

Angry Germans 'mimicking' Nazi views

Germany

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A new book containing dozens of original testimonies from people explaining why they joined the Nazi party in the 1930s has shown disturbing parallels with the current rise in far-right support in Germany, its publisher has warned.

Why I Became a Nazi contains a selection of statements gathered by Theodore Fred Abel, an American sociologist, in 1934. He offered cash prizes for "the best personal life story of a supporter of the Hitler movement".

Participants had to have joined the Nazi party before January 1, 1933. The

survey had the blessing of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda chief, and Professor Abel used the research for a 1938 book on Hitler's rise to power.

The testimonies, some of them virtual autobiographies up to 80 pages long, have been described as a Facebook of the Third Reich and have lain in US archives for decades.

Wieland Giebel, the publisher and historian, said that many of the comments — complaints about inequality, an untrustworthy media and the failings of the established parties — resemble the chants of "lying press", "Merkel must go" and "Germany for the Germans — foreigners out" heard at marches through Chemnitz

last month during the biggest neo-Nazi riots in a generation.

"These testimonies are highly topical. People felt excluded and that is similar to the situation we have today," Mr Giebel said. "I see a direct similarity between those people who saw Jews as scapegoats and those who today see refugees as the cause of social problems. Luckily there isn't a charismatic personality around to lead them."

He added: "Those who were writing in 1934 didn't know the Second World War would come with 60 million dead and the Holocaust, but those today who join this Nazi ideology, they know that and they still subscribe to this racism and exaggerated nationalism."