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The Far Left Vs. Germany

What happens when left-wing extremists run riot in Germany's second-largest city?

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When Chancellor Angela Merkel chose Hamburg as the location of the German-hosted G-20 summit, it was meant to show off the culture and coolness of Germany's second-largest city.

Instead, Germany ended up broadcasting “an orgy of violence”—as the German press dubbed it—to the world.

The 20,000 police who had descended on the city lost control. Foreign leaders—including the wife of the American president—had to be shut in their rooms while the mob raged nearby. They looted stores, burned cars, and attacked police with rocks, bottles and fireworks. Nearly 500 police officers were injured. The mob caused millions of dollars' worth of property damage.

One police spokesman called it a “new dimension” of violence. Justice Minister Heiko Maas said that “Germany has reached a historic high point in terms of politically motivated violence.”

Many Germans were furious. *Tagesspiegel* wrote that “the pictures of helpless police who could not secure state order and protection of property are a political catastrophe.”

The police even resorted to the constitutionally questionable step of receiving support from the Army. The constitution bans the Army from deploying on Germany's streets—they skirted close to this having the Army resupply the police using armored military vehicles.

The government has promised federal aid to help the city rebuild, and has called for European Union help in combating far-left extremism.

Of course, not all the protesters were violent. Police estimate that around 20,000 demonstrated and around 1,500 rioted. But even the “peaceful” ones called their first official march “Welcome to Hell”—hardly an invitation to a restrained exercise of the right to peaceful protest.

Who were these far-left agitators?

The Hamburg protests shine a light on Germany's dangerous far-left movements. The nation certainly has its own history of far-left violence—going back to militant groups such as the Red Army Faction during the Cold War. Hamburg has long been a hub for this home-grown extremism. At the same time, it is also part of a growing, global, far-left movement.

Germany's Far Left

As Douglas Murray pointed out on his *Spectator* blog, imagine if all this violence had been the work of far-right militia. “Would

it not attract attention?" he wrote. "Would it not also, quite rightly, lead to major opinion pieces and much opining elsewhere about the far right being 'on the march'? Would it not be treated as something more than just weather by the bbc and other news organizations?"

It would, quite rightly, be treated as a serious and ominous development. But because it has the label of "left" it is being ignored outside of Germany.

The fact that tens of thousands—more than 100,000 by many counts—were willing to take part in such extreme protests in modern Germany shows a serious unhappiness with the current economic and political system.

The G-20 violence comes amidst an upsurge in far-right violence across the country. Germany's Interior Ministry recently concluded, "In the past few years, the acceptance and intensity of violence in the far-left scene has noticeably increased. This is especially true of violence against police and political enemies."

You can see this same unhappiness and extremism in the rise of the far-left Left Party—the successor to the old East German Communist Party. The Socialist Unity Party ran the infamous Stasi secret police and backed the Soviet Union—the empire that slips just behind Mao Zedong's China in the list of most murderous regimes of all time. In like manner, the Left Party wants to end nato and big businesses. It takes busts of Karl Marx on the campaign trail. After an interview with one of its leaders, even the Charlemagne columnist for the left-leaning *Economist* magazine wrote, "I found myself praying that these people never get anywhere near power."

No wonder some of its members—in Bavaria, the entire party—are under government surveillance over fears that it wants to overthrow the state.

The Left Party has been winning significant support in regional elections—even joining the government state coalition in Thuringia after receiving nearly 30 percent of the vote.

The extreme left is rising in Germany. The rise of the fringe-right Alternative for Deutschland certainly is concerning. But it is quite a ways behind the Left Party.

It's important to remember that "Nazi" stands for "National Socialist"—it was as much a left-wing movement as a right-wing one.

The Global Leftists Movement Reaches Germany

This fertile soil received significant support from abroad. German experts speculated that extremists converged on Germany from across Europe. And in Europe, too, far-left extremism is rising. Europol's latest terrorism report said there was a "sharp increase" in far-left attacks from 2015 to 2016.

Even after the initial violent protests, the movement received a boost on Saturday when New York Mayor Bill de Blasio addressed the crowd.

They received an even more high-profile support from Pope Francis. "The G-20 worries me; it hits migrants in countries in half of the world and it hits them even more as time goes by," he said in an interview published by *La Repubblica* on Saturday. He said he feared it could lead to a "very dangerous alliances among powers that have a distorted vision of the world."

While this global movement was received gladly by Germany's extremists, German politicians have been less receptive. "All alleged political motives for this orgy of violence are full of deceit and should just serve as a disguise for the real motive of the offenders that [came] from all parts of Europe: violence in itself," said German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, who is also the former leader of the main left-wing party.

In fact, perhaps only in Germany are politicians taking the outbreak of violence seriously enough. German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière told a press conference that those behind the riots were "despicable, violent extremists just like neo-Nazis and Islamist terrorists." Gabriel—again, a former leader of Germany's main *left*-wing party—correctly identified the violence as an attack "on the rule of law."

Meanwhile, the entire spectrum of the German press is outraged. Germany has a far-left extremism problem that indicates a far wider dissatisfaction with the status quo. But outside of those far-left extremists, there's very little tolerance for this kind of violence.

It's early days yet, but there's already a lot of talk on concrete actions in response. Politicians from both sides of the political spectrum are vying to outdo each other with their condemnation of the protesters and calls for action.

Gabriel and Justice Minister Maas have called for a Europe-wide response, where countries share a database on left-wing extremists. Maas also called for those who supported this violence to be put on trial. Maizière called on the courts to impose "tough sentences." Many others are calling for well-known centers that support this kind of extremism to be shut down and for significant changes to the way Germany polices and monitors these kinds of groups.

Contrast this to the United States' response to the same movement. When extremists rioted in Ferguson, no politicians

talked about an assault on the rule of law. Instead they gave rioters “space to destroy.”

The rise of radical extremism is a global problem. Across the world, populations are dissatisfied with the status quo. But thus far, Germany is unique in demanding a forceful response to the left-wing extremist manifestation of this dissatisfaction.

The Hamburg G-20 summit shone a light on some of the biggest trends the *Trumpet* is watching. We saw the rise of radical extremism, the pope’s role in encouraging an alternative to the current U.S.-led financial system, and Europe working to build that financial system, even as it announced the outlines of a new trade block with Japan that would rival the North American Free Trade Agreement in size.

Exactly how all these trends interact isn’t clear. Many Germans are clearly dissatisfied with their political system, yet at the same time abhor the violence exhibited by those protesters.

But what is clear is that Germany and the U.S. are on different paths. America is becoming a pariah to the world; Germany is hailed as its new leader. America is threatening to raise tariffs on exports, while Germany is one of the foremost *preachers* of free trade (what it actually practices is another matter). America’s politicians cave in to the radical left; Germany’s rally around the rule of law.

The radical left is weakening the U.S. But in Germany there is strength.

The *Trumpet* has warned, based on Bible prophecies, that America is in decline. The same prophecies foretell a German-led, European new order that will replace it.

The outlines of that new order became visible in Hamburg. ■

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