

German state and political parties promote anti-Semitism

Peter Schwarz
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On Sunday, a 26-year-old Jewish student was attacked and beaten with a shovel outside the door of the Hohe Weide Synagogue in Hamburg. The police and the Hamburg public prosecutor's office judged the attack to be anti-Semiticly motivated and attempted murder.

The assailant, who wore a German army camouflage uniform and beat his victim with a military entrenching tool, was 29-year-old German citizen Grigoriy K., who was born in Kazakhstan. A slip of paper with a swastika was found in his pocket. According to *Der Spiegel*, K. had performed voluntary military service in 2016, including three months of basic training and then worked as a paramedic.

The attack in Hamburg is only the latest in an endless series of anti-Semitic attacks in Germany. In the first six months of this year, official police statistics recorded 696 crimes with an anti-Semitic motive. Since 2010, the annual number of such crimes has never fallen below 1,200.

One year ago, on October 9, 2019, neo-Nazi Stephan Balliet attacked the synagogue in Halle on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. Only the well-fortified door prevented a bloodbath with dozens of Jewish victims. Four months later, Thomas Rathjen murdered nine people in two shisha bars in Hanau. Like Balliet, Rathjen was a fervent anti-Semite who hated Jews and Muslims alike. In a manifesto, he called for the extermination of the population of Israel and more than 20 other states.

Seventy-five years after the Holocaust in which six million Jews fell victim, Jews in Germany, who make up just 0.2 percent of the population, are once again living in danger. The responsibility for this virulent anti-Semitism lies entirely with the ruling elites.

It lies with leading politicians of all parties, who court the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), elect its representatives to high offices, put its racist refugee policies into practice, trivialize far-right activists as

“concerned citizens” and support extreme-right networks in the police and the Bundeswehr.

Only yesterday, Federal Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) presented a report on right-wing extremists within the domestic secret service that deliberately plays down far-right networks inside the state apparatus and gives carte blanche to anti-Semites and racists.

After more and more new groups in the police, the German Armed Forces and secret services have been exposed exchanging neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic chats, threatening left-wing lawyers and activists, hoarding weapons and preparing for a coup on “Day X,” Seehofer had to admit that between 2017 and April 2020 there were well over 400 suspected cases of right-wing extremism inside the security agencies of the federal and state governments. He claimed, however, that there is “no structural right-wing extremism” in German security agencies.

In reality, Seehofer's figures are a gross underestimate. First, they do not include the suspected cases in the German army, whose official number in the same period was 1,064. Second, the figures are based on information provided by the security agencies themselves; there has been no independent investigation. Third, the massive increase in cases since March is not included—in North Rhine-Westphalia alone, the number of suspected cases has since risen from 45 to 104. Fourth, the number of unreported cases is many times higher, since there is an *esprit de corps* within the police and the German army that brands any passing over of information as “treason.”

The so-called “Code of Silence” is “widespread in police culture,” former police officer Rafael Behr, who now teaches at the Hamburg Police Academy, told *Der Spiegel*. “You don't betray colleagues, not at any price. You maintain solidarity at all costs. ... No one says ‘Stop’ or reports the incident when they see colleagues

who come to the police station with Nazi memorabilia, for example.”

Seehofer’s counterpart in Saxony-Anhalt, Interior Minister Holger Stahlknecht (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), is deliberately stirring up anti-Semitic sentiments in the police. On Monday, he told police officers in Dessau that they could no longer fulfill their duties because they had to work 1,500 additional hours per month to safeguard Jewish facilities.

Stahlknecht, who is personally responsible for the fact that the synagogue in Halle was without any protection a year ago, had carefully chosen the location for his appearance. He spoke at the Dessau-Roßlau police station where Oury Jalloh died 15 years ago. Although all the evidence suggested that the refugee from Sierra Leone was killed by police officers, the case has never been solved. It served as a beacon for unchecked racism in the police force.

Also responsible for the return of anti-Semitism are all the academics, journalists, and politicians who support far-right professors and denounce criticism of them as an attack on the freedom of scholarship. In February 2014, when *Der Spiegel* published an extensive article which pleaded for a reinterpretation of German history, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) warned urgently that this would lead to a revival of militarism, fascism and anti-Semitism. *Der Spiegel* cited historian Jörg Baberowski of Berlin’s Humboldt University. Baberowski attested that Hitler was “not vicious” and defended the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte. Nolte himself, who was still alive at the time, made anti-Semitic remarks in the article. For example, he accused the Jews of being partly responsible for the Gulag because some of them were Bolsheviks. In doing so, he followed the line of Nazi propaganda about a “Jewish-Bolshevik world conspiracy.”

Almost the entire media, numerous professors and politicians from all parties—including the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens and the Left Party—defended Baberowski and attacked the SGP and its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), which had publicly criticized him. In contrast, the SGP/IYSSE received much support from students and workers, and a court ruled that Baberowski could legitimately be called a “right-wing extremist.”

The dispute has continued for years. Mehring Books published two books about it: *Scholarship or War Propaganda? The return of German Militarism and the*

Dispute at Berlin’s Humboldt University and Why Are They Back? Historical falsification, political conspiracy and the return of fascism in Germany (order from Mehring Books: UK, USA). Anyone who wants to understand why anti-Semitism is flaring up again in Germany should read these books.

The return of fascism and anti-Semitism has deep, objective causes and is not limited to Germany.

In the United States, President Donald Trump is mobilizing armed fascist militias and openly threatens a coup if he loses the November election. In Brazil, the Philippines, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, ultra-right parties are in power. But in all other countries too, the ruling class is rapidly moving toward dictatorship. In Germany, as the virulent scourge of anti-Semitism shows, this development is far advanced.

The reason for this is the insoluble crisis of global capitalism. International relations are characterized by strategic rivalries, economic conflicts and wars, while domestic relations are characterized by deep social inequality and fierce class tensions. The coronavirus pandemic has intensified and accelerated this. The financial oligarchy has helped itself to billions from the state coffers, while workers are being forced back to work at the risk of their lives and must pay for the billions in debt through mass layoffs, wage and social cuts.

This is not compatible with democratic conditions. Hitler had already used anti-Semitism to mobilize the dregs of society against the working class and establish a dictatorship. For this reason, he was invited into the Reich Chancellery in 1933 by a conspiracy at the top of society.

The fight against anti-Semitism, dictatorship and war is now, as then, inseparable from the fight against their cause, capitalism. What is necessary is the building of a party that gives an international, socialist orientation to the inevitable class struggles to come. This is what the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and its sister organizations in the International Committee of the Fourth International are fighting for.



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