

Germany's grand coalition and the return of a police state

Johannes Stern
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The arrest of former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont March 25 demonstrates how far advanced the development of a police state is in Germany and across Europe. The fact that the arrest occurred in Germany was no mere coincidence. Alongside the country's remilitarisation, one of the grand coalition's central goals is the establishment of authoritarian forms of rule.

In his government statement March 23, Homeland and Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) summarised the wide-ranging plans agreed upon by the conservative parties and Social Democrats (SPD) in the coalition talks. "After spending several months forming the government, the time has come," Seehofer declared, for "resolute action." This includes, above all, "security, and that means comprehensively throughout Germany."

The grand coalition is proposing an all-embracing police state. "We will put an end to unequal security, dependent upon where one is located on the map by creating a pattern police law for all of Germany," he told parliamentary deputies. However, "a strong state" will only "work with modernised search and investigatory powers," he added.

This includes the expansion of video surveillance, control over the Internet, and the centralisation and integration of the intelligence agencies. He will "press ahead with the establishment of the Federal Criminal Police Office as the central database for police information," and "at the European level, do everything to integrate the various databases so that our intelligence agencies can act to achieve their goals more swiftly." In addition, "the powers in the digital sector [must] be brought into line with those in the analogue sphere," and the use of "intelligent video technology further expanded."

Ultimately, "a strong state can only function with strong police and security authorities," stated Seehofer. In connection with this, there have been "a significant increase in personnel in the past, especially at the Federal Criminal Police Office and federal police." The federal government will now "swiftly create an additional 7,500 jobs and ensure our security forces are well equipped with modern weaponry."

Like the measures themselves, Seehofer's ideological justification for them recalled the darkest chapter in German history. "Security is a human right," he declared, and for "the protection of citizens," a "strong state" is required.

The notorious Reichstag fire decree of February 28, 1933, which laid the basis for the Nazis' "strong state" and suspended basic democratic rights, was also justified by the need to guarantee "security" and the "protection of the people and the state." Today, the goal is also the elimination of basic constitutional rights and the establishment of an authoritarian regime capable of persecuting minorities and political opponents.

In the context of German history, nobody should underestimate this danger. The same ruling class that paved the way for the anti-Semitic Nazi terror state 85 years ago is once again connecting its calls for rearmament and a strong state with racist propaganda. In one of his first interviews in office, Seehofer slandered and threatened the close to 5 million Muslims living in Germany when he declared, "Islam does not belong to Germany."

The spokesman for the far-right Alternative for Germany, who was welcomed by President of Parliament Wolfgang Schäuble as "colleague Dr. Gottfried Curio," pushed Seehofer's rhetoric to the limit. "Does Jihad belong to Germany, polygamy, the

death penalty for changing one's beliefs, corporal punishment for adulterers and alcoholics, the right of married men to discipline their wives,—‘Beat her!’, does that belong to Germany?” Curio stated rhetorically. “Mass immigration” of people also means “an influx of knives” and all of this has “to be reversed,” he added.

The next speaker, Eva Högl from the SPD, did not oppose this fascistic filth but unconditionally gave her support to the right-wing interior minister's programme. “On behalf of the SPD parliamentary group,” she said, “Mr. Seehofer, we are looking forward to working with you.” Together “with the federal states” they intend to “measurably improve politics and better equip the police, judiciary and security agencies.”

The opposition parties adopted a similar line. To the extent that they criticised Seehofer and the government, it was from the right.

To the applause of the Left Party and Greens, Marco Buschmann of the neoliberal Free Democrats declared, “The law of the land must, of course, be enforced. Of course no paragraphs in laws can help with that, only more personnel. But the fact that the new government's first action in office was to expand its ministries and cut a further 200 posts in customs and domestic security is a fatal signal. They talk about border controls but remove customs personnel. They talk about domestic authorities but cut personnel from the responsible authorities. This is the wrong message to send.”

Andre Hahn from the Left Party complained, “Not so long ago, all of the parties involved in the coalition were cutting police at the state level. This took place under the pressure of the debt break and a lack of tax revenues for the states. But now it is expected that these parties will hire an additional 7,500 posts. They don't explain where the states should find the financial resources for this.”

Left Party parliamentary group leader Dietmar Bartsch expressed most clearly of all the Left Party's support for the erection of a police state. Seehofer's “announcements” were “certainly interesting” but he would “of course be measured by his actions.” Bartsch claimed, “Zero tolerance for crimes and violations of the law” was “just a normal statement.” He would like “that the laws be respected and that above all, the police and judiciary are equipped to realise their tasks.”

On this, the Left Party has “already applied a lot of pressure as an opposition party in the last legislative period and the one prior to that,” Bartsch added. But to date, “far too little has happened,” and he hopes that “more police are on the streets and fewer in the offices.” He added that he does not want “a surveillance state, but a state capable of action.” Only “the rich” need “a weak state,” because “they can pay for their own security.”

Who does Bartsch think he is kidding? As a representative of a party which wherever it holds government with the SPD and Greens has upheld the interests of the super-rich, imposed Hartz IV and deported refugees, Bartsch knows very well whose interests are served by a “state capable of action.”

In his classic work *The State and Revolution*, which Bartsch as a reformed Stalinist no doubt knows and despises, Lenin, basing himself on Engels, described the capitalist state as “a special power of repression” made up of “special bodies of armed men who have prisons, etc. at their disposal.” It is a basic tenet of Marxism that the state has no “protective function,” but is “a tool for the exploitation of the oppressed masses.”

With his support for Seehofer's “strong state,” Bartsch underscores that the Left Party is another reactionary “formation” which the capitalist state has at its disposal in the suppression and exploitation of the working class. The mounting social and political opposition to militarism, war, racism and social attacks must inevitably be directed against capitalism and its defenders. This requires the active struggle for a socialist programme, and the building of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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