# SEP candidate intervenes in a discussion on German security policy

**Our correspondents**
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On September 4, a discussion titled “Between NSA and NSU: German security architecture put to the test” took place in Berlin. The host of the meeting, the Humanist Union, and all the party representatives on the podium used the meeting to defend the secret services and play down revelations about their operations.

On the podium of the meeting, held at Humboldt University, were spokesmen of all the parties in the Bundestag plus the Pirate party. From the start the speakers made clear that they were determined not to openly address the criminal practices of the National Security Agency (NSA) or the cooperation between German intelligence agencies with the ultra right-wing terrorist group, the National Socialist Underground (NSU).

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) candidate for the Friedrichshain Kreuzberg constituency, Götz Müller, and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) state chairman, Axel Behring, vehemently justified the work of the intelligence agencies, which they claimed defended the state and were indispensable for a “fortified democracy,” For their part, representatives from the Left Party, Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens and Pirates expressed some mild criticisms.

Paula Riester of the Greens and SPD youth movement state chair Kevin Kühnert maintained it was necessary to reform the intelligence agencies. The national manager of the Left Party, Katina Schubert, said that the party favored the abolition of the agencies, but then immediately qualified her remark. Since their immediate abolition was not possible, she stated, one must be content instead with “intermediate steps.”

Schubert had replaced at short notice the originally announced speaker Petra Pau. Left Party deputy and Bundestag chair Pau was a member of the NSU-inquiry commission. Former SPD member Schubert joined the Left Party predecessor Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) in 2001. From 2006 to 2008, she was deputy leader of the party and from 2004 personal assistant to the former economics minister in Berlin, Harald Wolf, the architect of the social cuts implemented for a decade by the SPD-Left Party Senate.

The contributions by members of the podium sought to play down the significance of revelations regarding the complete monitoring of the entire population by the NSA and its close cooperation with the German secret services. The discussion included references to “digital international law” and the possibilities for the private encoding of data, but no mention was made of the dimensions of the violations against basic democratic rights.

Norman Bäuerle, who chaired the meeting, gave the speakers free rein and made no effort to direct the discussion onto more substantial issues, such as the role played by leading political parties in the NSA and NSU scandals.

This changed when Christoph Vandreier, parliamentary candidate for the Social Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, PSG), spoke from the audience. It was characteristic for the meeting that the PSG candidate was the only speaker to be pressured several times by Bäuerle to end his already short contribution.

Vandreier accused the party representatives of purposefully diminishing the significance of the surveillance scandal. In the last few months it had come to light that citizens had been spied on and that the intelligence agencies “systematically supervise telephone calls, emails and transaction data to be stored and evaluated,” declared the PSG candidate. “In addition, 10 immigrants were murdered under the noses of the domestic intelligence agency (BND) and the secret services. All the facts contained in the final report of the NSU committee point to the fact that this happened with the aid of the domestic intelligence agency.”

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This was played down, he said, “because, with exception of the Pirate Party, which hasn’t had the opportunity, all the parties represented on the podium have participated in the elimination of basic rights.”

Vandreier referred to the extension and adoption of the anti-terror laws by the Social Democratic Party -Green Party government in 2002: “It was also the SPD and the Greens, which intensified the co-operation with the NSA and made monitoring the population possible.”

The demand by Katina Schubert for abolition of the domestic intelligence agency is aimed at covering the tracks of the Left Party, Vandreier continued. Prominent representatives from the Left Party had sat in parliamentary control committees, which provide a democratic cover for the criminal activities of the secret services and require all members to adhere to a strict code of not revealing what is said inside the committees.

Vandreier referred to two Left Party leaders—Steffen Bockhahn, who as a member of the parliamentary Control Committee (PKG) had access to the activities of the secret services, and Ulrich Maurer, who sits on the so-called G10 Commission. At the end of June, Maurer told German radio that the secret services in Germany abided by the law and he would inform the G10 Commission correspondingly.

Vandreier cited the social attacks and the militarist policies pursued by the German government, which all other parties support in the face of massive public opposition. The attack on democratic rights was closely connected to this onslaught on social conditions. “These policies are not compatible with democratic rights,” he said. “This is why all parties are united in their attack on democratic rights and defend mass surveillance of the population.”

Vandreier concluded by declaring: “This is why it is necessary to build an independent movement to defend democratic rights in opposition to the secret services and parties represented on this podium.”

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