

Germany's secret service intensifies persecution of war opponents and warns against "Trotskyism"

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While the German government is massively rearming and escalating its proxy war against Russia, the entire state apparatus is being mobilised to fight opposition to war and militarism.

The latest "Constitutional Protection Report" published by the *Verfassungsschutz* (Germany's domestic intelligence service) at the end of June aims to silence anyone who criticises the mass death being organised by the NATO powers, calls social inequality by its name and rejects the government's pro-war narrative.

In 2019, The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) filed a complaint against the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as the agency is officially called) for re-listing it as "extreme left" in its annual report. The secret service justified its surveillance of the SGP by saying that it fought against "alleged nationalism, imperialism and militarism". Later, the Federal Interior Ministry declared that the SGP was extremist because it fought for a "democratic, egalitarian and socialist society".

When the Berlin Administrative Court adopted these extremely undemocratic arguments made by the *Verfassungsschutz*, the SGP filed a constitutional complaint, stating: "Like their historical forebears, the government and the courts today oppose not only socialist ideas but the basic principles of a democratic society, which are incompatible with their pro-war policies and the robbery of the working class." The SGP warned that Germany's return to an aggressive war and great power policy went hand in hand with the establishment of a dictatorship and a modern form of *Gesinnungsjustiz* [justice based on opinions]. One year after the start of the Ukraine war, this is now proving true across the board.

In the foreword to the current report, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (Social Democrat, SPD) declares that views that run counter to the German war effort are to be banned from public discussion. The Ukraine war adds an "additional dimension" to the "threat" posed by "disinformation campaigns" and requires "a turning point for internal security as well", Faeser said. The "targeted spreading and dissemination" of undesirable information is "part of the repertoire of illegitimate influence by foreign states" and must be combated by cyber measures.

The report again lists the SGP as an object of surveillance and accuses it of "propagating class struggle" and "Marxist class thinking". Referencing Trotskyism seventeen times, the intelligence service is particularly concerned about the SGP's agitation against militarism and war, which increasingly coincides with the rejection of war by large sections of the population. One passage, for example, states:

Currently, the rejection of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is regularly misused in an attempt to divert the humanitarian commitment that exists among young people into a

Trotskyist-interpreted resistance against supposed "militarism" and "imperialism" and against "capital".

The implications are unmistakable. In the midst of the bloodbath in Ukraine, which has already cost hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides, the secret service fears that young people's "humanitarian engagement"—i.e., their rejection of the war—will develop into a conscious opposition to German war policy and the ruling class. According to this logic, anyone looking for a way to stop this senseless mass death and the danger of nuclear war is already an "enemy of the constitution".

In 2018, the SGP warned that its persecution would be directed against anyone who criticised the present reactionary social and political developments: "Striking workers will then be persecuted as well as booksellers who sell Marxist literature or critical artists, journalists and intellectuals." The current *Verfassungsschutz* report shows how far this development has already progressed.

The report brands as "left-wing extremist" anyone who looks at society with open eyes and responds accordingly. The report describes "anti-militarism", "anti-imperialism" and even "anti-fascism" as "left-wing extremist fields of action" whose actors are "fundamentally" prepared to use violence and must be spied on.

The definitions used by the secret service are extremely broad. All those who, for example, "in the context of climate or housing policy" attribute "current problems to 'capitalism' as the 'cause of all evil'" are already considered left-wing extremists. Such "lines of argument which discredit the democratic order and its institutions are intended to make Marxist-Leninist analytical frameworks socially acceptable and thus shift the political discourse in the direction of one's own extremist positions". This in turn is aimed at creating "revolutionary consciousness, a 'mass base' and ultimately a revolutionary situation".

Typical examples of "left-wing extremism" cited by the secret service include "NATO, the USA and generally 'the West' [being] propagated as the supposed cause of the war". Left-wing extremist "anti-imperialists" are also of the opinion that "the 'capitalist' states open up new markets through 'imperialist' policies, also by force, in order to maximise profits". The "potential danger" posed by such views and individuals must be classified as "high", according to the report.

Anti-fascist archives and newspapers are also stigmatised and criminalised as "left-wing extremist" because their "agitation" "imputes a 'repressive character' to the state", "disqualifies court decisions as politically motivated class justice" and "gives the impression of a 'police state'" which acts arbitrarily. Even groups that provide mere legal assistance to "left-wing extremist criminals" are to be persecuted because their work is aimed at "reducing the potential for deterrence under

criminal law”. The same applies to libraries that “serve as meeting places for left-wing extremists”.

Finally, the report specifically addresses groups calling for the “building of a new ‘anti-war movement’” in light of the Ukraine war and supposedly “dogmatic left-wing extremism”. The latter “condemns the war as a fraternal war’ because workers turned [their] guns on each other instead of fighting the real main enemy, their ‘own ruling class’, and ending the escalation of imperialist interests between Russia, Ukraine and NATO”.

The criminalisation of opposition goes far beyond this, however. While the German government is rolling out its tanks all over Eastern Europe in the war against Russia, anyone who rejects the pro-war narrative or holds a different opinion from the government on foreign policy issues is stigmatised as an enemy of the state or a “multiplier” of enemy propaganda.

The term “illegitimate influence of foreign powers” is used by the *Verfassungsschutz* to apply to all alleged attempts by “foreign states” to “influence public opinion in their favour in order to influence political decision-making processes” through “state-influenced organisations” at home. With such a definition, not only can any socialists and opponents of war be persecuted, but also professional associations, bourgeois parties, religious organisations, cultural exchange programmes and language schools.

The unprecedented German rearmament drive and war intervention in Ukraine has accelerated the growth of opposition, the intelligence agency says: “The already high-frequency and extensive dissemination of pro-Russian narratives, state propaganda, and disinformation has increased significantly in intensity since the start of the Russian war of aggression.” The report warns of the influence of popular youth on social media: “In addition to state actors, influencers and activists are playing an increased role as multipliers of propaganda and disinformation for Russia.”

This “propaganda and disinformation” is combated by the *Verfassungsschutz* in lockstep with the entire government and state apparatus. The report explicitly refers to the National Cyber Defence Centre (including the Federal Office for Information Security, German Federal Bank, Foreign Intelligence Service, Federal Police and Armed Forces) and the “Hybrid Threats Working Group”. The latter serves the “Strategic Coordination” of the entire federal government and controls its own propaganda measures, including those of the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Ministry (AA), the Federal Press Office (BPA) and the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM).

Elsewhere, the report opposes a form of “delegitimation of the state,” which takes place “not through an open rejection of democracy as such, but through a constant disparagement of and agitation against democratically legitimised representatives and institutions of the state”. Criticism of the government is thus no longer a fundamental right but an attack on democracy! This is the flawless argumentation of a police state.

While critics of capitalism, imperialism and fascism are vilified as “left-wing extremists” and associated with violence, terrorist attacks can be carried out against religious minorities, monarchist coups can be prepared and the assassination of social democratic government members can be planned without this being considered “right-wing extremism”.

For example, under “delegitimation of the state relevant to constitutional protection,” the report lists the Telegram network “United Patriots,” whose members planned to kidnap Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach and assassinate his bodyguards in the spring of 2022. According to the Attorney General, the group drew up concrete plans to sabotage substations and power lines on a “day X” in order to create “civil war-like conditions” and to “take over the government” by force of arms. The category under which the group is listed was created in April 2021 specifically to downplay right-wing terror and equate it with general “hostility to the state”.

According to the *Verfassungsschutz* network the Bundeswehr (Army) officers, police officers and politicians belonging to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), whose plans for a coup became public last December, was also not right-wing extremist. At the time, the Federal Prosecutor’s Office spoke of a “terrorist organisation” that aimed to “seize power in Germany” at the cost of “homicide” and wanted to “enter the Bundestag [federal parliament] armed and arrest politicians”. The *Verfassungsschutz* report lists the case under “‘Reichsbürger’ and ‘Selbstverwalter’” (“Citizens of the Reich” and “Self-administrators” do not recognise the authority of Germany’s postwar state) and emphasises that only “a small part” of the *Reichsbürger* are clearly right-wing extremists.

The report only refers to the “Hannibal” fascist network, whose backers are still at large, insofar as it states that its member Franco A. has meanwhile been sentenced to prison for “preparing a serious act of violence endangering the state”—he wanted to kill politicians and place the blame on refugees. Regarding the “NSU 2.0” criminal neo-fascist network, which for years used police databases to send death threats to left-wing and liberal public figures, the report repeats the myth that a long-term unemployed man from Berlin who was apprehended was the sole “author”.

The *Verfassungsschutz* also denies the fascist character of the Yom Kippur attack on a synagogue in Halle (2019) and the mass murder of nine people with a migration background in Hanau (2020). Both murderers were “self-radicalised perpetrators” who acted “without any recognisable connection to already known structures in the right-wing extremist scene” and thus could not be assigned to the “right-wing terrorist milieu”. Both were driven by “conspiracy theories and online subcultures” which “are not necessarily assigned to right-wing extremism”.

In reality, anyone in their right mind can identify the murderers as fascists and right-wing extremists. Their “milieus” and “scene”—i.e., their helpers, masterminds, leaders and backers—can also be identified. But the *Verfassungsschutz* does not want to provide any information about these structures because it is deeply involved in them itself. As in the Weimar Republic in the 1920s and 30s, murderous fascists are useful “assets” for the secret services, who can be deployed as needed to eliminate political opponents or serve as spearheads for war abroad.

It has been known for years that the murderers of the so-called neo-Nazi “National Socialist Underground” (NSU) were supported by German intelligence agents and that their right-wing extremist environment was built up with state funds. Journalistic research and several parliamentary investigative committees have established that *Verfassungsschutz* undercover operatives built up the far-right German National Party (NPD), founded armed neo-Nazi groups, moderated fascist online networks and produced influential racist publications.

Those who tangle with the neo-Nazi protégés of the secret service are punished with years of imprisonment and receive a prominent entry in the *Verfassungsschutz* report. For example, Lina E., a student from Leipzig, was convicted for being part of a “criminal organisation” that committed “violent attacks on political opponents”—meaning Nazi martial artists. As reported by *WSWS*, the politically motivated verdict against Lina E. was based on conjecture and circumstantial evidence obtained by detectives in open cooperation with neo-Nazis. Previously, Lina E. had spent two and a half years in pre-trial detention.

As the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported in September, the *Verfassungsschutz* also employs at least 100 agents, each of whom uses up to five or six fake profiles in social media to commit “crimes typical of the scene”, such as incitement of the people, in order to “strengthen the world view” of persons from the right-wing extremist milieu. Former *Verfassungsschutz* President Hans-Georg Maaßen, who placed the SGP under surveillance, appeared in Budapest in May as a star guest at this year’s CPAC conference, which gathers radical right-wing politicians and

strategists from all over the world—including former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Hungarian President Viktor Orban.

The intelligence agency's close ties to the far right and its aggressive targeting of left-wing critics of the pro-war course and social inequality underscores the importance of the constitutional challenge the SGP has filed against its surveillance by *Verfassungsschutz*. A statement from the party said:

The SGP's appeal is of enormous political significance because the government and the courts want to make an example of the SGP. In the face of the proxy war that the German government is waging against Russia, the most extensive rearmament since Hitler, and ferocious attacks on workers through galloping inflation, wage theft and mass layoffs, the aim is to silence anyone who speaks out against this aggressive class policy or even calls it by its name.

If the Supreme Court follows the government and the ruling in the lower court, it will be a step towards dictatorship. Every strike by workers, every protest against rearmament and every demonstration against the far right could be banned as anti-constitutional.

The 2022 *Verfassungsschutz* report makes it clear how far this development has progressed and how important it is to support the SGP's struggle against the *Verfassungsschutz*. We therefore call on all readers to sign our petition against surveillance by the *Verfassungsschutz* and to defend the SGP. We demand an immediate stop to the surveillance of all left-wing organisations by the *Verfassungsschutz* and the dissolution of this criminal agency.



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