

Once more on the issue of anti-Semitism in Germany

Johannes Stern
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During Israel's onslaught on Gaza this month, German politicians were in propaganda mode around the clock. They defended the murderous bombardment of Gaza with the claim that Israel has the right to defend itself. At the same time, they denounced all protests against Israel's war policy as anti-Semitic, even when organisers explicitly spoke out against anti-Semitism.

The WSWs made clear in a previous comment that criticism of Israel's brutal actions has nothing to do with anti-Semitism. On the contrary, the assertion that the Zionist regime's terrorising bombardment of a largely defenceless population is taking place in the name of all Jews is drawn straight from the traditional arsenal of anti-Semitism.

"An anti-Semite is not someone protesting against the crimes of the government of Benjamin Netanyahu, who has struck an alliance with extreme right-wing parties, has one foot in jail and can only stay in power through endless provocations," we wrote. "An anti-Semite is someone who equates 'the Jews' with the policies of the Israeli government."

We also pointed out that the accusation of anti-Semitism was raised by forces deeply implicated in right-wing, anti-democratic and militarist conspiracies that are the real source of the threat of anti-Semitism.

Two interviews with former German President Joachim Gauck and current Parliament President Wolfgang Schäuble underscore just how far advanced this dangerous development is. Both have played a central role over recent years in Germany's return to an aggressive great power foreign policy. They now openly appeal for more tolerance towards and an understanding for the far-right, and thus defend forces that are, in fact, anti-Semitic.

In an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Schäuble summed up the reactionary character of the entire official anti-Semitism campaign. He agitated against immigrants allegedly "calling for the destruction of Israel," blustered about the "problem of an imported anti-Semitism from Islamic-dominated countries," and denounced the "anti-Semitism of the far-left." At the same time, he defended the

far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) against the accusation of anti-Semitism and went so far as to praise the fascist party as an ally in the struggle against it.

Over recent years, the established parties have integrated the AfD into parliamentary work and adopted its reactionary policies. Schäuble now praises them with the remark, "In parliament, the AfD is also awkwardly attempting not to be pushed into the anti-Semitic corner. Like all other parties, it voted unanimously for the establishment of an anti-Semitism commissioner for the federal government and for a resolution on anti-Semitism."

In reality, the "anti-Semitism resolutions" adopted by parliament during the last legislative period have nothing to do with the struggle against anti-Semitism. On the contrary, like the current campaign, their goal was to support the war policy pursued by Israel and the imperialist powers in the Middle East and suppress any opposition to it.

Schäuble's attempt to present the AfD as a spearhead in the struggle against anti-Semitism is a deliberate provocation. The party is full of racists and anti-Semites. Its leading members, including honorary chairman Alexander Gauland and the party's leader in Thuringia, Björn Höcke, trivialise the Holocaust, praise the Nazi Wehrmacht (army), and agitate against the Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

It is a fact that anti-Semitic attacks and acts of violence in Germany, including the terrorist attack on a synagogue in Halle in October 2019, are overwhelmingly perpetrated by right-wing extremists.

In the first three months of this year, the government recorded 428 criminal acts and six acts of violence motivated by anti-Semitism, most of which were perpetrated by right-wing extremists. 378 of the crimes and five of the acts of violence were categorised as "right-wing political criminality." By contrast, only one act of violence and one "other" crime were categorised as "political criminality: foreign ideology," and two crimes were designated "Political criminality: religious ideology."

Schäuble knows these numbers. He was forced to admit to the *FAZ* that the perpetrators are "mostly not immigrants,

but right-wing extremists.” Despite this, he praises these political forces. In the interview, he even came to the defence of Gauland’s statement that Hitler and the Nazis were “bird poop in over 1,000 years of successful German history.” Gauland has “apologised for this comment so often that I must say that this is not an expression of anti-Semitism, but of a totally wrong presentation of history.”

A presentation of history that Schäuble and the ruling class are deliberately propagating. Asked by the FAZ—which regularly gives Gauland space for his Nazi agitation—whether the distancing of the AfD from these positions was merely tactical, Schäuble responded cynically, “As Parliament President, I take seriously what everyone says. By the way, I’m happier if the AfD participates in the Holocaust commemoration on 27 January than if they don’t.”

Schäuble remained silent about the fact that the AfD has repeatedly boycotted official Holocaust commemorations or used them to ridicule the victims of fascist terror and legitimise the Nazis’ crimes. In 2019, for example, Marc Jongen, the AfD’s ideological leader, justified the carefully planned war of extermination that claimed the lives of 27 million Soviet citizens and led directly to the Holocaust as a “reaction” to Stalinist acts of violence.

Significantly, Jongen based himself on the right-wing extremist Humboldt University professor Jörg Baberowski, who works closely with the government and is vehemently defended against all criticism by all parties in parliament. Baberowski justified the crimes of the Nazis and Hitler. In 2014, he declared in *Der Spiegel* his explicit support for the now dead Nazi apologist and anti-Semite Ernst Nolte. He stated, “Hitler was not a psychopath, and he wasn’t vicious. He did not want to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

The extent to which the top representatives of the capitalist state support the right-wing offensive was underlined in an interview with Gauck in *Der Tagesspiegel*. In it, the former German president and pastor railed against an alleged “intolerance of the virtuous,” which designates “valid questions or opinions too swiftly as dangerous for society or right-wing extremist.” But it is precisely “a characteristic of an open society that it can cope with differences and doesn’t prohibit people who present views that someone doesn’t particularly like or despises.”

Gauck made no secret about the “views” he was talking about. When *Der Tagesspiegel* reminded Gauck that he once called for this “tolerance” for AfD voters, and asked him if “this now applies to the Lateral Thinkers and anti-vaxxers,” Gauck replied, “Absolutely. But please don’t get the wrong idea. Tolerance doesn’t mean accept.” But one cannot “exclude everyone who is dissatisfied with the coronavirus

policy.”

This is crystal clear. The so-called “Lateral Thinker” protests are dominated by far-right and fascist forces who explicitly declare their views by carrying the flag of the German Empire and anti-Semitic insignia. Gauck and the entire political establishment not only tolerated its protest marches in the past, but openly supported them because they serve to intimidate opponents of the government’s criminal coronavirus policies and press ahead with the reopening of the economy, which has already claimed more than 87,000 lives in Germany.

The ruling elite is also increasingly basing itself on fascist and anti-Semitic forces in its foreign policy. This was shown clearest of all during the fascist coup in Ukraine in 2014, when then-Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who has since become German President, met Oleh Tyahnybok, the leader of the far-right Svoboda Party, in the German embassy in Kiev. Tyahnybok is a notorious anti-Semite who rails against “Jewish swine and other vermin” in his speeches. His role models are Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera and Roman Schuchevytsch, who were involved in the mass murder of thousands of Ukrainian Jews.

The official anti-Semitism campaign must be decisively rejected. The millions in Germany and around the world, including many Jewish workers and young people, who are horrified by the murderous wars pursued by Israel and its imperialist backers and protest against this, are not anti-Semites.

The danger of anti-Semitism emerges from the ruling class, which as in the 1930s is building up far-right and fascist forces in order to save the capitalist system and impose its reactionary policies at home and abroad in the face of mounting popular opposition. Today, as in the past, the struggle against war, fascism, and anti-Semitism requires the independent political mobilisation of the working class on the basis of an international socialist programme.



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