

Scuffles in German city of Amberg exploited to incite right-wing campaign

Marianne Arens and Peter Schwarz
5 January 2019

“The neo-Nazis are supported by large sections of the state apparatus and are being deliberately strengthened and encouraged,” states the foreword of the book *Why Are They Back?* by Christoph Vandreier, deputy leader of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, which was published last year in German by Mehring Verlag. Anyone who doubts this assessment should look at the reaction to the alleged excessive outbursts of violence by asylum seekers in the town of Amberg.

In the town, located in eastern Bavaria, four drunk teenagers between the ages of 17 and 19 allegedly attacked and beat passers-by. Twelve people reportedly suffered light injuries as a result, including a 17-year-old who received brief treatment in hospital due to a head wound.

Drunken teenagers getting into fights, and attacking bystanders is a regular occurrence in Germany and usually doesn’t even merit a mention in the local press. “The reaction is totally overblown,” Amberg mayor Michael Cerny, a Christian Social Union politician, was compelled to admit to Spiegel Online. Due to the fact that asylum seekers were involved in the case, it was massively exaggerated by the national media.

Although the specifics of what took place remain unclear, politicians from Bavaria and Berlin have been lining up to outdo each other with proposals for more restrictive asylum laws. Federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU) demanded, “When asylum seekers commit violent crimes, they must leave our country! If existing laws don’t allow for this, they must be changed.”

State secretary Stefan Mayer (CSU) called for the stricter isolation of rejected asylum seekers who could not be immediately deported, and raised the possibility of using residency requirements, and forcing asylum seekers to report regularly to the authorities, or wear

electronic tags.

Although Bavaria’s Interior Minister Joachim Hermann (CSU) was forced to acknowledge that deportation was not legally possible in any of the Amberg cases, he insisted, “We are pulling out all the stops to change that.”

CSU general secretary Markus Blume stated, “Anyone who tramples on their right to be a guest has forfeited that right,” which is almost word for word the same statement coined by Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht.

The ever-present police ideologist Rainer Wendt also spoke out, accusing the youths, whom he doesn’t know and has never met, of harboring “a deep hatred for our state and the people who live here.”

As was to be expected, this reaction has encouraged neo-Nazis to come to the fore. The right-wing extremist Nationaldemokratische Partei (NPD) called for the establishment of a citizens’ army in Amberg and published pictures with the demand on Facebook. The pictures show NPD supporters wearing high-visibility vests with the slogan, “We create safe spaces,” while patrolling through the streets.

Thus far, virtually nothing is known about what occurred on the evening in question in Amberg. Almost all of the reports stem from one and the same source, a press report from the Bavarian police presidium. This extremely vague report is based on statements from a train passenger at Amberg station, who phoned the police after allegedly being attacked by one of the suspects.

The report continued, “At the scene of the operation, it was revealed that attacks took place on passers-by inside and in front of the train station.” The police then arrested four young men as suspects at 9 p.m. The report continued, “In the course of a thorough

investigation, it emerged that, contrary to initial reports, three other people reported being injured.”

The report is full of vague sentences, including phrases like “it was revealed” and “it emerged that.” Inexplicably, the initial reference is to a single suspect, but later the talk is of “four young male suspects,” including drunken “Afghan, Syrian, and Iranian citizens.” Subsequent reports merely speak of “persons from Afghanistan and Iran.”

The online edition of Focus magazine reported that it had been able to contact the train passenger who phoned the police. The magazine introduced him as Marco Steck, a landscape gardener and occasional security guard. Focus described the 26-year-old as “powerfully built and stocky like a wrestler [...] Anyone who sees Marco Steck standing on the platform in Amberg would find it hard to believe that someone would want to pick a fight with him.”

His friends were also allowed to speak, even though none of them witnessed the incident. A soldier named Marcel said he was sitting “just around the corner in a pub,” and expressed regret at not being on the scene at the right moment.

The question is posed: are those the only witnesses to the case? Soldiers who weren’t even present, and a young man working part-time as a security guard? Is it conceivable that the young men were not only drunk, but also provoked? Given the reports of right-wing extremist networks among soldiers and the police, such a hypothesis is by no means far-fetched.

It is certainly not a case of a sensational “orgy of violence,” as Die Welt, Focus, and Münchner Merkur are now writing. Several hundred police operations took place in the same district during the days around New Year’s Eve. In one case, a 37-year-old German citizen inflicted life-threatening injuries on two Bulgarians with a knife. It is not hard to imagine what would have happened if the perpetrator had been an asylum seeker.

Shortly after the scuffles in Amberg, a 50-year-old man deliberately drove his vehicle into pedestrians in the cities of Bottrop and Essen. When he was arrested by the police, the man said he wanted to kill foreigners. Eight people, including a 4-year-old boy and a 10-year-old girl, were injured, with one woman suffering serious injuries.

Even though this was no mere scuffle, but attempted

murder, both cases have only been referred to in passing. Interior Minister Seehofer told the Bild newspaper that it was a matter of “political credibility to deal with both cases thoroughly and firmly.” However, he made no reference to “excessive violence” with regard to the events in Bottrop and Essen.

Like the events in Cologne on New Year’s Eve three years ago, which were also hugely exaggerated, the campaign over Amberg serves to strengthen extreme right-wing forces and establish a police state, which is directed not merely against refugees, but the entire working class.

The social divisions in society are becoming ever deeper and the ruling elite is preparing for new wars. The federal government’s coalition agreement calls for an increase in defence spending to 2 percent of GDP, which amounts to some €70 billion. The ruling elite can only suppress the mounting opposition to social inequality and militarism by resorting to violent means. That is why they are strengthening the far-right and the repressive state apparatus.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact