

Hitler's resurrection in Germany

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12 October 2018

Seventy-three years after Germany's Nazi Führer ended his life in a Berlin bunker, the words and ideas of Adolf Hitler have been resurrected in one of Germany's most prominent daily newspapers.

Such was the unprecedented scale of the crimes committed by Hitler's regime that for decades his fascist and anti-Semitic rantings were banned in Germany. Publication of his noxious manifesto *Mein Kampf* was prohibited by the German government for 70 years, reappearing in an annotated edition only in 2016.

Now, however, it has emerged that an October 6 guest column written by the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party chairman, Alexander Gauland, and published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ)—the German newspaper with the widest international circulation—is largely based on a November 1933 speech delivered by Hitler to Siemens workers in Berlin.

"Gauland's text is obviously closely tied to Hitler's," commented historian Wolfgang Benz in the *Tagesspiegel*. "It is a paraphrase that looks as if the AfD chief had laid the 1933 speech of the Führer on his desk when he wrote his guest column for the FAZ."

Benz, an authority on Nazism and anti-Semitism, commented on the column that "one probably suspects that the same spirit is blowing as in 1933." It would appear, he said, that the AfD is offering "warmed-up leftovers" from the Nazi era, "with the nationalist movement, the NSDAP [Nazi party] and its epigones as a blueprint."

In the FAZ, Gauland justifies the "populism" of his party on the grounds that the AfD defends the interests of the "conventional middle class" and "so-called ordinary people" against "a new urban elite." The members of this "globalized class," says Gauland, "live almost exclusively in big cities, speak fluent English, and when they change jobs and move from Berlin to London or Singapore, they find similar apartments, houses, restaurants, shops and private schools everywhere... As a result, the bond of this new elite to their respective homeland is weak. In a detached parallel society, they feel

they are world citizens."

In 1933, Hitler used similar words to vilify a "small, rootless international clique," which whipped up the peoples against each other: "These are the people who are everywhere and nowhere at home, but who live in Berlin today, tomorrow in Brussels, the day after tomorrow in Paris and then again in Prague or Vienna or in London, and feel at home everywhere," he told his audience [interrupted with shouts of "the Jews!"]. "They are the only ones that really have to be considered international elements because they can do business anywhere."

Hitler counterpoised the "people," as a national element, to this "international clique," declaring that "... the people are chained to their soil, chained to their homeland, bound to the life possibilities of their state, the nation. The people cannot follow them." Gauland's "warmed-over" version refers to "... those for whom homeland is still a value in itself and who are the first to lose their homeland because it is their milieu, into which the immigrants pour. They cannot just move away and play golf elsewhere."

The anti-Semitic undertone of these lines is obvious. The image of uprooted, "cosmopolitan" Jews runs like a red thread through Nazi propaganda. But Gauland's borrowings from Hitler go further than that. The deification of nation and homeland—blood and soil—formed the core of the ideology of fascism and Nazism.

The fanatical nationalism of the Nazis protected neither the German middle class nor the working class from the blows of the capitalist global economy. It sent them to the slaughter on the battlefields of the Second World War in the interests of German imperialism. This fanatical nationalism was opposed to the revolutionary workers' movement, which was internationalist ever since Marx and Engels published the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 with the battle cry, "Proletarians of all countries, unite!"

As long as bourgeois nationalism was directed against feudal fragmentation and tyranny, it was associated with progressive and democratic tendencies. But this era ended

in the 19th century. The nation-state became too constricting for the international growth and integration of capitalist economy. Germany and the other imperialist powers were seeking to forcibly re-divide the world at the expense of their rivals. That was the cause of the First and Second World Wars.

“Attempts to save economic life by inoculating it with virus from the corpse of nationalism result in blood poisoning which bears the name of fascism,” wrote Leon Trotsky in November 1933, the same month that Hitler delivered his speech at Siemens. “Fascist nationalism, preparing volcanic explosions and grandiose clashes in the world arena, bears nothing except ruin” (“Nationalism and Economic Life”). Six years later, Hitler invaded Poland and started World War II.

The fact that a leading German newspaper has opened its pages to the AfD chairman to regurgitate Hitler’s blood-and-soil ideology shows just how far the return of the extreme right in Germany has progressed. Faced with growing international tensions, trade war and social conflicts, Germany’s ruling class is returning to its criminal traditions.

The publishers of FAZ knew exactly to whom they were offering a forum. Gauland, who had spent 40 years of his political career in the so-called Stahlhelm [Steel helmet] wing of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) before he joined the AfD, has opened up the party’s leadership to extreme right-wing and fascistic forces, such as Bernd Höcke. Where he stands politically himself was demonstrated in his statement from June of this year that Hitler and the Nazis were “just so much bird shit in over a thousand years of successful German history.”

Although the AfD received only 12.6 of the votes in the general election, it now sets the tone in federal politics. The refugee policy of the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats bears its signature, as well as the increased powers for the police and the secret service and the hike in spending for the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces).

Unlike the Nazis in the 1930s, however, the AfD does not head a fascist mass movement. It is rejected by broad sections of the population. In many cities there are frequent mass demonstrations against the right-wing danger. In Munich alone, tens of thousands have protested three times this year against increased state powers, social inequality and militarism, and in Berlin, 40,000 are expected to protest against racism on Saturday.

But this opposition, like the massive social dissatisfaction within the German population, finds no

political expression in official politics. The parties represented in the Bundestag (federal parliament), along with the corporate media, are openly adapting themselves to the politics of the AfD. Within the framework of the grand coalition, the SPD follows the right-wing policy of the AfD. The Left Party also advocates a nationalist course. Gauland himself explicitly praised Left Party leader Sahra Wagenknecht in his FAZ column.

Many previously liberal representatives of the affluent middle class are flat on their backs before the AfD. Typical examples include the Green politician Boris Palmer and the *Spiegel* columnist and *Freitag* editor Jakob Augstein, who declared that Gauland had written “a clever text,” and called for “the AfD to co-govern.”

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party--SGP) has just published the book *Why are they back?* by Christoph Vandreier, which shows how the rise of the AfD was systematically prepared for years by a shift to the right in the universities, in the media and in politics.

As early as 2014, the media sparked a furious witch hunt against the SGP and its youth organization, the IYSSE, because we had criticized the right-wing extremist historian Jörg Baberowski, who claimed in the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* that Hitler was “not cruel.”

The leading role in this attack was played by the FAZ. Jürgen Kaube, now co-editor of the paper, defended Baberowski against alleged “Trotskyist bullying.” As the SGP predicted, trivializing the crimes of the Nazis paved the way to the resurgence of right-wing, militaristic and authoritarian politics in Germany.

This development is not limited to Germany. In the US and throughout Europe, capitalist rulers are turning to authoritarianism and the revival of fascism.

There is only one way to stop the revival of militarism and fascism in Germany: the mobilization of the international working class on the basis of a revolutionary program and the building of the SGP and the Fourth International as a mass socialist party.



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