Fascist deputies disrupt Holocaust memorial in Germany

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On Wednesday, deputies from the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party disrupted a Holocaust remembrance ceremony in the state parliament of Bavaria, with over a dozen members walking out of the room and one member posting a vulgar tirade against the speaker, a Holocaust survivor.

This week's event, taking place in the same city where Adolf Hitler staged his infamous Munich Beer Hall Putsch almost a century ago, has laid bare the ongoing rehabilitation of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust in Germany.

The neo-Nazis of the AfD feel emboldened to take such actions because the Grand Coalition government has worked to encourage and legitimize its anti-immigrant, xenophobic and ultimately anti-Semitic policies. The fascists know that they will not be seriously criticized by the ruling Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties, which have adopted much of the AfD's platform as their own.

Having adopted the AfD's critique of Germany's "welcoming culture," the Grand Coalition has set up internment camps for refugees inside Germany's borders. Meanwhile, the neo-Nazis are allowed by the police to rampage through the streets of German cities—as they did last year in Chemnitz, where they attacked immigrants, refugees, leftists and a Jewish restaurant.

Wednesday's memorial was targeted by AfD members after Charlotte Knobloch, a Holocaust survivor and president of the Jewish Community in Munich, spoke basic truths that almost no one in official German politics will utter.

"The so-called AfD bases its politics on hate and exclusion," Knobloch said. "It is our responsibility that the unimaginable cannot repeat itself," she added, in a sharp warning about where the politics of the AfD leads.

As legislators applauded the speech, nearly all the members of the AfD party left the room in protest.

In a statement posted on Facebook, AfD member Ulrich Singer raved about the Holocaust survivor's "lies," "insolence, disrespect" and "stupid and infantile babbling." Over the subsequent days, Knobloch said she had received "insults, threats and abuse by email and telephone almost every minute."

Charlotte Knobloch was born in Munich in 1932, where, as a six-year-old girl, she personally witnessed the burning down of the Munich synagogue during Kristallnacht. She survived the Holocaust only because a Catholic family in the countryside hid her and pretended she was the illegitimate child of their own daughter. She remained in Germany and later played a leading role in Jewish organizations.

The AfD's leaders have justified and legitimized the Hitler regime and have sought to deny the historical significance of the Holocaust – the murder of over six million Jews by the Nazis.

AfD Chairman Alexander Gauland has publicly stated that the Nazi dictatorship was "just so much bird shit in over a thousand years of successful German history." Björn Höcke, the AfD's leader in Thuringia, called the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin a "monument of shame," and demanded a "180-degree shift" in the country's attitude toward the Holocaust.

Germany's media and political establishment have systematically promoted the resurgence of the AfD. In 2014, the German news weekly *Der Spiegel* ran a major story dedicated to downplaying German responsibility for World War II, featuring a quotation from Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski, who declared, "Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not vicious. He did not want to talk about the extermination of Jews at

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his table.”

Over the following years, the media has promoted far-right, anti-immigrant demonstrations and heralded the rise of the AfD as a legitimate outpouring of popular sentiment, creating the political climate for a radical shift to the right by the entire German political establishment.

Meanwhile, figures associated with the AfD have been promoted to key political positions by the Grand Coalition government of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD), including Hans-Georg Maassen, the former head of the German Secret Service, who defended and promoted the AfD and covered up for the neo-Nazi riot in Chemnitz.

The only political organization that stands against the rehabilitation of Nazism is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP--Socialist Equality Party) and its student movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).

The SGP warned five years ago that Germany's return to an aggressive imperialist foreign policy and militarism required “a new narrative of the twentieth century, a falsification of history that diminishes and justifies the crimes of German imperialism.”

As a result of their criticisms of figures such as Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski, the SEP and IYSSE became the targets of furious denunciations in Germany’s major newspapers. The SPD president of Humboldt University, Sabine Kunst, publicly defended Baberowski and declared criticism of his neo-Nazi views to be inadmissible.

The AfD has been promoted not from below, but from above, through support and encouragement from the political establishment. Meanwhile, the great mass of the population views their actions with disgust, and demonstrations against the neo-Nazis have attracted hundreds of thousands of people. But this broad opposition to everything the AfD stands for finds no expression in official politics.

In contrast to the silence and complicity that prevails among the parties of the political establishment, the SGP and the IYSSE have waged a principled struggle to expose the promotion of the extreme right.

As a result, the IYSSE at Humboldt University has seen a significant increase in its vote in the most recent election for the student parliament, emerging as one of the most broadly supported student groups and outpolling the Left Party, which has engaged in a cowardly adaptation to the far-right.

Amid the eruption of the class struggle all over the world, the IYSSE and SGP will continue their fight against the resurgence of fascism, on the basis of the fight to unify the international working class against the capitalist system.

The reemergence of fascism in Germany and the embrace of the neo-Nazis by the media and political establishment make clear that German fascism was not an aberration, but an expression of the most fundamental tendencies of capitalism itself: war, reaction and imperialist barbarism. The fight against fascism is, in other words, the struggle for socialism.

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