

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### Right-wing terrorism—*déjà vu?*

*The Rostock riots signal the rise of new terrorist groups in the neo-Nazi scene—but the m.o. is not new.*

**F**or four nights from Aug. 22 through Aug. 25, the east German city of Rostock, a port on the Baltic coast, was rocked by riots over the issue of driving out several hundred asylum-seeking foreigners housed in a temporary shelter. Several hundred right-radical and neo-Nazi rioters hurled paving stones, bricks, steel bars, firebombs, and flares—not on the 10-story shelter, but at the police.

Police Chief Siegfried Kordus reported that his men were attacked by an apparently well-trained mob, operating in small groups like guerrillas, who assaulted the police, withdrew upon pressure, and attacked again where the police forces offered a vulnerable flank. The attacks were steered through a command center, which monitored police movements, received information from the “battle-ground” and gave orders via walkie-talkies. Police radio was jammed by the mob’s radio scanners.

This, the Rostock police chief said, was no “spontaneous outburst” of xenophobia which the media declared typical for east German youth; it was a clear sign that the same problem that police in the west German states had faced during the 1980s in numerous confrontations with leftist mobs, was emerging now on the right-wing fringe of Germany’s political underground.

Kordus’s apt appraisal was shared by Bernd Seite, the governor of Mecklenburg-Prepomerania, the state where Rostock is located. He said at a press conference Aug. 25, “We know these people—it is the same kind of

rioters we’ve seen in Brokdorf, at the Hafenstrasse in Hamburg, in Frankfurt and in Wackersdorf,” referring to the 1980s showdowns at the nuclear plant project at Brokdorf, the occupied Hafenstrasse buildings at the port of Hamburg, the runway project at Frankfurt Airport, and the nuclear re-processing plant at Wackersdorf.

The latter two were the scene of civil war-like battles between a brutalized mob using walkie-talkies, radio-jamming equipment, and flares. At one Frankfurt runway clash, two policemen were killed by pistol shots.

In Rostock, radicalized local youth “took over” part of the riot after provocateurs had begun stoning and firebombing the shelter and “set the theme”; then better-trained groups of the mob trained their attacks on the police and on the firemen who tried to fight the fires at the shelter and at private cars parked nearby, which the mob had overturned and destroyed.

The new right-wing mob is using methods that seem to be borrowed from the leftists of the 1980s. And as the radicalization of the leftist anti-state underground went along with the formation of the Baader Meinhof gang and other terrorist groups, the same process of a right-wing terrorism in the making can be observed today.

Politicians at the federal level in Bonn and in state administrations tend to play down the importance of these recent developments. But the fact that an official probe has been launched into some of the most violence-prone groups of the scene, shows that the situation is taken more seriously than

politicians’ interviews would indicate.

The Nationalist Front group of Christoph Schoenborn, which created a National Intervention Command and is training select cadre in underground combat techniques and the use of radio equipment and firearms, is the subject of a probe under article 129 of the German penal code—the specific article used for the prosecution of the Baader Meinhof and other leftist groups in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Schoenborn group’s activities overlap with foreign influences, like underground work in Germany of the Ku Klux Klan, which is also the subject of an official probe. Heinz Anussek, the head of the Berlin intelligence service, said last January that his agency was highly alarmed about “an increasing pattern of right-wing extremist attacks during 1991” and particularly over “the growth of links between local skinhead groups and international neo-Nazi and white-supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.” Meanwhile, the KKK has been put on the official record for trying to build a terrorist network inside Germany. In a reply to a parliamentary question of the opposition Social Democrats at the end of July, the government reported findings related to a KKK underground group.

A police search of the group in Königs Wusterhausen, near Berlin, produced terrorist matériel like pipe segments, chemicals, and explosives ostensibly to be used for the building of shaped charges; also pamphlets calling for “armed struggle” against the government and other state institutions were found. The group is linked to Dennis Mahon, a KKK organizer who made a recruiting tour of Germany last year. He claimed in interviews that he had instructed young German neo-Nazis personally in the use of firearms and other matériel.