

Saxony's minister president declares solidarity with far-right protests in Chemnitz

Johannes Stern
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The key message in the government statement delivered by Saxony's Minister President Michael Kretschmer (Christian Democrats, CDU) in Saxony's state parliament on Wednesday was that in the wake of the neo-Nazi protests in Chemnitz, Germany's ruling elite is intensifying the very policies that have emboldened the far-right.

The centerpiece of Kretschmer's speech included the call for a strong state, the intensification of the hard-line anti-refugee policy, and the downplaying of the attacks on journalists, immigrants and the left.

"There was no mob, there was no witch-hunt, there was no pogrom in Chemnitz," stated Kretschmer. "Those are words that don't correctly describe what happened there, and it is also important that we make that clear in this government statement."

He agreed with Chemnitz mayor Barbara Ludwig (Social Democrats, SPD) that one can "only come to terms with this situation" if "we differentiate rather than tar everyone with the same brush." Such an approach "protects those" and "does not pillory those who took to the streets out of anger, disappointment, and sympathy, and wanted to articulate their feelings. They are not right-wing extremists and we stand by them, ladies and gentlemen."

Kretschmer went beyond merely declaring his solidarity with the xenophobic protests in Chemnitz. The new state government plans "to travel through the state, listen to people, acknowledge their arguments, their worries, their fears, and their protests, and to integrate this into our political work." Germany needs a "cross-party consensus" to ensure that "the people's will is ultimately enforced by legal decisions—not only in theory, but also in practice."

In other words: like the grand coalition in Berlin, Saxony's own grand coalition will adopt an even

stronger pro-AfD orientation and implement its far-right policies. "The task must be to reach a swift consensus at the federal level and among the states on the issue of protecting our external borders," warned Kretschmer. There must also finally be "effective regulations" for "difficult issues like deportations," he added, "so that we can really take action against those who have broken the law."

The other major theme of Kretschmer's speech was the need for a strong state. Early on in his remarks, he thanked "the police officers in Saxony, those from the federal police, and from other states who are continuing to guarantee security in Chemnitz today." He explained that there is no question that "the rule of law is being enforced here, that we, as the state, have a monopoly on violence ... If more police officers are required, we will request them and deploy them there." It is also "absolutely clear that the training of thousands more officials in the judiciary and police is aimed at successfully waging a struggle against extremism," Kretschmer added.

Kretschmer sought to create the impression that the build-up of the repressive state apparatus is directed against the danger posed by the far-right. At one point he stated, "I have asked the Justice Minister together with the state prosecutor to work out a plan for a zero-tolerance strategy and accelerated legal proceedings. We saw how this worked in Leipzig, where we managed to convict someone within 17 hours who gave the Nazi salute in a stadium. That's the speed I'm talking about."

Who does Kretschmer think he is kidding? He is not alarmed by the behavior of a few football hooligans—behavior which he provided an apology for and praised in the same speech—but rather the widespread opposition to right-wing extremism and

fascism among workers and young people.

On Monday, around 70,000 people flooded into a concert in Chemnitz to protest against the far-right under the slogan, “We are more.” Speaking on behalf of the entire ruling elite, CDU general secretary Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer criticized the concert prior to it taking place, underscoring who the real targets of the repressive state apparatus are.

The current report by the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz), Germany’s domestic intelligence agency, which was released in July with a foreword by federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU), focuses on the struggle against the left.

While the AfD is merely presented as a “victim” of alleged “left-wing extremists,” the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is now officially among the “objects under surveillance” by the secret service. Its “misdeed” is not “left-wing extremist” violence, but rather its public advocacy of a socialist program against “the existing state and social order invariably slandered as ‘capitalism’, against the EU, supposed nationalism, imperialism, and militarism.”

For the state intelligence agency in Saxony, which also enjoys close ties to the far-right, it is not the neo-Nazis who are the real enemies, but their opponents. On Tuesday, Gordian Meyer-Plath, head of Saxony’s intelligence agency, spoke out against the surveillance of the AfD by the intelligence service in Saxony.

More than almost anyone else, Meyer-Plath personifies the close cooperation between the intelligence service and the far-right in Saxony. He is a member of the Marchia Bonn student association and was indirectly involved in the establishment of the National Socialist Underground (NSU). While working for Brandenburg’s state intelligence agency in the 1990s, he was in charge of the work of the agent Karsten Szczepanski, alias Piatto, when Szczepanski went underground in 1998. Szczepanski was a member of the neo-Nazi NPD, participated in the establishment of the Ku Klux Klan in Germany, and was closely associated with the NSU’s three members.

The close ties between the police in Saxony and the far-right milieu also became clear in Chemnitz. After a right-wing mob was given free rein to go on a rampage for two days late last month, an officer at a detention center in Dresden was suspended on August 30 after

allegedly passing an arrest warrant for a 22-year-old Iraqi to the right-wing extremist milieu. The warrant was published by Pegida founder Lutz Bachmann, several AfD politicians, and the organization Pro Chemnitz, which organized the right-wing marches in the city.

It is precisely these structures that Kretschmer and other capitalist politicians intend to strengthen when they call for a strong state.



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