German secret service officially characterises the Alternative for Germany as a “suspected right-wing extremist case”

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Last week, the president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutz, as Germany’s domestic secret service is called) informed his colleagues from the federal states that the agency would treat the entire Alternative for Germany (AfD) as a suspected right-wing extremist case and will now subject it to observation for intelligence purposes. After years of refusing to do so, the government is now forced to officially recognise the fascistic character of Germany’s largest opposition party.

Given the significance of the rise of fascism once again in Germany, the home of Nazism, it is extraordinary how little media attention is given to the phenomenon in the international press. Outside of an article once every couple months in the *New York Times*, it is virtually ignored in the United States. The fact is, however, that thirty years after the reunification of Germany and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, all claims of an “end of history” and triumph of liberal democracy have been conclusively refuted.

In a comprehensive report leaked to various media outlets, the Verfassungsschutz summarised its justification for the classification, which is based on the statements of 302 functionaries, 88 of them at the federal level. It concludes that the officially disbanded, openly fascist “ Der Flügel ” (“wing”) grouping in the party still exerts great influence. “Violent resistance” could also “not be excluded in principle,” the Verfassungsschutz wrote.

According to the summary statement, political opponents are dubbed “enemies of the people” and “destroyers of Germany” by the party, Muslims are “defamed, belittled and marginalised across the board.” The failure to respect the human dignity of migrants is not only “diametrically opposed” to the constitutional guarantee of human dignity and the principle of equality, “but also greatly endangers social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in Germany.”

There can be no doubt about the right-wing extremist character of the AfD. As early as 2017, its parliamentary group leader and honorary chairman Alexander Gauland called the crimes of the Nazis just so much “bird shit in over 1,000 years of successful German history” and expressed his pride in Hitler’s Wehrmacht soldiers. Party members and elected officials maintain close contacts with violent neo-Nazis and those in the right-wing terrorist scene, whose members hoard weapons and draw up lists of thousands of political opponents whom they intend to round up and shoot on a “day X.”

However, the Verfassungsschutz, which ostensibly answers to the interior ministry, has covered up for and supported the right-wing extremists for years. When the AfD marched through Chemnitz in August 2018 together with other right-wing extremists, inciting the hunting down of refugees as well as anti-Semitic attacks, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer stood behind the demonstration and declared, “If I wasn’t a minister, I would also have taken to the streets as a citizen.”

The then head of the Verfassungsschutz, Hans-Georg Maassen, even denied that there had been any right-wing extremist agitation at all. He had also met regularly with AfD leaders to advise them on how to escape surveillance by the intelligence agencies.

In the same year, the Verfassungsschutz classified the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) as “left-wing extremist” and “anti-constitutional,” among other things, because it positioned itself “against supposed nationalism.” The SGP, more than any other party, has warned of the right-wing danger and organised resistance against it.

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In its annual report, the intelligence service cites protests against AfD party conferences, the “ongoing ‘fight’ against right-wing extremists” and the collection of “information about alleged or actual right-wing extremists and their structures” as evidence of “left-wing extremist” sentiments.

The AfD entered the Bundestag (federal parliament) in 2017. For the first time since the end of the Nazi dictatorship, over 90 right-wing extremist deputies sat in parliament. The party was subsequently courted by all parliamentary groups and integrated into parliamentary work. It was elected to the chair of important committees and finally made the official leader of the opposition when the Social Democratic Party (SPD) resumed its place alongside the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) in the Grand Coalition government. In Thuringia, the CDU and Free Democratic Party (FDP) even formed a government majority with the fascists. In 2019 alone, the AfD received over ten million euros in state support.

It was only because of this policy that the AfD was able to enter all 16 state parliaments, build up a comprehensive party apparatus and massively expand its influence inside the police, army and secret services.

Now, given the enormous opposition to the right-wing extremists, even the Interior Ministry and the Verfassungsschutz cannot avoid officially recognising the character of the AfD. This shows how serious the fascist danger really is and fully confirms the warnings of the SGP.

But neither the government nor the secret services can be expected to seriously fight the AfD in any way. After all, the last few years have shown how closely the Verfassungsschutz is linked to the extreme right.

Even before the AfD, secret service employees set the tone in right-wing extremist organisations, and the Verfassungsschutz financed large sections of the fascist scene. In the course of its “observation,” the Verfassungsschutz infiltrated the neo-Nazi German National Party (NPD) to such an extent that, according to the judges of the Supreme Court, it had to be spoken of as a “state affair.”

The Grand Coalition not only made the AfD the leader of the opposition but is also putting the policies of the right-wing extremists into practice. The construction of inhumane deportation camps for refugees, the strengthening of police state measures and the most massive rearmament since the Second World War all bear the AfD’s imprimatur. This takes on particularly sharp forms with the ruthless policy of re-opening the economy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, which places corporate profits before health and lives.

Because capitalism has nothing more to offer the vast majority of the population than social inequality, militarism and death, the ruling class is increasingly resorting to authoritarian and fascist methods to enforce the policies of the financial oligarchy, as it did in the 1930s. This is why far-right tendencies are being built and strengthened throughout the world.

Donald Trump’s coup attempt on January 6 was a turning point in this respect. Trump mobilised significant parts of the state apparatus, the Republican Party, and a fascist mob to try and overturn the US elections and establish a presidential dictatorship. Not for nothing did AfD Bundestag member Martin Renner write on Facebook shortly after the storming of the Capitol, “Trump is waging the same political battle—which already has to be called a culture war—as we are as the ‘Alternative for Germany.’”

In the US, as in Germany, the opposition of official politics to the far-right is mendacious and hypocritical. They do not fear the programme of the fascists so much as the resistance that is developing against it in the working class. All historical experiences show that the struggle against fascism cannot be based on the bourgeois state and its secret services. The latter inevitably use their increased powers to suppress opposition from the left.

The only way to stop the right-wing danger is to mobilise the international working class against the root of the evil, capitalism. This is the perspective for which the SGP is fighting in this year’s federal election. We call on all those who reject the return of fascism and war to support this election campaign and become members of the SGP.

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