

# Chairman of German Pirate Party defends the secret services

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The chairman of Germany's Pirate Party has signaled his organisation's support for the mass surveillance of the population by the secret services.

In an article published on the party web site, Bernd Schlömer, who works as a civil servant in the defence ministry, expresses concern for the loss of confidence in the secret services and proposes how this can be restored, with the help of the Pirate Party.

"In a democracy like Germany," he writes, "if in the future it is to be seen as legitimate to obtain information via intelligence means, then consideration must now be given not only to effective control of the [secret] services, but also to new proposals. The shift away from technical supervision by the Chancellor's Office and the establishment of a parliamentary intelligence commissioner are examples of better control."

Speaking to the weekly newspaper *Der Freitag* two weeks earlier, Schlömer had clearly formulated his attitude to Germany's domestic intelligence agencies. "I personally think," he said, "an institution that is supposed to protect the Constitution is important and helpful." (The German name for the secret service is the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution.)

The political director of the Pirate Party, Catherine Nocu?, spoke in the same vein. In a two-faced statement to *Spiegel Online*, she said that a democratic society did not need a secret service "in its present form", and then proceeded to echo the claim of the secret services that their spying operations were necessary to "fight terrorism" and were not directed

against the general population. If the Pirates entered the Bundestag (parliament), she said, they would collaborate with others to "provide for more control."

These statements come in the midst of superficial calls by the Pirate Party for the defence of the whistleblower Edward Snowden, practical courses in the use of encryption technologies, and public protests. Such moves are intended to give the appearance of opposition, but are incidental to the role of the Pirate Party in providing a political cover for the continuation and strengthening of the mass surveillance of the population.

Snowden's revelations about the profound involvement of the Christian Democratic Union-Free Democratic Party coalition and the previous Social Democratic Party-Green Party coalition in massive surveillance by the intelligence services discredits all of the establishment parties. Under these circumstances, the Pirate Party can play an important role for the ruling class in helping to develop police state methods in the face of widespread popular opposition.

That the party is willing to take on this function was clearly shown last weekend. At the demonstrations that took place in several cities under the slogan "Stop Watching Us," the Pirates offered representatives of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Greens and Free Democratic Party (FDP) a platform to cover up their responsibility and disorient the protesters.

The Pirate Party, founded only a few years ago on the basis of demands for transparency, data protection and privacy, is responding to the exposure of the largest surveillance machinery in human history by granting

political legitimacy to the secret services.

This reactionary political line corresponds to the social orientation of the party. The Pirate Party regards transparency and mitbestimmung (co-determination) as means for integrating its middle class base into decision-making positions. The party has from the onset supported the social attacks on the working class and the growth of social inequality in Europe.

The Pirates explicitly defend anchoring the debt ceiling in the Constitution. This obliges the federal, state and local governments to impose brutal austerity measures. The party has stressed many times it is ready to join coalition governments with all parties represented in parliament.

When the Pirates adopted their basic programme in November last year, they explicitly endorsed the European Union, which is the main instrument for social attacks across Europe. They opposed the fight against unemployment and rejected a motion precluding combat missions by the Bundeswehr (the armed forces).

Their advocacy of capitalism likewise drives the Pirates to support the intelligence services, for it is precisely the social attacks that are bringing the ruling elite into ever sharper conflict with the vast majority of the population. The more the narrow layer of super-rich enrich themselves at the expense of the working class, the more aggressively they seek to defend these privileges against the opposition of the majority.

The defence of democratic rights is inseparably bound up with the struggle for social equality in opposition to the financial oligarchy. The experience of the Pirate Party shows that the rejection of a socialist programme renders the defence of democratic rights a hollow phrase and leads to support for the dictatorship of the banks and corporations.

On the basis of their capitalist programme, which formulates the interests of certain sections of the aspiring middle class, the Pirates have attracted some of the most ruthless elements of society. Indifferent to the social attacks, they are primarily interested in their own

personal advancement.

The reactionary character of the party is also evident in the role played by Daniel Domscheit-Berg. He has been seen in the media peddling his opinions on the surveillance scandal like no other member of the Pirate Party. A few years ago, Domscheit-Berg worked for WikiLeaks. He subsequently achieved notoriety by turning against and opposing WikiLeaks, sabotaging its work, and writing a book supporting the smear campaign against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.



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