

Why are they back?

New title from Mehring Books explains resurgence of fascism in Germany

Our reporters
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Mehring-Verlag, the German imprint of Mehring Books, has published a new volume on the resurgence of fascism in Germany, entitled *Why Are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy And The Return Of Fascism In Germany* by Christoph Vandreier.

Vandreier presented the book in a well-attended lecture at the Frankfurt Book Fair on Saturday.

“We had long been thinking about writing a book about the experiences of the last five years, in which the rise of the right wing, the return of fascism and war were ideologically and politically prepared,” Vandreier said in his introductory remarks.

After the neo-Nazi riots in Chemnitz, “we decided that this project was urgent and that the book had to be completed by the time of the Frankfurt Book Fair,” he said.

The neo-Nazi attacks on refugees and a Jewish-owned restaurant, Vandreier said, have made clear that the fascists are back and that the political issues of the past have returned with a vengeance.

The previous day, AfD politician Björn Höcke spouted his right-wing extremist views at the Frankfurt Book Fair, protected by dozens of police in battle dress, facing off against hundreds of protestors gathered in the main staircase. The Social Democrat Thilo Sarrazin, a purveyor of racism and eugenics, presented his new book *Hostile Takeover*, and other right-wing thinkers and publishers also exhibited their publications.

“Among the masses, the neo-Nazis are hated,” Vandreier stated, pointing to the mass anti-fascist demonstration taking place in Berlin that same day. “The fact the extreme right is able to act so provocatively can only be explained by the support it

receives from the political establishment.”

As an example, Vandreier cited the journalist Mariam Lau, who writes for the liberal newsweekly *Die Zeit* and is mentioned in the book for her defence of right-wing extremist professor Jörg Baberowski and her remark that refugees should be left to drown in the Mediterranean.

Ahead of the book fair, Lau had complained in *Die Zeit* that the right-wing newspaper *Junge Freiheit* had been given a less prominent place at the fair. She accused critics of the racists and right-wing extremists of “discourse hygiene.”

The fact that the chairman of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), Alexander Gauland, could publish a contribution in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which paraphrased a speech by Hitler, shows how the right-wing extremists are being courted. *Der Spiegel* columnist Jakob Augstein, who calls himself a left-winger, attested that Gauland had “written a sage text about German—and Western—misery.”

“The chapters in this book deal in detail with the role of academics, the media, political parties, and the state apparatus in building up and strengthening the AfD,” Vandreier said. “It is not written from the standpoint of a neutral observer, but as a contribution to the struggle against the return of militarism and fascism.”

Vandreier added: “This book was only possible because the Socialist Equality Party and its youth organization, the IYSSE, opposed the attempts to rehabilitate Nazi ideology. It was only in this struggle that the extent of the shift to the right by the ruling class and the enormous opposition against it became clearly visible among students and workers.”

Vandreier then discussed the individual chapters of

the book. He explained how, in early 2014, with the return of German militarism, a comprehensive campaign to falsify German history was launched. For example, German responsibility for the First World War was denied and even the crimes of the Nazis were trivialised, in preparation for new wars. The Humboldt University historian Jörg Baberowski had said in *Der Spiegel* that Hitler was not vicious and downplayed the Holocaust.

For three years, not a single professor or journalist objected to these crass statements. “This deafening silence was a prerequisite for today’s extreme right to act so aggressively,” Vandreier read from the book. The management of Humboldt University and numerous media outlets attacked Baberowski’s critics and defended the extreme-right ideologue.

Now the AfD’s policies were being implemented by the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, Vandreier continued. It was the most right-wing government since the end of the Nazi regime, as demonstrated by its massive increase in armaments spending for the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), its austerity measures and the establishment of a system of concentration camps to detain refugees.

The shift to the right by the political establishment and the government is a result of the deep crisis of capitalism, which, as in the 20th century, led to fascism and war, Vandreier explained. “As war and class struggle return today, so does the historical question Rosa Luxemburg posed during the First World War: ‘socialism or barbarism?’”

This appraisal was defended by Leon Trotsky against Social Democracy and Stalinism, which had disarmed the working class on the eve of World War II. “Trotsky maintained that only an independent movement of the working class can prevent war and fascism.” This perspective is now gaining enormous significance, concluded Vandreier.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion. The meeting was chaired by Sven Wurm, who also played a key role in the fight against the return of right-wing and militarist ideology at Humboldt University. He stressed that it was important to build the IYSSE at Frankfurt University, and encouraged all participants to continue to explore these issues.

Why are they back? met with great interest at the book fair, and the first print run sold out.



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