

Right-wing extremist Hans-Georg Maassen runs for the Christian Democrats in German general election

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Former President of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as Germany's secret service is called, Hans-Georg Maassen will run for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the upcoming federal elections. He was selected at the end of April by the four CDU district associations of Schmalkalden-Meiningen, Hildburghausen, Sonneberg and Suhl in Thuringia as a direct candidate for the Bundestag (federal parliament) with 37 out of 43 votes cast.

The selection of Maassen, which CDU chancellor candidate Armin Laschet defended at a press conference on Monday, shows the extent to which the ruling class in Germany is once again relying on fascist forces 75 years after the fall of Hitler's Third Reich. Maassen, more than anyone else, is the face of the far-right conspiracy inside the state apparatus, whose political representation in parliament takes the form of the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

In his role as head of the domestic intelligence service between 2012 and 2018, Maassen played a key role in covering up and strengthening far-right terrorist networks in the police, military and intelligence agencies, and advancing the agenda of the extreme right.

As president of the Verfassungsschutz (BfV) at the time, Maassen was responsible for the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) being included in the agency's 2017 annual report as a "left-wing extremist party" and "object of surveillance." This was because, as the report states, the SGP stands for a "democratic, egalitarian and socialist society." The report, which the federal government still adheres to today, bears the signature of the AfD and criminalises any left-wing criticism of capitalism and the right-wing policies of all the establishment parties as "left-wing extremist" and "anti-constitutional."

When a far-right mob marched through Chemnitz in August 2018, hunting down foreigners, immigrants and Jews, Maassen described reports about this as "fiction." He called videos documenting the violence "disinformation" and "misinformation," to applause from AfD honorary leader Alexander Gauland. When the grand coalition federal government of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (SPD) then felt compelled to make Maassen retire early due to massive popular opposition, he ranted in the style of the extreme right about a conspiracy of "radical left-wing forces."

Since then, Maassen has openly acted as a far-right politician. He incites anti-refugee sentiments, trivialises and justifies right-wing extremist terrorist attacks and promotes the building of a fascist movement in right-wing magazines like the Swiss *Weltwoche*. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Maassen positioned himself as one of the country's leading coronavirus deniers. He declared on Twitter that the "novel virus" was "comparable in danger to a flu virus" and called for an immediate end to all protective measures in the interests of business and the corporations.

Representatives of the SPD, Left Party and Greens reacted to Maassen's candidacy with feigned indignation. "Mr Maassen's nomination is certainly a bad day for the CDU, but unfortunately also for all of us," said Olaf Scholz, the SPD chancellor candidate and current finance minister. The CDU had "difficulties with people who move away from what we need for cohesion in Germany," he added.

Maassen has always held extreme right-wing positions and owes his career in the state apparatus in particular to the social democrats. His rise in the Interior Ministry coincides with the term of Otto Schily (SPD), who headed the department from 1998 to 2005. During this time,

Maassen prevented the return of Murat Kurnaz, a native of Bremen, to Germany and ensured that he languished in the notorious US Guantánamo Bay prison camp for five years while innocent.

He held his post as head of the BfV largely under the aegis of the grand coalition. During his watch, the investigation into the series of immigrants murdered by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU) was torpedoed, and right-wing extremist structures within the state apparatus were strengthened. In the process, he established close ties with Scholz. When Scholz ran for SPD chair in 2019, Maassen demonstratively backed him. On Twitter, he described Scholz as a “good man” whom he had “first met at the Visa-UA [Visa Investigative Committee],” declaring, “Olaf Scholz enjoys my trust!”

The Greens’ “criticism” is no less mendacious. They call Maassen a “door opener to the extreme right” (Federal Executive Director Michael Kellner), but at the same time hold on to possibly forming the next federal government with his party.

“Any parliamentary group can put up with one right-wing CDU MP and a handful more,” said Green Party Co-Chair Robert Habeck cynically. He clearly also had in mind the right-wing extremist “door openers” in his own party, such as the mayor of Tübingen, Boris Palmer. In the past, Palmer had repeatedly outed himself as a staunch supporter of Maassen. Among other things, he defended Maassen’s denial of right-wing extremist violence in Chemnitz with the sentence: “Who do I believe more now, antifascist insects or the president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution?”

Most repulsive, however, is the hypocrisy of the Left Party. Maassen’s candidacy was “a red line,” declared Susanne Hennig-Wellsow, party chair together with Janine Wissler since the end of February. “The firewall to the right is gone.” Adding that “Maassen is Höcke in a three-piece suit,” referring to Björn Höcke, leader of the now-disbanded ultra-right “Der Flügel” (“Wing”) inside the AfD. In southern Thuringia, she said, “there will now be a race on the right.” The fact is, the Left Party is not only involved in this “race” but is actively driving it forward.

In Thuringia, where Maassen is now a candidate, the Left Party state prime minister Bodo Ramelow cooperates with the fascists in the state parliament committees and hoists them into important offices. Last February, Ramelow helped AfD deputy Michael Kaufmann to the vice presidency in the Thuringia state parliament with his own vote.

The Left Party’s support for the extreme right in Thuringia is no exception; there is an entire wing around former parliamentary group leader Sahra Wagenknecht that openly spreads nationalism, rails against immigrants, and demands an immediate end to all protective measures in the pandemic.

This course is supported by the vast majority of the Left Party and the party leadership. Wagenknecht will “always play a prominent role in this party,” Hennig-Wellsow and Wissler declared at their first joint press conference. Last month, Wagenknecht was then elected by a large majority as the Left Party lead candidate in Germany’s most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia, even though she had just published her book *Die Selbstgerechten (The Self-Righteous)*, which was hailed by the AfD.

The Left Party has also long since made its real position clear concerning Maassen and the BfV. As recently as March 2013, it had invited Maassen to a public meeting and practised direct solidarity with the domestic intelligence service. Wherever it is in government at state level, it supports increasing the powers of the police and intelligence apparatus, which is permeated by right-wing extremist structures. Its current “criticism” also serves to cover its own tracks.

Maassen’s candidacy for the CDU must be understood as a warning. Faced with the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s, the ruling class is closing ranks based on an extreme-right programme.

In the federal election, the SGP is the only party to oppose the pandemic policies of stepping up state powers at home and militarism abroad, social inequality and “profits before lives,” and to arm the growing opposition to them with a socialist programme. Read and distribute our election statement, help place our party on the ballot and become a member .



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