Report on the Chemnitz Pogrom

First-hand report by a German activist

Maybe you‘ve heard of it, maybe not. This is a brief report on recent happenings in Chemnitz / Saxonia.

Chemnitz is a former industrial city of about 250.000 citizens situated in Saxony. This German state is known for its pretty right-wing state apparatuses and a strong fascist street movement (Pegida). Chemnitz, too, has a strong fascist movement and for some time it even was home to the Neonazi terror group, National-Socialist Underground‘ (NSU), known for having executed nine immigrants and a police officer.

There is, however, also a left-wing, antifa and anarchist scene in Chemnitz with two housing projects, an autonomous youth center, a feminist group, a local group of the anarchist union FAU and antifascist activists.

In the night of Saturday to Sunday, August 25th/26th, two groups of men got into trouble during the Chemnitz city festival. An Iraqi and a Syrian national reportedly stabbed two Russian Germans and a Cuban German, the latter, Daniel H., dying as a result of his injuries.

On Sunday morning, when the public learned of the killing, the right-wing footbal hooligan group Kaotic Chemnitz called on facebook for a protest in the streets. In the evening about 1000 right-wing hooligans, fascists, and so-called ‚concerned citizens‘ gathered and started to march through Chemnitz. Police was not able to control them at all. At some point the mob started chasing and beating up immirants.

A local fascist fringe party, Pro Chemnitz, that also has deputees in the city council, called for a march on the following day. Now antifascists from Chemnitz and neighbouring cities such as Dresden, Leipzig, Jena, Erfurt and others

started to mobilise, too. On Monday evening 1000 antifascists of all stripes faced a mixture of 8000 hooligans, fascists and right-wing citizens. Police deployed only 600 officers and, hence, was not able to control the fascists. Durig and after their march several street fighting squads left the fascist rally aiming to attack the antifascists. On the way from the antifascist rally to the train station, to their cars or back home several antifascists were attacked. They got off lightly, though. Only one remained with a broken nose.

Monday was a wake-up call, not only for the radical movement but for the public, too. It was clear that something had to be done. On Thursday, Saxony‘s Minister-President Kretschmer was to join a citizens‘ dialogue in Chemnitz and fascists would organise a counter-rally and on Saturday there would be two marches, organised by Pro Chemnitz and AfD. At the end, it was agreed to call for an antifascist rally to be held in Chemnitz on Saturday.

On Monday, about 900 right-wingers held a rally against Minister-President Kretschmer, the ‚lying press‘, the ‚political establishment‘ and so forth. No specific incidents.

On Saturday, fascists and antifascists from all over Germany went to Chemnitz. 4500 fascists and 3500 antifascists were reported. Pro Chemnitz held a first march and then joined the march that was organised by the AfD as a ‚silent march‘ allegedly to commemorate the victim of the stabbing. At some point, the march could be blocked by hundreds of antifascists. After that police kettled hundreds of antifascists, keeping them for hours and checking their ID‘s. At the same time, fascist groups started attacking counter-protesters again. Several people were injured.

In some West-German cities there were big antifascist rallies. In Hamburg up to 10.000 people took to the streets, in Berlin, too. That‘s nice but it doesn‘t change the situation on the ground. Still, it shows that it‘s not just fascists conquering

the streets but that we‘re witnessing some kind of polarisation.

On Monday, September 3rd, a concert ‚against the right‘ and ‚against hatred‘ and with the slogan ‚We‘re more‘ was organised in Chemnitz by different artists, some mainstream (like ‚Kraftklub‘, ‚Die Toten Hosen‘), others openly antifa (such as ‚Feine Sahne Fischfilet‘ and ‚Egotronic‘).

About 65.000 people reportedly attended the concert.

The concert didn‘t change the balance of forces on the streets, though. On Friday, September 7th, there was another march organised by Pro Chemnitz. 2000 fascists and about 1000 antifascists took to the streets. This time, no clashes were reported. As it seemts, things are calming down now.

Some notes from an anarchist perspective. On Monday, the second day of the pogrom, there were only 600 police and the fascists‘ march went totally out of control. That was not, as liberals and democrats assert, government failure. Everybody knew that thousands of fascists would flock to Chemnitz and that things would get extremely violent. It must have been a conscious decision by some higher echelons in the police and state apparatuses to deploy way too few police and, thus, let the situation escalate.

In the pogroms of the past years it‘s been the same, in Freital / Saxony in January 2015, in Heidenau /Saxony in August 2015 and in other places, too. It seems to be the strategy of a part of Saxony‘s (and Germany‘s) state apparatus to encourage and tolerate fascist street violence and terror – **as a means to combat leftists, to discipline the immigrant population, and to legitimise calls for the further buildup of the police and secret services.**

On Saturday, September 1st, we‘ve seen an alliance of fascists across political divisions: right-wing football hooligans, local fascists of Pro Chemnitz, national-socialists of Dritter

Weg, fascists of the party Die RECHTE, the Identitarian Movement, the right-wing populist movement Pegida, the right-wing populist party AfD. This marks a new stage in the history of the fascist movement since 2012. The fascists are growing ever stronger and the level of street violence is increasing.

Also on the antifascist side, somehow organically, **a unity front has been formed**, stretching from the social-democratic party SPD to autonomous antifas and anarchists. Thuringia‘s SPD, for example, sponsored busses to bring counter-protestors from Erfurt, Jena, and other cities to Chemnitz and almost all antifas, radical leftists and anarchists from those cities took those busses. There is a huge debate on how closely or if at all we should cooperate with politicians and authoritarian leftists and in the past years many of us categorically denied any cooperation. During the pogrom, however, the question was not even raised. This should give us reason for reflection.

Democratic politicans of all stripes (from the conservative CDU to the left-wing party) were quick to condemn the fascist street violence. What‘s their motive? Some of them were pretty clear about that. They‘re concerned that fascist violence might cheapen the image of Chemnitz, frighten off investors and enterpreneurs and endanger the integration of immigrants as a cheap and flexible workforce into the German economy. At the same time, there are only very few politicians to condemn state violence against immigrants, e.g. vexatious police controls or deportations, to the same extent. Furhermore, those ‚antifascists‘ felt compelled to distance themselves from left-wing and radical antifascists, lumping them together with the fascists as ‚extremists‘.

The objective of their antifascism, i.d. state antifascism, hence, is to maintain a certain equilibrium of forces in order to keep capitalist exploitation and the wielding of state authority going smoothly.

The AfD is the third strongest party in Germany. In the 2017

federal elections it won 12,5 per cent of the votes. In some states, such as Saxony, it won around 25 per cent, thus becoming the second strongest party. In Saxony, where state elections are going to be held in 2019, according to this election outcome, the only government possibly to be formed would be a coalition government of the conservative CDU and the fascist AfD. Their strategy, as laid out by AfD leader and right-wing intellectual Björn Höcke, is to transform the democratic system into an authoritarian regime. This is to be done by a national opposition made up by three fronts: the AfD as parliamentary force, the Neonazis as street movement, and, thirdly, disenchanted segments of the state apparatuses, i.d. cops, judges, state attorneys, military. This strategy is proving to be successful. The AfD is already the third strongest party.

The street violence scenes of Chemnitz showed the increasing strength of the fascist movement. And there are a lot of cops, military, judges and other state officials in the AfD or in touch with the AfD. To give just one example of these days. In the midst of the Chemnitz events a correctional officer leaked the arrest warrant of the suspected murderer of the Daniel H. to fascists who then published it. Before leaking it, he discussed the move with around a dozen colleagues in a WhatsApp group.

Fascism, however, is not an endeavour of the new right.

We should not forget that it‘s conservative, social-democratic, green, in some states such as Berlin and Thuringia even left-wing politicians who are organising today‘s deportation regime – not the AfD. During the Chemnitz pogrom it was the Saxon police, i.d. of a state led by a conservative-social democratic government, that gave free rein to fascists and attacked anti-fascists. After the Chemnitz pogrom it was Saxony‘s Minister-President of the CDU and the head of the German intelligence service, the ‚Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution‘, who doubted and even

denied that there was any mob violence against immigrants in Chemnitz – not the AfD. Even Sara Wagenknecht, a politican of Die Linke, not the AfD, who defended the right-wing mob by stating that not all protesters were fascists, that many of them were socially discontent citizens.

All in all, this is a sinister situation and many of us feel pretty concerned about the future.