

Germany: Left Party defends the secret services

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The Left Party has come to the defence of the secret services as they face growing difficulties following the exposure of their involvement in mass surveillance. Their defence of the German state and secret services in various parliamentary committees and state bodies shows the reactionary nature of the Left Party's politics.

Following the exposure of the NSA's mass surveillance by whistle-blower Edward Snowden, further details came to light concerning the involvement of the German secret services. Not only is Germany's Foreign Intelligence Agency (BND) well informed about the activities of their American counterparts, it too conducts a comprehensive surveillance programme and regularly exchanges massive quantities of data with the NSA.

As in the US, in Germany, too, the affair has shown that faced with growing social polarisation, the infrastructure of a police state is being quietly assembled. The movements and communications of every citizen are being systematically recorded and evaluated. The same organisations that collect this data are also tightly connected to fascist forces, as came to light in the so-called NSU affair, which revealed the many links between various state agencies and the far-right National Socialist Underground, responsible for 10 murders.

In this situation, the Left Party is moving closer to the state apparatus and has taken on the task of providing a cover for the BND and the domestic secret services. From time to time, they raise the occasional criticism of the secret services and demand their regulation. In this way, they seek to create the illusion that the intelligence agencies can be controlled and reformed through parliamentary means. In fact, the party works closely with the intelligence services.

The Left Party was and is involved in numerous state bodies, and is thus directly responsible for managing the various state branches of the intelligence agencies. Their member Steffen Bockhahn sits on the federal Parliamentary Control Committee (PKG). The PKG provides a pseudo-democratic cover for Germany's intelligence agencies. Its members are able to visit any secret service facility, order files for inspection and question staff; however, they are obliged to uphold strict confidentiality. In other words, the Parliamentary Control Committee is used to integrate parliamentary deputies into the activities of the intelligence agencies.

Bockhahn regularly takes part in the PKG meetings and therefore must have been informed early on about the intrigues of the German secret services. Unlike Edward Snowden, he adheres strictly to the confidentiality protocols. In an interview on his web site, Bockhahn says that when it concerns "really hot information", confidentiality has to be accepted.

In the same article, he defends the existence of the intelligence agencies and provides suggestions as to how their work could be organized more effectively. "The BND and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution [as the domestic secret service is called] have the task of protecting us from espionage," says Bockshahn. To fulfil this task, both intelligence agencies should "finally understand that spies are not trusted partners, no matter who they work for," he says. Therefore, German intelligence officials should place less trust in their foreign colleagues and work more independently, he argues.

Bockhahn is a typical Left Party careerist and social climber. As a youth he was attracted to the misnamed Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successor to the Stalinist party of state in the former East Germany. Behind its phrases about democracy and freedom, the

PDS advocated the restoration of the capitalist market economy. He became a PDS member as a school pupil at the age of 16 and was a long-time staffer for PDS Federal Manager Dietmar Bartsch before he took over the leadership of the party's state association in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The Left Party representative on the G10 Commission, Ulrich Maurer, was even clearer regarding the work of the secret services. At the end of June, speaking on Deutschlandfunk radio, he said he assumed that the secret services in Germany operated lawfully, and therefore would also provide the appropriate information to the G10 Commission. "That is, its requests to monitor a person must be well founded and be individually submitted, and then it will be approved or not approved". In examining applications, it would not "operate on the basis of mistrust", he claimed.

The G10 Commission is smaller than the PKG, and is appointed by that body to examine the applications of the three intelligence agencies to monitor telecommunications and the post. In this way, Maurer's participation in this body directly and "trustingly" involves him in the work of the intelligence agencies.

The clear positioning of the most important Left Party representatives in the decision-making bodies of the state is not an accident. The Left Party is an establishment party that has repeatedly proven it is willing to implement harsh social attacks to defend the interests of the banks. Based on well-off sections of the middle class, and hostile to the working class, the Left Party is moving ever closer to the state apparatus, and defends it in face of the intensification of social antagonisms.

When the secret service came under pressure following the revelations of its close links to the far-right scene, the then Left Party representative on the PKG, Wolfgang Neškovi?, defended the secret service as the "fire brigade" that could not simply be abolished. Shortly thereafter, the party invited the head of the secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen, to participate in a public exchange of ideas.

The Left Party attacks the federal government from the right, accusing the chancellor of not doing enough to represent German interests. The deputy chair of the Left Party, Sarah Wagenknecht, called on Angela Merkel to go on the offensive against the United States,

and as a consequence of the NSA's espionage activities demanded a halt to the negotiations on a free trade agreement between Europe and the United States.



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