

Pro-Israel demonstration in Berlin: The powers-that-be keep to themselves

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Lies and hypocrisy are part of the business of bourgeois politics. But there is a limit beyond which they become intolerable. This limit was reached with the rally “Never again is now. Germany stands up,” which took place last Sunday in Berlin, and clearly crossed that line.

It was the second rally in front of the Brandenburg Gate, in which top representatives of the state, the establishment parties and the churches, as well as cultural figures, took part to justify the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza under the mendacious guise of the “fight against antisemitism.”

The demonstration was organised by Berlin property entrepreneur Nicolai Schwarzer, with Bundestag (parliament) President Bärbel Bas acting as patron. The “partners” included Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank, the Mercedes Group, Bosch, Bayer and BASF, the German Football Association, the Protestant Church, the Catholic bishops, the Rotary Club, and various memorial sites.

On October 22, Head of State Frank-Walter Steinmeier had given the keynote speech; this time, Bundestag President Bas, the second-highest representative of the state in terms of protocol, took on this task. Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for participation. All three are members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Other prominent speakers included the Mayor of Berlin Kai Wegner (Christian Democrat, CDU), Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor, President of the Central Council of Jews Josef Schuster and the singers Roland Kaiser and Herbert Grönemeyer. The Left Party also called for participation in the rally, and Green Party leader Ricarda Lang and Federal Labour Minister Hubertus Heil (SPD) marched in the front row.

All these parties are up to their necks in Israeli war crimes, which even the conformist German media can no longer conceal.

Since the Hamas uprising on October 7, the Israeli army

has killed well over 20,000 Palestinians, the vast majority of them women and children. It has dropped tens of thousands of bombs on a densely populated area smaller than Berlin, destroyed almost all the hospitals and most of the houses and infrastructure and driven the majority of the 2.3 million inhabitants into a small area in the south, where they have neither a roof over their heads, food nor medical care. Even UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned that the entire population is threatened by mass starvation, dehydration and rampant disease.

In the West Bank, the Israeli government has let fascist settler gangs off the leash, who are terrorising the Palestinian population with impunity with the support of the army. Since October 7, 275 Palestinians, including 63 children, have been murdered and 3,365 injured there.

The German government supports this genocide with the false justification that Israel is exercising its “right to self-defence.” It supplies Israel with weapons, opposes the international demand for a ceasefire and persecutes all those in Germany who protest against it with demonstration bans, police harassment and arrests. Sunday’s demonstration served to support this reactionary policy.

The accusation of “antisemitism” has long since turned into a club used to beat every progressive and anti-imperialist movement. While real antisemites, such as those of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), are protected by the German state and welcomed with open arms by the Israeli government, critics of the Netanyahu government—which includes avowed racists and fascists—are considered antisemites.

The Holocaust is completely detached from its historical and social context and attributed to an ahistorical antisemitism, which today obliges people to support the crimes of the Israeli regime without criticism. However, Hitler’s antisemitism, which he had copied from

bourgeois politicians such as the Christian-Social Adolf Stoecker and the mayor of Vienna Karl Lueger, was primarily directed against the socialist labour movement. It served to incite the petty-bourgeois classes and reached its murderous climax during the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union.

Sunday's demonstration was characterised by this propaganda. Federal Labour Minister Hubertus Heil (SPD) declared that the mass murder of the Shoah against the European Jews must never be repeated. Israel had the right to defend itself and Germany stood by Israel's side.

The chairman of the Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, said that the situation of the Jewish communities in Germany was dramatic "in view of the antisemitic uproar on German streets." By "antisemitic uproar" he obviously meant the numerous pro-Palestinian demonstrations, in which over 10,000 people in Germany and hundreds of thousands internationally, including many Jews, are taking part and which, despite police harassment, are almost always peaceful.

Even the official motto of Sunday's demonstration, "Never again is now," is based on a historical falsification. The Hamas uprising, a reaction to 75 years of expulsions and oppression that turned the Gaza Strip into a huge prison and became worse and worse under the Netanyahu regime, cannot be equated with the Holocaust—the extermination of 6 million defenceless Jews by an imperialist state armed to the teeth.

The second part of the slogan, "Germany stands up," comes directly from the right-wing extremists. Jens-Christian Wagner, director of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation, two former Nazi concentration camps, therefore refused to take part in the demonstration.

In a personal statement, he explained that "for years, *Querdenker* [similar to Q Anon] and extreme right-wingers, including those from the AfD, have been spreading antisemitic conspiracy legends, historical revisionism and anti-democratic agitation" under this motto. "You don't fight antisemitism by adopting the slogans of antisemites."

Wagner goes on to write that the slogan "Germany stands up" implies "a reading according to which Germany (by whomever) is oppressed and bent over and should now stand up again. Actually, the slogan can only be read as nationalistic. That is why it is also used by the groups mentioned above for their antisemitic propaganda."

And therefore—one must add, even if Wagner himself

does not draw this conclusion—it also served as the motto of the rally. The German government is not supporting the genocide in Gaza because it is concerned about the fate of Israeli Jews, but because, like the US, it is pursuing its own national, imperialist interests in the energy-rich and strategically important Middle East, relying on Israel as a military bridgehead. The suppression of Palestinian resistance serves to take action against Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran and other opponents in the region and to push back the influence of Russia and China.

In view of the growing outrage at Israel's actions, the organisers of the demonstration obviously felt that they were on shaky ground. Both the appeal for the gathering and many of the speakers emphasised that the rally was not only directed against antisemitism and hatred of Jews, but also against all forms of racism and xenophobia. It advocated "peaceful and respectful coexistence." The Muslim Alhambra Society was also invited to a joint interdenominational prayer that opened the rally.

But these are cynical excuses. The parties that organised the rally stir up xenophobia on a daily basis, tighten asylum and deportation laws, persecute Muslim immigrants, censor artists and close cultural institutions such as Berlin's Oyouun that offer them a platform. They are pumping tens of billions into military armaments and the war against Russia in Ukraine.

At the same time, they are increasingly isolated. According to the police, only 3,000 people turned out for Sunday's event, despite prominent support and generous funding from banks and corporations. The powers-that-be kept to themselves. At the government demonstration in October, the police had counted 10,000 participants.



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