Who is responsible for the far-right murder in Idar-Oberstein, Germany?

Johannes Stern
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Even a week after the murder in Idar-Oberstein, people are shocked and in deep mourning over the horrific act. There are many candles and flowers in front of the gas station where 20-year-old student and cashier Alexander W. was shot in cold blood last Saturday night.

There is no doubt that it was an act of right-wing extremist terrorism. The perpetrator, 49-year-old Mario N., comes from the far-right extremist milieu of coronavirus deniers, which vehemently rejects all measures to curb the pandemic. He shot Alexander W. point-blank in the head after the latter had asked him to wear a mask at the gas station two hours earlier.

After his arrest, Mario N. justified the act as a fight against COVID-19 mitigation policies. As to the motive, senior prosecutor Kai Fuhrmann stated the situation "put a lot of stress on him [Mario N.]." He had felt pushed into a corner and "saw no other way out" than to set an example. In the eyes of Mario N., the man he killed was "responsible for the overall situation, since he enforced the rules," Fuhrmann said.

Mario N. also made no secret of his right-wing extremist sentiments in social media. A Twitter account attributed to him follows, among others, Alternative for Germany (AfD) right-wingers Björn Höcke and Beatrix Storch, right-wing media such as Tichy's Einblick and former head of the Secret Service and notorious right-wing extremist Hans-Georg Maassen.

There is much to suggest that Mario N. is part of the extensive far-right terrorist structures that reach deep into the army, police and intelligence services, maintain death lists with several thousand targets and who are planning a right-wing coup. In addition to the murder weapon—a large-calibre Smith & Wesson revolver—other illegal weapons and ammunition were seized in Mario N.'s apartment.

Mario N. gave free rein to his right-wing extremist fantasies of violence and terror even before the coronavirus pandemic began. In early 2019, he tweeted, "Looking forward to the next war. Yes, this may sound destructive now, but we can't get out of this spiral."

When asked by another user if he was a soldier in the Bundeswehr, Mario N. replied, "No, not anymore, but there are always ways to be found." Then he threatened, "My muscles are tense, my mind sharpened. Mercy to those who have brought about this situation. Or, no, mercy would be wrong."

Similar to previous far-right terrorist attacks, leading politicians feign horror, wash their hands of the matter and point to the responsibility of the AfD and its entourage.

They express shock at, in the words Green Party candidate for chancellor Annalena Baerbock wrote on Twitter, "the terrible murder of a young man who only asked to follow the rules in place, to be prudent and show solidarity." "The radicalization of the coronavirus deniers milieu" was causing her "great concern," she said.

Social Democratic Party (SPD) candidate for chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote on Twitter that his thoughts were with the relatives of the murder victim. Now, he said, "as a society, we must resolutely oppose hatred."

Armin Laschet, the Christian Democrat (CDU/CSU) candidate for chancellor, called during an election campaign appearance in Fulda for the perpetrator to be "severely punished."

Ute Vogt, the domestic policy spokeswoman for the SPD parliamentary group, said the AfD had "made a significant contribution to the enormous rise in hatred and incitement on the streets and in social media since it entered the German Bundestag [federal parliament]." The party had "quickly recognized the potential and used the 'anti-vax' scene for its own benefit."

Domestic politicians from the Left Party, the Greens, the CDU/CSU and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) expressed similar sentiments.

The AfD was "the supreme agent of political radicalization in Germany," the domestic policy spokesman for the FDP parliamentary group, Konstantin Kuhle, told *RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland* (RND). "By spreading their confused accusations of dictatorship during the coronavirus pandemic," right-wing extremists "bear a share

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of the responsibility for the radicalization of certain population groups, including the perpetrator from Idar-Oberstein."

All these expressions of sympathy and accusations of guilt cannot hide the fact that the responsibility for right-wing terror lies not only with the AfD and other far-right groups, but with the ruling class as a whole. It has systematically created the ideological climate and the political conditions for right-wing extremist terrorist acts like the one in Idar-Oberstein. And it has done so in several respects.

First, there are the murderous COVID-19 policies. Throughout the course of the pandemic, all governing parties, from the CDU/CSU to the Left Party, have placed the profits of business above the lives of the population and rejected consistent measures to eradicate the virus. With the recent softening of coronavirus protections, the ruling class is openly following the line of the AfD, which has long called for an end to all measures and a "return to normalcy."

The "profits before lives" policy, which has cost more than 93,000 lives in Germany alone, has been accompanied from the outset by a campaign by politicians and the media that has fascist overtones and uses the arguments of coronavirus deniers.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it was Health Minister Jens Spahn (CDU) who dismissed COVID-19 as ordinary flu and opposed mandatory mask wearing.

When it came to ending the first lockdown in spring 2020, Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) declared—to the applause of AfD honorary chairman Alexander Gauland—that the right to life was not "absolutely" protected by the Constitution. Since then, politicians of all parties regularly denounce life-saving coronavirus protection measures up to vaccinations as an attack on "freedom rights."

In order to push through the reopening policy and intimidate the broad opposition to it, representatives of all parties in the Bundestag have repeatedly supported the far-right coronavirus deniers' demonstrations.

Significantly, just two days after the murder of Alexander W., the CDU published an election ad calling for talking "precisely to those" who "have a critical attitude," meaning the right-wing extremists.

The CDU video features a certain Thomas Brauner, who is one of the best-known representatives of the far-right and violent coronavirus deniers milieu. At the end of April, Brauner, together with other co-thinkers, harassed a camera team of the *Welt* TV station in Berlin's government district so intensely that the reporters had to interrupt their work.

Criticism of Laschet and the CDU by the SPD, the Left Party and the Greens is pure hypocrisy. Representatives from their ranks have also repeatedly declared that coronavirus deniers should not be excluded. Like the Greens parliamentary group leader in the Saxony state parliament, Franziska Schubert, or the Left Party's parliamentary group vice-chairman in the Bundestag, Andrej Hunko, they have even taken part in their demonstrations.

After the first far-right coronavirus deniers' demonstration in Berlin on August 1, 2020, the top candidate of the Left Party in the federal elections, Dietmar Bartsch, demanded, almost in the same words as Laschet and the CDU, that one must engage with the participants. "Labelling them and marginalizing them doesn't help," Bartsch told Deutschlandfunk radio at the time. "There are also right-wing extremists there and really also lunatics, but also many people who, yes, participated there out of displeasure."

How directly the Left Party in particular is also responsible for the rise of the extreme right is particularly evident in Thuringia. There, the "left-wing" Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow is currently protecting the AfD-backed CDU candidate Hans-Georg Maassen. He condemned a call by the Campact association to prevent Maassen from running by presenting a joint opposing candidate as an inadmissible interference in "a free election."

Ramelow's defence of the figurehead of the extreme right comes as no surprise. Particularly in Thuringia, where Maassen is running with AfD support, the SPD-Left Party-Green state government cooperates with fascists in the state parliament committees and hoists them into important offices. Last February, Ramelow used his own vote to help AfD man Michael Kaufmann into the vice presidency in the Thuringian state parliament.

The murder in Idar-Oberstein is a warning. It is the result of the policy of the entire ruling class, which, as in the 1930s, is reacting to the deep crisis of capitalism by deliberately strengthening far-right and fascist forces.

The SGP is the only party that opposes the policies of stepping up the powers of the state at home and abroad, social inequality and the "profits before lives" policies that breed right-wing terror, and seeks to arm the growing opposition to them with a socialist programme. Read and share our election statement, vote SGP on September 26 and become a member.

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