

Social democrats support German government's rejection of Snowden's asylum request

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Germany has joined the list of countries that have rejected Edward Snowden's request for asylum. On Tuesday, Berlin confirmed that the former intelligence official, who has uncovered the massive international spying activities of the US government, had applied for asylum in Germany.

A few hours later, a government spokesman said that Snowden would be denied asylum and a residence permit. He would also not be permitted to stay in Germany even for a limited period of time. Although Germany is a key target of National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance operations, the German government denied 30-year-old Snowden the right to asylum, although he is being illegally hunted and persecuted by US authorities.

"The conditions for admission have not been met" was the curt statement issued by the Foreign and Interior Ministries in Berlin. Fully aware that Snowden fulfilled all the legal criteria to claim asylum as a political refugee, the government turned down his appeal on formal grounds, claiming that such appeals must be made on German territory.

Even though the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) is currently running an election campaign, it immediately lined up with the federal government and supported its decision on Snowden. The long-time spokesman of the SPD parliamentary group, Dieter Wiefelspütz, told a German newspaper he saw "no reason" to grant Snowden asylum in Germany. "I cannot see that the man is being politically persecuted," he said.

Wiefelspütz continued, "Mr. Snowden may possibly have betrayed state secrets based on his conscience. He may be a hero in the pursuit of liberty. That does not,

however, protect him from the legal consequences."

Wiefelspütz is an archetypal modern social democrat. The SPD has not the slightest scruple when it comes to the defense of capitalism and the bourgeois state apparatus, at the cost of sacrificing the democratic rights of the population. The German SPD has been the most important pillar of bourgeois rule since the party voted in favor of war nearly a century ago and bloodily suppressed a workers' revolution at the end of the war.

Today the party offers its services as a more consistent defender of the interests of the German ruling class against the population than the Merkel government. Wiefelspütz's statement makes clear that a SPD government would not hesitate to apprehend Snowden as soon as he set foot on German soil, and deliver him promptly to the US government.

He argues in the manner of a representative of a dictatorial regime. He says Snowden may have acted out of conscience and was "perhaps a hero in the pursuit of liberty." In other words, he acknowledges that Snowden may have performed the public a great service by informing them about the criminal activities of the US secret services and government. According to Wiefelspütz, however, this weighs less than the fact that he had violated the secret instructions of the security services.

For Wiefelspütz the state apparatus has top priority: he has only contempt for the civil rights and democratic principles.

Not long ago, the social democrats adopted a different line of argument. They accused citizens of former East Germany of not opposing the Stalinist state and rebelling against its laws and diktats. On the grounds that the natural right to freedom and democracy stood

above a state's constitution, East German citizens were prosecuted and punished after the collapse of the GDR for failing to defy the commands of East German border troops. Then as now, the argumentation of the social democrats was determined solely by capitalist class interests.

Wiefelspütz's undemocratic and reactionary position also exposes the attitude of the Left Party, which is intent on forming a future government with the SPD, proclaiming that the social democrats represent a "left alternative" to the Merkel government.

The Left Party is conducting its usual cynical double game with regard to Snowden. Top Left Party officials, Gregor Gysi, Oskar Lafontaine, Katja Kipping and Sahra Wagenknecht maintain a low profile and signal to the SPD in various ways that they agree with it.

At the same time, the largely unknown national manager of the Left Party, Matthias Höhn, released a brief statement on the party's web site. Under the headline "Thank you, Edward," Hohn writes about Snowden: "Even if he does not deserve a pedestal, then at least he should receive asylum." This would be in the political interests of Germany, Höhn declares pathetically.



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