

German conservative parties embrace the language of dictatorship

Peter Schwarz**8 September 2017**

On September 1, the interior and justice ministers of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) adopted a statement on domestic security which reads like a blueprint for dictatorship. The two “Union” parties head the current coalition government in Germany, with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) as a junior partner.

At the start of the document the signatories boast: “We are the driving force in domestic and legal policy.” The document continues in this vein and ends: “We stand for a strong state that takes seriously its responsibility for the security and protection of its citizens. Security in freedom requires order. ... We will not permit unregulated areas.”

The word “right” is used in the text exclusively in expressions linked to state, law and order, rather than in connection to democracy. The term “democracy” appears only once in the document: “Right and left-wing extremism question the basis of our democracy.” The concept of “basic rights” or “democratic rights,” which protect citizens from state violence and exploitation, does not exist in the vocabulary and mindset of the Union ministers.

Under the title “A strong state of law to protect our citizens,” the document puts forward a catalogue of measures any dictator would be proud of. This begins with the sentence: “Optimal cooperation between the federal and state level, and especially between the police, intelligence services and the judiciary, is the decisive factor for effective security in our country.”

The ministers seem to have forgotten that the separation of the intelligence services and the police as well as their decentralisation were among the basic principles of the post-war German order. This was the most important conclusion drawn from the criminal role played by the Secret State Police (Gestapo) of the

Nazi regime.

The German bourgeoisie, however, did not arrive at this conclusion voluntarily; it was forced to adopt it under pressure from the Allied powers. Following the restoration of full Germany sovereignty after unification, the longstanding separation of the police and intelligence forces has been increasingly questioned. The CDU ministers now consider it to be irrelevant.

Many of the measures proposed by the Union ministers would have made the Gestapo envious—in particular because it did not yet have the new possibilities of state control opened up by the latest surveillance technology.

“We will strengthen the police and security forces, both in terms of personnel and state-of-the-art equipment,” the document states. “We want to bring state-of-the-art technology (for example, intelligent video technology for face recognition), powers corresponding to our time, close cooperation between the security authorities, and, last but not least, a modern data policy that balances security interests with data protection concerns.”

“Islamist terrorism” serves as a pretext for the massive build-up of state powers. This, despite the fact all of the major terror attacks in recent years—from Paris, Brussels and Berlin to Barcelona—were committed by perpetrators known to the security authorities and frequently in close contact with them. Significantly, however, the interior ministers go further. They cite as an additional reason for boosting state power the threat from “right-wing and left-wing extremism,” with the emphasis on the latter.

The violent clashes on the fringes of the G20 summit in Hamburg, provoked by the police and massively exaggerated by the media, serve as a pretext for

attacking social and political opposition from the left. “The brutal violence on the streets of Hamburg at the G20 summit has demonstrated the terrifying potential for violence stemming from left-wing extremists,” the text reads.

This serves as a justification to undermine the basic rights to demonstrate and exercise free expression. To this end the criminal offence of civil disorder is to be broadened in a way that a single stone, thrown by a police provocateur, can serve as a pretext to declare a peaceful demonstration to be a mob of violent criminals. Based on the new law, criminal proceedings can be brought, not only against those who practice violence, but also against all those who “assist aggressors by offering them protection in the crowd.”

Meeting places of Autonomists—such as the Rote Flora in Hamburg and Riga Street in Berlin—will no longer be “tolerated,” and masking one’s face on a demonstration is to remain a criminal offence and not be “downgraded to an administrative offence.”

The Union ministers also want to further empower prosecutors and the courts to combat and intimidate social opposition. This is to be done via improved “personnel and material equipment,” the further expansion of criminal law as well as the modernisation “of the instruments for prosecution.” This includes “new possibilities to evaluate DNA” and the expansion of “the storage and recovery of traffic data.” “Promoting sympathy” for “terrorist and criminal associations … on our streets and squares”—whatever that means—is to be made a punishable offence.

Many of the proposals have unmistakably racist features, e.g., when the ministers demand the examination of DNA “for skin colour, hair colour and bio-geographical origin” or when they are threatening: “We will not tolerate parallel societies—only our rights, our values, our principles are valid.”

The fact that attacks on democratic rights carried out in the name of “security” are an essential characteristic of dictatorships was part and parcel of German public education just a few years ago. According to a report on the military dictatorships in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay posted on the web site of the Federal Centre for Civic Education in 2006, all these regimes justified their rule with the “Doctrine of National Security,” which is elaborated as follows: “This doctrine asserts external and internal security to be the most important

task of the state; to this end state action is not subject to (human) rights restrictions and controls. The doctrine therefore legitimates the considerable tightening up of existing security laws.”

On the basis of these criteria, the German minister’s proposals clearly point to the establishment of a dictatorship. And in this respect they are not alone. As we have already pointed out in another article, in the current federal election campaign, all of the parties involved, from the far-right Alternative for Germany to the Left Party, are trying to outdo one another “with demands for more policemen, civil war equipment for police and better surveillance techniques.”

It should also be noted that the ministers of interior and justice from nine federal states, who drafted the statement with German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière, include ministers from Baden-Württemberg and Hesse, where the CDU governs in coalition with the Greens. The demand for the rearmament of the police and judiciary also occupies a central place in the programs of the SPD and the Left Party.

The only explanation for the drive towards state armament and dictatorship is that all parties anticipate fierce social and political conflict after the Bundestag election. They know that the policies of militarism and dismantling of social rights—their response to the global crisis of capitalism and growing international tensions—are deeply unpopular. They are consciously preparing to forcibly repress any opposition.



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