

How the secret service and the far-right AfD control German politics

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24 August 2018

On August 17, the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) published a statement protesting against it being placed under surveillance by the German secret service (the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, or BfV).

The “Constitutional Protection Report 2017” published at the end of July, classifies any socialist critique of capitalism and its social consequences as “left-wing extremist” and “anti-constitutional.” The SGP is listed as a “left-wing extremist party,” subject to state monitoring, despite the fact that the BfV makes no accusation that the SGP violates the law or is engaged in violent activity. In fact, the report explicitly confirms that the SGP pursues its goals by legal means—via “participation in elections” and “lectures.”

At the same time, the secret service report says nothing about the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and its fascist connections. The Nazi-apologist Björn Höcke, the new-right ideologue Götz Kubitschek, the racist Pegida movement and the far-right publications *Junge Freiheit* and *Compact* do not feature in the report, which only refers to the AfD as the victim of alleged “left-wing extremists.”

Meanwhile, many new details have emerged confirming that the BfV and its president, Hans-Georg Maaßen, collaborate closely with the AfD. According to the German Interior Ministry, Maaßen has held around 200 discussions with politicians from all of the parties represented in the German parliament, including the AfD, since he took office six years ago. Almost all of the talks were confidential and took place on Maaßen’s initiative.

In July, Franziska Schreiber, a former member of the AfD, reported in her book *Inside AfD* that Maaßen had held discussions with Frauke Petry, when she was the leader of the AfD. Maaßen met Petry twice in 2015,

before the AfD had entered the Bundestag. According to Schreiber, Maaßen gave her advice on how to prevent the AfD from being monitored by the BfV—a claim which Maaßen denies.

Schreiber has since confirmed under oath that Petry had repeatedly told her “that the AfD is lucky to have someone like Hans-Georg Maaßen as head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, someone who is favourably inclined towards the party and consequently does not wish it to be monitored.”

Petry’s successor as leader of the AfD, Alexander Gauland, has also confirmed that he met with Maaßen. Allegedly the meeting was to address a “suspicion” that there was a “Russian agent” in the AfD parliamentary group. Gauland later reported that Maaßen had assured him, “there’s nothing to it.”

Even the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* now admits that there are “suspicions that Maaßen might be close to the far-right AfD.” In the spring of 2018, it was “revealed that several state offices for constitutional protection wanted to observe the AfD because of its contacts with openly anti-constitutional elements.” But, as he had done previously, Maaßen spoke out against surveillance of the AfD.

The current head of the AfD, Gauland, is full of praise for Maaßen. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* quotes Gauland saying: “I look upon Mr. Maaßen as an objective top state official.”

Last week, the *taz* newspaper reported on another meeting with a leading AfD official. Maaßen visited the AfD deputy Stephan Brandner in June of this year for a one-hour conversation in the latter’s parliamentary office. Brandner is chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Bundestag. He owes his post to Bundestag vice-president Thomas Oppermann (SPD), who had proposed him for the position in a secret

election.

Brandner told the *taz* that he spoke with Maaßen about the work of the Legal Affairs Committee and the current BfV report. He would not give details of the meeting because both men had agreed on confidentiality. The BfV also refrained from any comment on the meeting. “The BfV never comments on confidential discussions in the sphere of parliament,” said a spokeswoman.

The meetings between Maaßen and senior AfD members make clear that the decision to target the SGP is part of a conspiracy in the state apparatus based directly on extreme right-wing forces. The BfV is under the remit of interior minister Horst Seehofer (CSU), who also wrote the foreword to its 2017 report.

In his foreword, Seehofer argues for the construction of a police and intelligence state, which delegates “effective powers to the national and regional constitutional protection authorities.” Germany could “not allow different spheres of security [to create] blind spots.”

Germany’s ruling grand coalition (Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union, and Social Democratic Party) has adopted in full the politics of the AfD, especially in regard to refugees. The AfD gained just 12.6 percent of the vote in the last parliamentary election and is despised by broad layers of the population. Nevertheless, it largely dominates German political life, which has increasingly assumed the character of a conspiracy by all the Bundestag parties.

Maaßen not only held confidential talks with the AfD, he also confers with all the so-called opposition parties. As reported in the latest issue of *Die Zeit*, Maaßen “meets regularly with leading members of the Left Party and Greens such as Gregor Gysi, Sahra Wagenknecht and Katrin Göring-Eckardt. Sometimes these conversations take place privately in restaurants, often paid for by the BfV, or on occasion, Maaßen invites parliamentarians to his headquarters in Cologne.”

As an institution, the BfV stands for the far-right continuity of the German elites. At the time of its founding in the 1950s, the agency employed many former Gestapo members. In recent years, its roots in the tradition of National Socialism have emerged ever more openly.

Maaßen took over the leadership of the BfV in the

summer of 2012 when the agency was in deep crisis. Three-quarters of a year earlier, the neo-fascist terrorist cell National Socialist Underground had been exposed, and it emerged that the BfV had many undercover operatives active around the group. The BfV then proceeded to shred files en masse, and Maaßen’s predecessor, Heinz Fromm, had to resign.

Now Maaßen has turned the BfV into a political tool that lines up closely with the far-right AfD, while spying on the SGP.

The consequences are known. *Die Zeit* writes: “the decision to conduct the surveillance of a party” is “of necessity a political decision—with political consequences.” It continues: “Not just because the BfV then may monitor members, its elected officials and state associations, listening to telephone conversations in special cases, recording chats and observing suspects. But above all because the observation stigmatises a party.”

In its statement, the SGP warned that the action of the BfV is directed against “anyone who is fighting against social inequality, militarism and oppression and who advocates a socialist perspective.” The ruling class is responding to the increasing radicalization of the working class and youth “by returning to the authoritarian policies of the 1930s, cracking down on socialists and adopting the policies of the far right. This crisis is stripping off the ‘democratic’ facade of German capitalism to reveal the original brown paint.”

It is high time to confront this far-right conspiracy in the state apparatus and defeat the offensive of the BfV and the grand coalition. The SGP appeals to all those seeking to oppose militarism and war, social inequality and the moves towards a police state. Distribute our statement against the BfV, contact us and actively join the fight for a socialist alternative.



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