

German politicians and media promoted the ideology on display in Charlottesville

By Johannes Stern
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German politicians and media outlets have responded to the right-wing extremist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, with sanctimonious denunciations. They have criticized the response of US President Donald Trump, who defended the fascist mob and whose right-wing advisers in the White House encouraged and incited the violence. But they completely ignore their own responsibility for the rise of the extreme right.

“Trump’s half-hearted manoeuvring after the outbreak of right-wing extremist violence is fatal,” stated Justice Minister Heiko Maas (Social Democrats, SPD) on Monday in Berlin. “All democrats should find clear words to oppose racism. Anyone not taking a clear stance must accept that they are encouraging neo-Nazis,” he added.

Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democrats, CDU) expressed her sympathy with the victims. Government spokesman Steffen Seibert said that Merkel was very sad to hear of the death of a young woman at the hands of right-wing extremists this weekend. He referred to “absolutely repugnant scenes” at the march. “There was an explicit display of racism in its most despicable form, anti-Semitism, hatred. And it is repulsive regardless of where such images and slogans take place.”

German newspapers detailed the connections between Trump, the White House and right-wing extremist circles who were behind the Charlottesville march. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote of the “dark ties” between Trump, his chief political adviser Stephen Bannon and the far-right news outlet *Breitbart News*.

Spiegel Online cited the response of the neo-Nazi *Daily Stormer* to Trump’s “underwhelming message.” “He didn’t attack us,” enthused the fascist propaganda site. “Really, really good. God bless him.” It added, “We are now at war. And we will not retreat.”

Do Merkel, Maas and the bourgeois media think they can play the population of Germany and the world, which

is deeply shocked by the Charlottesville events, for fools? The truth is that the same politicians and newspapers raging over “Trump’s despicable calculation” (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) are jointly responsible for the ability of right-wing extremist and fascist forces to raise their heads and act with increased aggression in Germany and Europe.

Hardly a day goes by in the ongoing federal election campaign in which leading politicians and media outlets are not agitating in the style of the far-right Alternative for Germany against refugees, promoting nationalism, and appealing to the fascistic dregs of society to enforce their policies of militarism, the strengthening of the state apparatus, and social cuts. The SPD and its Chancellor candidate Martin Schulz in particular are waging their election campaign on this basis.

Maas, a Social Democrat, who now feigns outrage, called following the protests in Hamburg against the G20 for a European database of left-wing extremists and a “rock against the left” concert. Obviously encouraged by this, right-wing extremists organised a festival in mid-July in Thuringia, “Rock against foreigners,” which turned into one of the largest neo-Nazi events in Europe during the past decade. Under the protection of the police and the SPD-Left Party-Green state government, the right-wing extremists committed crimes, performed the Nazi salute by the hundreds, as was done in Charlottesville, and chanted “Sieg Heil!”

Such examples of fascist violence, which is tolerated by the police, and right-wing extremist terrorism have increased significantly in Germany over recent years.

One example was a January 2016 attack by hundreds of organised right-wing extremists on Connewitz, a left-wing district of Leipzig, where they destroyed more than 20 businesses, bars, and a Turkish restaurant. The fascist rampage, which strongly resembled the events in Charlottesville, developed out of a demonstration by

Legida, the Leipzig branch of the Pegida right-wing extremist movement. Politicians and the media whipped up the racially charged atmosphere prior to the attack. At the beginning of 2016, politicians from all parties represented in parliament spoke out in favour of dialogue with Pegida supporters.

According to official government statistics, 75 people fell victim to right-wing extremist violence between 1990 and 2015. In many cases, the police and government denied the right-wing background of these fatalities for years. Only when it became public that the National Socialist Underground murdered nine immigrants and a police officer between 2000 and 2006 alone did the federal government order a review of unexplained deaths for cases involving a right-wing extremist motive.

The Amadeu Antonio Foundation, which has a strong focus on right-wing extremist violence, identified a much higher figure. According to their sources, right-wing extremist groups killed 178 people between 1990 and July 2015. In addition, there were 11 suspected cases.

The state was directly implicated in some of these deaths. It is now known that two-dozen agents from the intelligence services and police were active in immediate proximity to the NSU. One was even present during the 2006 murder of Halit Yozgat in an Internet cafe in Kassel.

The defence of the right-wing extremist Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski shows very clearly how Germany's ruling class bears joint responsibility for the rise of the far right on both sides of the Atlantic. The Humboldt professor is glorified by the same right-wing extremist forces in the US responsible for the fascist violence in Charlottesville. *Breitbart News* and the *Daily Stormer* have over recent years both enthusiastically welcomed Baberowski's agitation against refugees, calls for militarism, and downplaying of the crimes of the Nazis.

A December 2015 article on *Breitbart News* stated, for example, that the "highly respected" professor was warning of the vanishing of Germany as we know it. *Breitbart* cited approvingly several paragraphs from an interview Baberowski gave to the Huffington Post. "Germany will no longer be able to avoid engaging in wars and conflicts. And Germany as we know it will disappear due to mass immigration," he declared.

At about the same time, Andrew Anglin, the publisher of the *Daily Stormer*, declared his support for Baberowski. He cited his racist attacks on the German government's refugee policy: "It wasn't wise to take selfies with refugees that were shared around the world,

and it also wasn't wise to declare to the world that anybody could come to Germany because we cannot have an upper limit." The website also published a picture of Baberowski.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) and its youth organisation, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, were alone in publicly drawing attention to his right-wing extremist connections and firmly condemning his downplaying of the Nazis' crimes. Several student representative bodies joined in with the criticism. Baberowski is, among other things, a supporter of Ernst Nolte, the most well known Nazi apologist among post-war historians. "Nolte was done an injustice. Historically speaking, he was right," he stated in *Der Spiegel* in early 2014. In the same article, Baberowski asserted, "Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not vicious. He did not want to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table."

The consequences of this historical falsification and its defence by broad sections of the ruling elite are now becoming clear following the events in Charlottesville. The Social Democratic president of Humboldt University and many media outlets defended Baberowski, and waged a hysterical campaign against the SGP and IYSSE because of their criticisms of the right-wing radical professor.

But truth is stronger than any censor. Baberowski is known among workers and students as a right-wing extremist. And the sanctimonious outrage from German politicians and media outlets following the shocking events in Charlottesville cannot conceal the fact that they bear joint responsibility for the rehabilitation of right-wing extremist ideology and its violent consequences.

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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