German SPD politician justifies murder of Rosa Luxemburg

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Although the SPD continues to officially dispute its complicity in the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht a century ago, Wolfgang Thierse, former president of the federal parliament, recently explicitly declared: We would do it again. The two revolutionary socialists and co-founders of the German Communist Party were brutally murdered one hundred years ago, on January 15, 1919, by Freikorps soldiers who were in close contact with the SPD Reichswehr Minister Gustav Noske.

Thierse gave an interview to the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* on January 14 about the commemoration of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, which he described as a "dishonest honour."

Asked whether the Social Democrats bore a portion of the blame in January 1919, Thierse answered, "There were radicalised elements among the workers. They had to be defeated by force of arms. It remains a painful episode, also in retrospect, but we know that the path that was then taken was the better one."

According to Thierse, Germany after the November Revolution was divided between "radical forces who wanted something like the Bolsheviks in Russia, a revolution, and the moderate Majority Social Democrats, who said, we first need to win peace, we must ensure that the people don't starve, that some sort of orderly relations exist." In retrospect, one can say "that the moderate forces were right in not relying on a brutal revolution that would have resulted in a dictatorship, but instead working for democracy, the rule of law, and the social state."

In summary, Thierse is saying that the suppression of uprisings by revolutionary workers, which claimed thousands of victims, and the execution of their leaders were necessary steps to secure democracy, the rule of law, and the social state. This is an incredible falsification of history, which can only lead one to conclude that Thierse and the SPD, confronted with similar conditions, would do exactly the same today as they did then.

The SPD government of Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann, and Gustav Noske from 1918–19 did not defend democracy, but rather the authoritarian state, militarism and capitalist private property. They protected from the raging revolution all of the social forces that would assist Hitler to power 14 years later—the military caste, the big landowners, the industrialists Stinnes, Flick and Krupp, the Deutsch Bank, and the authoritarian judiciary and police apparatus. To this end, they organized the Freikorps, which carried out several coup attempts in subsequent years and went on to serve as the basis for Hitler's paramilitary Stormabteilung (Storm Detachment, SA).

The concessions the SPD was forced to make in the process—a bourgeois constitution, universal suffrage, the eight-hour day, etc.—were purely tactical and were withdrawn at the first opportunity. The Weimar democracy was never more than an empty shell, which collapsed at the first signs of social unrest. Numerous serious historians, including those who oppose a socialist perspective, therefore explicitly describe the policies of the Ebert government as counter-revolutionary.

As the well-known publicist Sebastian Haffner wrote in his book on the November Revolution published in 1979, "The German revolution was a Social Democratic revolution that was put down by the Social Democratic leaders; an episode that is virtually unparalleled in world history."

In his new book on the 1918 revolution, Joachim Käppner comments on this remark: "Had the Ebert SPD used the mass movement instead of fearing it,

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driven the old military to the devil instead of allying with it, the Republic probably wouldn't have collapsed in 1933, or at least wouldn't have fallen into the hands of the Nazis—according to Haffner's train of thought, and it is difficult to disagree with his logic."

Leon Trotsky summed up the character of the November Revolution in the concise formula, "As to the German Revolution of 1918, it was no democratic completion of the bourgeois revolution, it was a proletarian revolution decapitated by the Social Democrats; more correctly, it was a bourgeois *counter-revolution*, which was compelled to preserve pseudo-democratic forms after its victory over the proletariat."

In the founding programme of the German Communist Party, Luxemburg noted that the Hohenzollerns overthrown on November 9, 1918, were "no more than the front men of the imperialist bourgeoisie and of the Junkers. The class rule of the bourgeoisie is the real criminal responsible for the World War," she continued. "The capitalists of all nations are the real instigators of the mass murder."

On this basis, she concluded that the world war had confronted society with two alternatives: socialism or barbarism. She went on, "The World War confronts society with the choice: either continuation of capitalism, new wars, and imminent decline into chaos and anarchy, or abolition of capitalist exploitation." Her warning was to be tragically confirmed by Nazi rule, the Holocaust, and the Second World War.

The 75-year-old Thierse is a powerful voice in the SPD. He grew up in East Germany, and began his political career as a civil rights activist during German reunification with the New Forum. Shortly before reunification, in the summer of 1990, Thierse became leader of the SPD in East Germany. He was subsequently deputy leader of the German SPD until 2005, and a member of its commission on basic values until 2013.

Between 1998 and 2005, Thierse played an important role as president of parliament in enforcing the agenda of the SPD-Green Party government, including foreign military interventions, the Hartz social welfare reforms, and the Agenda 2010. The bearded Catholic and spokesman for the Christian Working Group within the SPD was capable of bestowing a lofty moral aura on the reactionary policies of the Schröder-Fischer government.

The fact that Thierse has now openly attacked Luxemburg, instead of trying to distort or co-opt her as others have done, is an unmistakable sign of the SPD's further shift to the right. Despised by workers and reduced to 14 percent in the polls, the SPD is preparing once again to brutally suppress social opposition in alliance with the most reactionary forces.

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