

## NEW PARTY IN GERMANY

# The AfD Party: Old Wine In New Bottles?

## PART THREE

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June 3—There is no doubt about it: The majority of the population in Germany feels abandoned, and has the overwhelming impression that the political ruling class is motivated by anything but the pursuit of the general welfare. The decisions of the heartless bureaucrats in Brussels are certainly not transparent. But what people do see is that the living standards of many have been sinking for about a quarter of a century; that medical care is getting worse; and that if you are among the unfortunate victims of Hartz 4, or are a member of some other such socially powerless group, often you cannot even afford the bare necessities, much less participate in the cultural life of society.

For years on end, there was allegedly no money for the poor or for affordable housing. But then, suddenly, billions of Euros, in the three digits, were made available to “rescue” the banks and speculators, and sums in the double-digit billions were suddenly found “in a coat pocket” for the refugees. “A pretty large coat pocket,” people grumble, among themselves. And then there is increasing anxiety over the growing threats—the growing danger of war, the danger of terrorism, lack of understanding of the cultures of immigrants, fear of poverty in old age—the list of problems seen as existential keeps getting longer.

That general feeling of “getting a raw deal,” all sorts of resentments, and the outrage of angry citizens are precisely what the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) party, the various Pegida offshoots, and the New Right feed upon. This is not just a spontaneous reflex; behind it lies a specific method. Peter Sloterdijk, with whom



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*Alternative für Deutschland “party philosopher” Marc Jongen’s guiding light Peter Sloterdijk has written a world history of rage.*

the AfD’s “party philosopher” Marc Jongen collaborated for years as an assistant at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, has even written a world history of rage.

### **Rage as Driver of History?**

In a 2006 book, published in English translation in 2010, titled *Rage and Time*, Sloterdijk presents the thesis that rage is one of the driving forces of history. He constructs a theory of history according to which—starting with Greek mythology and the first lines of Homer’s *Iliad*—rage is a god-like capability, something like a divinely ordained eruption of power, which is



According to Jongen collaborator Peter Sloterdijk, rage is one of the driving forces of history, starting with Greek mythology. This image from Greek mythology shows Achilles killing Penthesileia. She was helping to defend Troy.

manifested in the form of *thymos*, and is later presented by Plato as one of the three pillars of the human psyche, between reason and passion. Sloterdijk then traces his perspective on history from ancient Greece to the vengeful God of the Judaic world, to the teachings of the Church fathers of the Middle Ages, up to the communist “world bank of rage.” The ultimate demand of his book is for the release of “thymotic energy,” as if the world hadn’t had to endure an overdose of it with the radicalized extremist movements of the Twentieth Century and experienced the historical consequences such negative energy can cause.

If Sloterdijk’s bestial image of man were correct, then a human being would be nothing more than an aggressive watchdog that becomes the more effective, the more it is incited and provoked. If rage and resentment were a principal driving force in the history of mankind, then in all likelihood, we would have bashed each other to death in a very early era, possibly in the era of hunting and gathering, when we ate rabbits and berries, and rage over a missed meal would have been vented on our neighbors. Mankind would never have risen mentally above the infantile state in which a spoiled brat kicks his younger brother in the shins to get the toy blocks.

If Friedrich Schiller assumed that Kant must have had a very unhappy childhood to come up with such unfree thoughts as the Categorical Imperative, how absolutely miserable and terrible must the childhood of this misanthrope Sloterdijk have been! Of course, for Sloterdijk, who believes man is only the “king of the domesticated animals,” everything that differentiates mankind from the other forms of life is closed off and unreachable—his creativity, his humanity, his receptivity to beauty, his ability to produce great creations of Classical art, his unlimited talent for discovering ever deeper the laws of the physical universe.

No, Sloterdijk’s world is no less ugly than the radical biological determinism of a Björn Höcke: In 2010, Sloterdijk spoke of the “fertility in misery” of the Arabs, who used their reproduction rate as a “demographic weapon” against Europe.

Sloterdijk’s longstanding assistant Marc Jongen—the current speaker of the AfD in Baden Württemberg and a member of the AfD’s national program committee—has adopted several of his ideas, among them his ideology of the history-making function of rage. He says the

German population is suffering from a “thymotic deficit,” and touts the AfD as the only party which not only addresses the rage and anger in the population, but knows how to spur it on. He calls that “raising the thymos tension”—in other words, riling up the rage in the population. Only in this way, Jongen explains, can we bring people to oppose the “threat” of “mass migration.” No wonder that the star of the Pegida demonstration praises Jongen as the “great hope of the movement.”

Inciting enraged citizens in this way—inflaming them—is playing with fire. It is the method of demagogues who take up real grievances, only to respond with plausible but catchword-like—and therefore false—arguments. Take an example from Jongen: “Of the hundreds of millions of needy people in the world, we can only bring a very small, nearly infinitesimal percent to Europe. The idea that we in Europe could be responsible for justice in the world as a whole, is an expression of gigantic hubris.” The implication of this statement is that because it is a nearly infinitesimal percentage, it makes no significant difference whether we refuse these people (otherwise described as a “mass immigration”) entrance into Europe, never mind what happens to them.



painting by Jean Duplessis-Bertaux in 1793

*Storming of the royal Tuileries Palace on Aug. 10, 1793, led to the fall of the French monarchy.*

### Or Else, the Paradigm of Love

The crux of the matter is this: That this kind of thinking implies that the neoliberal financial dogma which the AfD fully supports—as they recently demonstrated with their trading in gold—is a permanent feature of the world. But in reality, this trans-Atlantic financial system is on the verge of disintegration, and can only be superseded by a complete reorganization of the system, the introduction of a global Glass-Steagall system of banking separation, and the reconstruction of the world economy through the expansion of the New Silk Road. The AfD has no competence in any of these matters. Jongen criticizes the clear lack of “thymotic virtues,” once called the “manly virtues,” especially in the approach to all things military. These, he says, are at best tolerated as a necessary evil. Jongen concludes: “I have the feeling that our political elite has since 1968 forgotten the very elementary lessons of foreign policy and geopolitics.”

The “elementary lessons of geopolitics” are currently being carried out in NATO exercises in Poland, the Baltics states, and Romania, and by U.S. forces in the South China Sea. It is that geostrategy, a remnant from the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, which brought us two World Wars, and has now brought us to the edge of obliterating humanity in a third—this time a global and

thermonuclear world war—which represents the greatest obstacle to the continued existence of the human race.

The only way to overcome all of these existential threats—threats that the AfD wants to exploit for its own ends—lies in overcoming geopolitics and geopolitical strategy once and for all, and establishing a totally new paradigm organized around the common aims of mankind. If we are not able to reach the higher level of reason, the level on which the common interests of a universal humanity are

achieved, we will not fare any better than the dinosaurs, whose bodies were impressive, but whose brains were relatively tiny. In any case, the solution to these problems does not lie on the level of poor watchdogs and poor Sloterdijks.

Friedrich Schiller’s answer to the Jacobin terror of the French Revolution, an example of a rebellion of enraged citizens par excellence—about which he said that a great historical moment had found a little people—was his *Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man*. In them he stressed that from then on, improvements in the political realm could only be achieved through the ennoblement of the individual—and that meant, above all, educating the emotions up to the level of reason. Gotthold Lessing argued, in a wonderful analysis of the artistic method, with reference to the famous sculpture of Laocoön and His Sons, that the artist can not present pure emotion—in this case, agony—without aesthetic ennoblement, if he is to meet the requirements of Classical art. Rage and anger, as well as hate and envy, belong to the lowest level of human emotions.

If we are to overcome the enormous challenges with which we are confronted today, we can only do so with love,—love for mankind, and love for our own humanity.

*This article has been translated from German.*