

Germany: Defend climate activist group “Ende Gelände” against the secret service

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A climate change group linked to the youth organisations of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Left Party and the Greens, who govern together in the city-state of Berlin, are being spied on by the secret service. This is according to the report of the Berlin Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the secret service is called, which was presented to the public by Interior Senator (police minister) Andreas Geisel (SPD) on May 19.

The report classifies the climate change movement “Ende Gelände” (“End of the Road”), which has organized several mass protests against opencast lignite mining, as “left-wing extremist.” This means that the movement, and thus indirectly also the Jusos (Young Socialists), Green Youth and Left Youth Solid, who work with it, are all being monitored by the secret service.

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution accuses “Ende Gelände” of using the methods of civil disobedience, of evaluating “police measures against it as ‘repression’,” of linking climate protection with the “thematic fields of anti-capitalism and anti-fascism,” of aggravating “the climate crisis to a crisis of the political system” and of attempting “to monopolize and radicalize the—mostly young—climate activists.”

In other words, the Berlin state branch of the secret service (*Verfassungsschutz*) describes the movement as “left-wing extremist” because it combines climate protection with criticism of capitalism, state institutions and the prevailing politics and because it seeks to win young people to its aims. The secret service is thus not defending the constitution, which explicitly protects such political activities, but the interests of a privileged elite that sees every form of criticism and opposition as a threat to its rule.

By denouncing anti-capitalist and anti-fascist endeavours as “left-wing extremist,” the secret service is preparing a ban on socialist organisations in the tradition

of Bismarck and Hitler.

The “Union of Values,” an association of right-wing Christian Democrat (CDU/CSU) members, has already called for a nationwide ban on “Ende Gelände.” Its most prominent spokesman, Hans-Georg Maassen, has explicitly welcomed the classification of “Ende Gelände” as left-wing extremist and demanded that the Green Youth be checked for anti-constitutional aspirations as well. He justified this with the argument, “Anyone who shows solidarity with extremist groups should at least be listed as a suspect case.”

Maassen was President of the Federal secret service from 2012 to 2018. He was sent into early retirement because he had supported a right-wing extremist demonstration in Chemnitz.

The federal executives of Green Youth, Left Youth Solid and Jusos have published a joint statement condemning the citing of “Ende Gelände” in the Berlin secret service report. They are proud “to stand up for a planet worth living on together with Ende Gelände,” they write.

They accuse the *Verfassungsschutz* of evaluating climate activists as “extremist,” while “fascist networks are acting more and more self-confidently and almost undisturbed, conspiracy theories are gaining more and more support and right-wing terrorists are murdering people, as in Hanau and Halle.” This is “shameful” and shows “that the analyses of the *Verfassungsschutz* are fundamentally wrong.” The latter once again confused anti-capitalism with antidemocracy and equated “democracy and capitalism.”

The youth organisations of the SPD, Greens and Left Party demand “consequences ... The Office for the Protection of the Constitution is not in a position to take up the necessary work in the fight against right-wing terrorist cells. It must be abolished.”

This demand is correct, but the parties to which the

three youth organizations are affiliated will never carry it out.

The SPD reacted to the statement by fully supporting the domestic intelligence agency. Andreas Geisel, Berlin's Interior Senator, who oversees the matter, praised the secret service report for its "carefully differentiated" presentation. Member of the state parliament Tom Schreiber, who is responsible for secret service issues in the Berlin SPD state parliamentary group, ranted that the "naive contributions to the debate on the abolition of the authority" bordered "more on political bullying and political carnival than on serious contributions to the discussion."

The Left Party and the Greens were somewhat more critical, but they too categorically reject the dissolution of the *Verfassungsschutz*. Even in Thuringia, where Left Party leader Bodo Ramelow is the state premier, the secret service has not been disbanded, even though it was directly involved in setting up the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU) terrorist network and kept Ramelow himself under observation for years.

The reason for this is not difficult to understand. The Left Party, like the SPD and the Greens, defends the capitalist order and the property relations on which it is based. The more the opposition to capitalism grows—a development that is being greatly accelerated by the coronavirus crisis—the more openly the establishment parties resort to censorship, state repression and right-wing extremism to intimidate and suppress this opposition.

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution plays an important role in this. It is a central component of the right-wing conspiracy. It actively participates in the development of right-wing extremist parties and organizations. For example, the leadership of the far-right German National Party (NPD) was so strongly penetrated with police Confidential Informants (CI) that the Federal Constitutional Court refused to ban the neo-Nazi party in 2003 because of a "lack of distance from the state."

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution also had a narrow network of CIs around the terrorist network responsible for the NSU murders and the murder of Kassel's district president Walter Lübcke, people who are still being covered up and protected today. As President of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Hans-Georg Maassen had also met several times with high-ranking representatives of the extreme right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to advise them how to avoid being classified as right-wing extremists.

Two years ago, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution classified the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) as "left-wing extremist," justifying this exclusively because the SGP advocated a socialist programme and criticised capitalism. When the SGP filed a legal complaint against this, the *Verfassungsschutz* responded with an inflammatory diatribe against Marxism and every form of socialist, left-wing, and progressive thinking.

The legal response, written by a large law firm, did not accuse the SGP of illegal activities but justified its persecution based on its view of society, its Marxist stance on history, its political analyses and its socialist objectives. For example, the lawyers of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution declared that "arguing for a democratic, egalitarian, socialist society" ran "contrary to the central values of the Basic Law" (the German Constitution).

The SGP declared at the time, "With its attack on the SGP, this criminal government agency wants to set a precedent for a new kind of legal prosecution of thought crimes that would provide the basis for the prosecution of anyone who criticises the current reactionary social and political situation." The SGP warned, "If the right-wing conspiracy in the state apparatus is not stopped and the SGP is not defended, the dam will be broken for even more far-reaching measures." This has now been confirmed.

At that time, we appealed "to all those who want to defend democratic rights and oppose the growth of the right: Protest against the attack of the *Verfassungsschutz* and defend the SGP." We demanded, "the *Verfassungsschutz* cease the surveillance of the SGP and all other left-wing organizations and that this right-wing hotbed of anti-democratic conspiracies be dissolved."

The SGP reiterates its demand for the dissolution of the *Verfassungsschutz* and advocates that "Ende Gelände" be removed from the report of the Berlin secret service.



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