

Lessons from Weimar Germany for the Portland Extremists

Immediately following the conclusion of the First World War and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was thrust into a state of economic, political, and social disarray. The infantile German state, which had recently been established in 1871, struggled to maintain its reputation as a global superpower. Kaiser Wilhelm II chose to abdicate the throne, a weak constitutional republic was recognized in Weimar, and the [Dolchstoßlegende](#) (the “stab-in-the-back” myth) soon spread across the wounded nation. By the early 1920s, many of Germany’s emerging political parties – both right- and left-wing – had formed paramilitary groups to intimidate and violently suppress their political adversaries.

Though the history of the Weimar Republic is brief – it was dissolved in 1933 – it is instructive. The period is filled with violent episodes carried out by baton-wielding ideologues who were determined to beat and assassinate their way into political power. These paramilitary units, which were so prevalent in post-war Germany, were hardly consistent in membership. Many individuals viewed their service to a paramilitary group as an extension of their time in the military during World War I and sought a form of camaraderie they found lacking after the war. Other affiliates were nothing more than enraged ideologues who viewed violence as the most effective method to ensure the establishment of their utopian vision.

As early as 1918, the [Räterepublik Bayern](#) (Bavarian Soviet Republic) was temporarily established in the midst of the German Communist Revolution. Immediately following its pronouncement, street brawls broke out between Nationalist, Socialist, and Communist groups. These brawls were nothing more than well-organized mob brutality. Hundreds of moderate

and [liberal](#) politicians were murdered in the streets by both right- and left-wing extremists. Once nationalists began taking over the Reichstag, these assassinations were then typically blamed on rogue communists, rather than Nazi [Sturmabteilung](#).

A hyperinflationary crisis and the looming threat of a communist revolution, in large part, made this environment of violence possible. By the beginning of the 1930s, however, Hitler's National Socialist Party had come to power, banned all other political parties (including their paramilitary arms), and blindly set the country on a collision course for a Second World War. The rest, so it is commonly said, is history... and yet we see a strange pattern reemerging.

Street Violence and Antifa Rallies

"History may not repeat itself, but it does rhyme."

While there is no conclusive evidence that the American novelist Mark Twain ever uttered or wrote these words, they are often attributed to him. Recent stories coming out of Portland, which is often regarded as the country's mecca for progressive and peaceful individuals, sound more and more like a Dr. Seuss story every day as Twain's supposed theory rings true.

Viral [videos](#) of masked left-wing extremists, typically identifying under the collective banner of Antifa, have been surfacing on the internet for well over a year. [Andy Ngo](#), a prominent Portland journalist who was covering an Antifa rally, is just one of the latest victims of this widespread paramilitary street violence. The injuries sustained by Ngo – a brain hemorrhage, multiple contusions, and various other neurological complications – are still making headlines a month after the attack.

Despite a recent [proposal](#) from Republican Senators Ted Cruz (TX) and Bill Cassidy (LA) to classify Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization, not everyone is taking Antifa's violence seriously.

[Tae Phoenix](#), a musician and frequent op-ed contributor, scoffed at Cruz and Cassidy, claiming, "I've met golden retrievers who scared me more." Progressive blogger [Sarah Gailey](#) actually had the gall to propose *more* violence, even going as far as suggesting Antifa members should start using bricks. The violence in Portland, notwithstanding Phoenix and Gailey's comments, should bother everyone. Paramilitary street violence of this nature, whether it's carried out by left- or right-wing groups, is not a new or comical phenomenon. It is the result of deep-rooted ideological conflict and often indicative of impending political chaos.

Left-Wing Violence Begets a Reactionary Response

[Michael Malice](#) is correct when he asserts that "we live in a culture where everyone working for President Trump is brazenly referred to as a White Supremacist or a Nazi, even Jewish advisors like Jared Kushner" and that "there are very few people in Americans who are comfortable seeing their fellow citizens being assaulted."

Antifa members like to think they are fighting actual fascists, or at least tend to label anyone who identifies as ideologically right of a self-proclaimed communist as one. But what they fail to realize is that they are just a catalyst for the return of real fascists. The response to the extremist violence will not be met with adherence to left-wing ideology but rather reactionary opposition. This effort to stifle and ban free speech defenders from vocalizing their opposition to leftist ideals is actually a march toward a totalitarian system rather than a step away from it.

In the face of extremist political violence, it is essential to remember all the past and not just that which is convenient for one's particular narrative. The work of [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#) exposed the world to what left-wing ideologues were capable of implementing.

"Thanks to ideology," Solzhenitsyn informed the world in [The Gulag Archipelago](#), "the twentieth century was fated to experience evil doing calculated on a scale in the millions."

Ideology is what is fueling the violence carried out by individuals on the streets of Portland. What Antifa fails to realize is that waving communist flags and punching Nazis doesn't pacify hatred; it only incites more violence.

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