

The Antifa Movement in Germany

by Alfred de Zayas

The Antifa movement in Germany is a modern-day SA (*Sturmabteilung*),¹ manifesting violent intolerance and complete disregard of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. What is most worrisome is that the German authorities – politicians, police, and civil service – essentially tolerate their open criminality and do not protect the public from their verbal abuse, intimidation, defamation, ripping up of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) political posters, burning of cars of university professors suspected of sympathizing with the “right,” Kristallnacht-style destruction of private property, physical violence against persons and other anti-democratic activities. They engage in “hate speech” against those who cite the Bible to oppose the imposition of gender and LGBT ideologies. History and political-science professors who do not agree with the Antifa agenda are defamed as fascists, Nazis, and Holocaust-deniers. Young professors and lecturers who disagree are similarly targeted, mobbed in class, and prevented from speaking. Some Antifa activists have paraded through German streets with signs reading “Harris, do it again,” referring to the 1945 bombing of Dresden by “Bomber Harris” of the Royal Air Force and asking him to obliterate Germans once again. This is pathological, an insult to tens of thousands of innocent persons who perished under the carpet-bombing of Dresden, but it is downplayed by the mainstream media (MSM).

Independent thinkers must endure insults and intimidation, in class and in the social media. The

aim is to crush academic freedom and impose a Gleichschaltung² in any academic research and publication. Whereas some issues like “gender,” “welcome culture,” “multiculturalism,” etc., are promoted, others, such as “identity,” are penalized. Academics are thus intimidated into silence. Self-censorship is the rule, not the exception. And even while keeping quiet and not speaking out against Antifa, an academic suspected of independent thinking may suffer career-death: no promotion, no tenure, no professorship. This is Orwellian dystopia, nothing else, including thought-police and the misuse of the judicial arm to penalize dissent.

A new wave of totalitarianism is sweeping through Germany with the collusion of the mainstream media, which does not hesitate to participate in the mobbing of honourable professors and the dissemination of vile Antifa disinformation and defamation. The MSM – including *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, *Die Welt*, *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* – seldom criticize Antifa and focus only on “excesses” by PEGIDA³ and other organizations that challenge the narrative about our wonderful new multicultural reality. They downplay the violence of Antifa activities and only focus on the “danger” of the “far right” (anything more conservative than Merkel is considered far right).

This abnormal situation finds its roots in the 1968 “student revolts” and the rejection of the “old values” of the generation that “applauded” Hitler. A black-and-white scenario was taught

in the schools and the objectivity of historical methodology was replaced by teleological history-writing. The guild of historians moved away from the admonition of Leopold von Ranke to write history *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (“as it actually was”) and embraced the Machiavellian approach of the end justifies the means. The fruit of this unscholarly and anti-democratic spirit was the *Historikerstreit*

(“dispute among historians”) of the 1980s, which destroyed the careers of Germany’s best remaining historians – including Andreas Hillgruber, Ernst Nolte and Immanuel Geiss. While they enjoyed the support of many respected historians, including the Director of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Professor Horst Möller, and other luminaries like Michael Stürmer, Michael Wolffsohn and Hagen Schulze, they were shouted down by the mob of “politically correct” young historians, “young Turks” and political scientists, including Jürgen Habermas. It was historical totalitarianism as in the days of the Soviet Union. Professors had to be protected by police so that they could give their classes. Once, when I lectured at the Freie Universität Berlin in 1989, Ernst Nolte’s automobile was burnt. What followed in the 1990s was the so-called *Wehrmachtausstellung*⁴ promoted by the Antifa – a political show against historical memory, a concerted effort to destroy memory, what the Romans called *damnatio memoriae*. All Wehrmacht officers and soldiers were criminals, and the population that lived through the period were also criminals. An artificial mood of rejection of all German history and values took hold of the mainstream media and the universities. This made it increasingly difficult for independent professors to publish objective research that was not in conformity with the “politically correct” narrative.

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In the 1970s, I was in Germany as a Fulbright Graduate Fellow, subsequently as *Wissenschaftlicher Assistent* (“scientific assistant”) at the Institute of International Law of the University of Göttingen, and matriculated in the history faculty of the University of Göttingen, where I obtained my PhD in history in 1977.

I directed the DFG⁵-funded project *Wehrmacht-Untersuchungsstelle*,⁶ and published two best-sellers, *Die Nemesis von Potsdam* (C.H.Beck, then dtv, then Ullstein, 14 editions; English version *Nemesis at Potsdam*, Routledge), and *Die Wehrmacht-Untersuchungsstelle* (Universitas/Langen Müller, then Ullstein), and worked as senior researcher at the Max Planck Institut für Völkerrecht (Institute of International Law) in Heidelberg, before going to the United Nations in Geneva in 1981.

I made two television documentary specials, one for the Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting Corporation), the other for the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (West German Broadcasting Corporation), both broadcast during prime time on Channel I, ARD (a consortium of public broadcasters in Germany). Both were well received. I used to write op-eds for *Die Welt* and *Die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), and my books were positively reviewed in print publications such as *Der Spiegel*, FAZ, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SDZ). I appeared on television programs such as *Monitor* and *Drehscheibe* and programs of the TV station Phoenix, among others.

But after the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s, I was “disinvited” from conferences to which I had been invited as keynote speaker. I received hate mail and threats. I decided that Germany had taken a turn toward totalitarianism. I have not accepted

any invitations to Germany for six years and am not likely to speak again in a country where my words will be taken out of context and where people seem to be just waiting for a “false note” to accuse me of whatever is the flavour of the month. I will not subject myself to the predictable mobbing and humiliation. Nor will I concoct a politically correct narrative to satisfy an audience that is no longer interested in truth, but only in entertainment and witch hunts. I will continue fighting for freedom of opinion, freedom of expression and that most important right – the right to our own ideas and perspectives. That is human dignity in practice.

References

1. *The Sturmabteilung (SA)*, was the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party during its rise to power. The *Saalschutzabteilung* (Meeting Hall Protection Detachment), which later became the *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Detachment), protected Nazi Party meetings from opponents and disrupted meetings of other political parties, frequently using intimidation and violence.
2. *Gleichschaltung* refers to the process of Nazification in which totalitarian control was established over all aspects of society, including the economy, trade associations, the media, culture and

education. Everything had to be in conformity with the Nazi Party ideology.

3. *PEGIDA* is the acronym for *Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West). This political movement was founded in 2014 in Dresden with the objective of curbing immigration and resisting the Islamization of society. The movement has also spread to other countries.

4. Literally translated as “Exhibition on the Wehrmacht.” “Wehrmacht” means “defence force,” encompassing the three branches of the armed forces of Nazi Germany: Army, Navy and Air Force. Today’s German military is known as “Bundeswehr” or “defence of the union.”

5. *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* or German Research Foundation, a research-funding organization.

6. The Board of Investigation of the Wehrmacht – which examined violations of international law by the Allied forces during the Second World War.

Alfred-Maurice de Zayas is an American lawyer, writer, historian, and leading expert in the field of human rights and international law and has held high-ranking positions in the United Nations. Since 2012, he has been the UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order. Alfred de Zayas lives in Geneva, Switzerland.

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