

Head of German secret service advised far-right Alternative for Germany

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Hans-Georg Maaßen, the president of Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), met with former Alternative for Germany (AfD) leader Frauke Petry several times in 2015, advising her how to avoid nationwide surveillance of the AfD by the German secret service and having her party designated as "right-wing extremist."

This was revealed in a recently published book, *Inside AfD*, by AfD dropout Franziska Schreiber. The 28-year-old author was a close colleague of Petry's and was chairperson of the AfD youth organization Junge Alternative in Saxony.

"Petry informed me later that Maaßen had told her what the AfD had to do to evade surveillance by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, which he had not wanted himself," writes Schreiber. "They both seem to have developed a certain sympathy for one another."

Maaßen is said to have advised the AfD leader to expel Björn Höcke, a representative in the state parliament of Thuringia associated with the AfD's ethnic nationalist wing. In December 2015, shortly after meeting with Maaßen, Petry did in fact call for Höcke's resignation and prepared expulsion procedures against him. According to Schreiber, she did this "at the urgent advice" of the chief of intelligence.

The BfV has in the meantime indirectly confirmed that Maaßen met with Petry. One generally conducts conversations with representatives of all parties, a spokesperson told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, not denying that the meetings took place. He did, however, deny that Maaßen advised the AfD or recommended the expulsion of specific leading members.

That there were close relations between Maaßen and Petry was already known long before the publication of *Inside AfD*. The news magazine *Der Spiegel* reported in early 2016 that they had "at Petry's request" met several times in the fall of 2015. The magazine referred to "several AfD politicians," including Petry.

There was talk even then of counsel given to Petry. It was understood that Maaßen warned the AfD leader that the Saarland chapter would be placed under surveillance

because of extremist activity. Shortly thereafter, the AfD moved to disband it.

Maaßen has for some time declined to investigate the radical right-wing AfD. In early 2016, *Die Welt* quoted him as saying, "The AfD is not a right-wing extremist party." According to the article, Maaßen spoke with "unexpected clarity" against surveillance of the AfD. The conditions requiring such an investigation had not been met, according to Maaßen.

Since then, the AfD has increasingly advocated openly for National Socialist (Nazi) and ethnic-nationalist positions. Petry, who as head of the AfD called on police to "make use of their firearms if necessary" against those crossing the border illegally, left the party because it was, by her own admission, too right-wing. Her successor, Alexander Gauland, has called Hitler and the Nazis "a speck of bird shit in over a thousand years of successful German history."

Not only is Björn Höcke still a party member, he has triggered nationwide protests with several inflammatory right-wing speeches. At the beginning of last year, he railed against the "culture of remembrance" of the crimes of the Nazis, called the Berlin Holocaust Memorial a "monument of shame," and accused the Allies of seeking to "rob us of our collective identity" and "eradicate us root and branch" with their bombing runs on German cities. Despite this, party expulsion procedures against him ceased under pressure from the party leadership.

Notwithstanding these developments, the BfV maintains its defence of the AfD. In the new 2017 Report on the Protection of the Constitution, which Maaßen and Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union—CSU) presented last week at a press conference in Berlin, the chapter on "right-wing extremism" does not devote so much as a syllable to the AfD. Their name appears more frequently in the chapter on "left-wing extremism"—as a "victim" of alleged "left extremists."

The report reads as if it had been written at AfD headquarters. "Protests against the two party conferences of Alternative for Germany (AfD) held in Cologne in April and

Hannover in December” are cited as defining characteristics of “left-wing extremism.” The same goes for the “persistent ‘struggle’ against right-wing extremists” and the fact that, in addition to the AfD, the “left-wing extremists” hold “the federal government of the Christian Democrats and social democracy as well as the party Alliance 90/The Greens responsible for the tightening of asylum laws.”

Whoever criticizes the far-right or rejects the brutal and inhumane refugee policy of the grand coalition in the Bundestag (parliament), is, according to the definition of the secret service, a “left-wing extremist” and a threat to the Constitution. Still more reprehensible, according to the report, is the collection of “information on alleged or actual right-wing extremists and their institutions.”

Maaßen’s meetings with Petry and the Report on the Protection of the Constitution make clear that the BfV does not “protect” the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, but rather defends the AfD against all those who seek to exercise these basic rights. This is consistent with the policies of the federal government, which is made up of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the CSU and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). This grand coalition government has not only adopted the policies of the AfD, it does everything it can to promote the growth of this widely hated party.

With its decision to join with the CDU and CSU in a second grand coalition following the disaster in last year’s parliamentary elections for these, the parties of the previous grand coalition government, the SPD not only helped form the most right-wing government since the founding of the federal republic after World War II, it made the AfD, which received only 12.6 percent of the vote, the official opposition. Because of this, the right-wing demagogues of this neo-fascist party have unlimited access to prime time TV cameras and are able to freely spout their brown poison in the Reichstag—the very building whose destruction in a fire served as the pretext for the recently installed Chancellor Hitler to assume total power.

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The grand coalition has adopted and implemented the demands of the AfD regarding refugees. Its policy of militarism and the building up of the state apparatus is supported by the AfD.

The BfV, which has more than 3,100 employees and a budget of 350 million euros at its disposal—and this does not include the secret police offices of the 16 states and their numerous informants, or “V-Leute ” —is playing a key role in the political shift to the right in Germany. This process recalls more and more the end of the Weimar Republic, with its conspiracies and political killings.

It was no accident that after the Second World War, many Nazis and members of right-wing organizations such as the Organization Consul (OC), which destabilized the Weimar Republic with political assassinations, were integrated into the BfV.

The links between the BfV and the neo-Nazi scene are notorious. The BfV was involved in covering up the background to the 1980 Oktoberfest bombing, in which 13 people were killed and more than 200 injured. After the National Socialist Underground (NSU), which murdered nine immigrants and a police officer, was broken up, it was revealed that at least two dozen V-Leute had been in the immediate periphery of the far-right terrorist cell.

This, too, was covered up. During the NSU trial, which lasted five years, the judge and the prosecuting attorney ruled out any investigation into this background, despite the insistence of the joint plaintiffs. Several V-Leute received limited or no authorization from the interior minister to speak before the court or a parliamentary investigating committee.

Maaßen, who claims to be unaffiliated with any party, has been a top official in the state intelligence apparatus for almost 30 years. In 1991, Otto Schily (SPD), then federal minister of the interior, brought Maaßen into his ministry, where he quickly became the head of the department on immigration law. In this capacity, he prevented the Guantanamo prisoner Murat Kurnaz, who grew up in Bremen, from returning to Germany in 2002.

In August 2012, Maaßen was appointed president of the BfV by then-Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich (CSU). A short time later, he attacked whistleblower Edward Snowden as a “traitor” and called for the media to collaborate more closely in the strengthening of state security. In 2015, Maaßen brought forward several criminal charges to initiate an investigation against two bloggers from “netzpolitik.org” on suspicions of treason. With this action, Maaßen unleashed a major attack on freedom of the press.



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