

The murder of German politician Walter Lübcke: A warning

Peter Schwarz**19 June 2019**

The death of Walter Lübcke, the local German politician who was targeted by the extreme right after speaking out in defense of refugees, has exposed the dirty secret of German politics: the systematic promotion of right-wing extremist forces by the state and the ruling elite.

Although it was clear from the outset that Lübcke had been the target of hate campaigns by right-wing extremists and had received several death threats, it took two weeks for the federal public prosecutor to take over the case due to its “special significance.” Prior to this decision, the investigators focused on the victim’s personal ties, as was done during the investigations into the murders carried out by the right-wing extremist National Socialist Underground. The media treated the cold-blooded execution of a high-ranking politician as a non-event.

Only when the right-wing extremist connection to the crime could no longer be denied, after the DNA of a neo-Nazi known to the police due to his long record of criminal offences led to him being designated the prime suspect, did the investigators and media change tack.

The federal prosecutor is now attempting to spread the myth of an individual perpetrator. Thus far, there is “nothing to indicate that the accused could have been involved in a right-wing terrorist organisation,” said a spokesperson for the federal public prosecutor, even though the suspect’s biography tells a different story.

The media declared the murder to be an attack on the state and that the lack of censorship of the internet was its main cause. “Has the mob, which rages and agitates on the digital networks, got what it wanted?” asked the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in a typical comment. For too long, we have “bowed to the seductive power of ‘social’ networks,” wrote the newspaper, and complained about the “gradual loss of the state’s authority.”

In reality, Lübke’s murder is not the result of a weak state, but rather the systematic promotion of right-wing extremists by the state and the ruling elite. This is the dirty secret of German politics. This support ranges from the outright trivialisation of right-wing extremist acts of violence, the

blindness on the part of the intelligence agencies towards right-wing extremist groups, the deliberate promotion of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), the downplaying of the Nazis’ crimes on university campuses, and the toleration of right-wing extremist terrorist groups by sections of the security apparatus.

Lübcke is thus far the most prominent victim of the right-wing extremists, but far from the only one. According to the conservative recordkeeping of the Federal Criminal Police, 85 people have fallen victim to acts of right-wing extremist terrorism since the reunification of Germany in 1990. The independent Amadeu Antonio Foundation puts the figure at 195, which it lists by name on its website, with 12 more suspected cases.

Most victims are not known to the public, or, like the NSU’s victims, are only identified years later. By contrast, every single act of violence by a traumatised refugee is exaggerated by the media and seized on as propaganda fodder for the AfD. In addition, there are thousands of refugee aid workers, politicians and journalists who are threatened, intimidated and beaten by right-wing extremists without the police doing anything about it. These incidents are rarely covered in the press.

The right-wing extremist terrorist networks have intimate ties with the security agencies, which cover up these groups. For example, it is already public knowledge that the neo-Nazi milieu out of which the NSU emerged was financed to the tune of hundreds of thousands of euros by the domestic intelligence agency. At least two dozen informants for the police and intelligence agencies were active in the environs of the NSU while it carried out its racist murders.

Right-wing extremist networks also exist in the army and police, where they can operate with virtual impunity. Several media outlets reported last year on the existence of a well-connected right-wing extremist network in the army, which planned attacks on political opponents and took steps to prepare for a fascist revolt on “Day X.” A right-wing extremist network was revealed in the Hesse state police during the investigation into death threats sent to the lawyer

Seda Ba?ay-Y?ld?z. Close ties exist between Stephan E., the suspect in the Lübcke killing, and these groups.

The promotion of right-wing extremist terrorist networks is only one aspect of the rightward shift within the state and ruling elite. Another is the virtual adoption of the AfD's refugee policy by Germany's grand coalition of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and Social Democrats. The right-wing extremist party, which describes the Nazi regime as "bird poop" in over a thousand years of glorious German history, is offered concessions by the other parties and treated as a future partner in government.

Former German President Joachim Gauck, who is supported by all of the established parties, appealed just one day prior to the arrest of Stephan E. in a lengthy interview with *Der Spiegel* for "greater tolerance towards the right." Gauck criticized the federal parliament for failing to elect an AfD member as vice president, and prattled on about all of the AfD's key themes.

He complained that among the younger generation "the feeling of shame or guilt" for the Nazis' crimes was being "implemented." He asserted, "The feeling that change is a danger because it alienates us from ourselves," is "an anthropological constant, like the fear of the outsider." "The longing for an authoritarian figure" was described by him as a "conditio humana."

Gauck knows very well what the purpose of all this is. As German President, he gave a keynote speech on foreign policy on German Unity Day in 2013. He demanded that Germany return to a global political and military role that "corresponds to its position as the fourth largest economy in the world." The speech served as the prelude to a systematic revival of German militarism, which was endorsed by all parties represented in parliament.

A new evaluation of German history took hold in the universities, which downplayed Germany's war crimes in the first and second world wars.

When Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski defended the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte in 2014 in *Der Spiegel* and said, "Hitler was not vicious," the Socialist Equality Party warned: "The revival of German militarism requires a new interpretation of history that minimises the crimes of the Nazi period." This can only be "realised through the use of measures to intimidate opposition and the suppression of all critical opinions."

The criticisms of Baberowski by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality provoked a storm of outrage, which included almost all media outlets, university management, and professors. They continue to defend Baberowski to this day, even though he

maintains close ties to the AfD and other right-wing extremists. One of his most vocal supporters is the former CDU politician Erica Steinbach, who now heads the AfD's Desiderius Erasmus Foundation. Earlier this year, Steinbach posted several attacks on Lübcke, and failed to delete death threats posted in the comments section of her posts for some time.

The murder of Lübcke has fully confirmed all of the SGP's warnings. Under conditions of mounting social tensions and geopolitical conflicts, the ruling elite is resorting to its authoritarian and militarist traditions. Under the veneer of democracy applied to German capitalism following Hitler's downfall, the original brown color of fascism is clearly visible.

In the Weimar Republic, political murders carried out by paramilitary organisations with close ties to the state were a routine occurrence. The murder of well-known bourgeois politicians, like Matthias Erzberger and Walther Rathenau, was only the tip of the iceberg. The actual terror was directed against the representatives of the working class—from the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht to the bloody suppression of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, numerous strikes and protests, and the concentration camps after Hitler's seizure of power, where the workers' leaders were the first to be detained.

Lübcke's murder is not only a serious warning to working people in Germany, but also to workers around the world. Under conditions of war, trade war, and dramatic social inequality, bourgeois rule can no longer be preserved through democratic means. Like the defence of democratic and social rights, the struggle against the far-right danger is inseparable from the mobilisation of the working class to fight for a socialist programme and overthrow the capitalist system.



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