

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Extremist revival being orchestrated

Allegations of a German "Fourth Reich" and "neo-Nazism" stem from East-West covert operations.

Since mid-September, Germany has witnessed a tide of extremist attacks. Those on the left are attacking Germany in the same way that certain British elite publications, like *The Spectator*, or Serbian journals have done: The new Germany is allegedly a cradle of a new Nazism and a "Fourth Reich." And there are those on the right that supply the justification for these allegations, setting fire to refugee lodgings, painting swastikas on homes, and singing Nazi songs.

But the sudden explosion of these attacks, coupled with broad domestic and international media coverage, indicates that it is not the result of a generic trend in Germany. There is hostility to foreigners among many Germans, and racism can be observed, but there has been no violence against foreigners on a broad scale. For what it's worth, a FORSA opinion poll published in mid-October found 70% of the population in favor of tolerance, and only 16% intolerant. Why, then, this explosion of violence now?

In 1989, immediately after the fall of the communist regime in East Germany, a similar pattern of incidents occurred. Suddenly, the media were giving much coverage to the right-wing radical group Republikaner (REP), which popped up with provocative slogans against refugees seeking asylum and foreign workers. Incidents like these served as a pretext for the media to portray the future united Germany as a "brown" state reminiscent of the Nazi past.

This author witnessed one such orchestrated incident at a rally of more

than 200,000 in the east German city of Leipzig in January 1990. A television team of North German Radio was focusing on a small, provocationist group of REP youth chanting right-wing slogans about a Germany that should be reserved for the Germans. Protests from passers-by—this author included—against this interplay between NDR and REP provocateurs, were defamed as "authoritarian" by others who apparently were playing a role in orchestrating the scene.

At the same time, the SED, the former ruling party of East Germany that had hurriedly renamed itself the Party of Democratic Socialism, was launching a black propaganda campaign against unification. A chain of strange incidents involving the anonymous painting of swastikas on Soviet Army installations suddenly emerged, and PDS propagandists, like party chairman Gregor Gysi, were quick to denounce these incidents as fresh evidence of their warning "Against Reunification and the Brown Plague!" that could be read on thousands of posters in Berlin and other cities from 1989 to 1990.

The black propaganda suffered a severe blow, however, when it was revealed that Hans-Rudolf Gutbrodt, self-proclaimed leader of the REP party group in the east German city of Parchim, had worked for years as an informant for the Stasi, the communist secret service. A local police officer assured the media that Gutbrodt had been and still was an "unofficial collaborator of the Stasi"—an outside operative on a Stasi payroll.

Revelations that many of the youths in the new right-wing groups had an SED/Stasi family background, and that some leaders of the former SED youth organization had become leaders of right-wing groups in east Germany, contributed to a sudden decline in the media's and PDS's allegations on the rise of "neo-Nazism." By early February, opinion polls among the east German population cited the widespread belief that "the Stasi is behind all these things to smear those that are for unification."

Despite the propaganda, the PDS remains a tiny group with less than 5% of the vote nationwide. But Stasi specialists in disinformation have remained active in the political underground, even building two front organizations (ODOM and ISOR) to fight for the interests of members of the armed units of the abolished east German regime. One may assume that a good deal of the right-wing extremist incidents these days were set up by these same hands.

Other groups are involved. Recruitment activities of the U.S. Ku Klux Klan and its sister organizations in Canada are known. Dennis W. Mahon, a KKK organizer from Texas, was paraded on German media in mid-October as engaged in efforts to build a KKK branch based on "Germanic heritage . . . from the Teutonic Knights to the Waffen SS," as he told an RTL Plus television team.

There are also the activities of a German-Canadian, Ernst Zuendel, which are on the police record, who is trying to build a neo-Nazi organization in the tradition of Hitler's "Munich movement." Zuendel, known for anti-Semitic provocations in KKK-related activities in Canada and Mexico, was arrested in Munich in March, released on bail, and is facing trial. He is said to have very close ties to British and U.S. secret intelligence circles.