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By Christoph Vandreier
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Germany: Former secret service boss agitates against refugees and plays down right-wing terrorism

One year after his removal as head of Germany's domestic secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) has become one of the spokesmen for the extreme right. On Tuesday, Markus Lanz offered him a platform on his talk show for his aggressive smear campaign against refugees as well as the trivialisation and justification of right-wing extremist terrorist attacks. The performance was in every respect that of a fascist ideologist.

For example, Maassen presented right-wing extremists who carry out terrorist attacks on defenceless refugees and their accommodation as concerned citizens. He declared, "The people who carry out the attacks on asylum shelters, at least the identified suspects, were for the most part not right-wing extremists, were not Nazis. They were middle class people who had radicalised themselves."

Maassen openly shared the motives of the right-wing terrorists and claimed that they only carried out their attacks because policies were being pursued that they did not want and that they "no longer saw themselves reflected in the media." The media had talked about refugees coming in 2015, but it was immigrants that had come, said Maassen, who wants to deprive the hundreds of thousands of war refugees who have come to the country since 2015 of any protection.

According to Maassen, the reporting on refugees should have had "consequences." But unfortunately, he laments, no director has had to resign. The former president of the Office

for the Protection of the Constitution, as the German secret service is known, claimed that “People are calling out a mendacious press,” because the public broadcasters report “nonsense.”

Instead of “refugees,” Maassen said, the report should speak of “1.8 million Arabs” who had come to Germany. His aim is to stir up racist resentments in order to hide the tragic fate of the refugees. The media should stop reporting on “little girls with big eyes,” he said. As well as the word “refugee,” the term “distress at sea” should no longer be used in this context.

The media “are trying to generate a certain world view,” Maassen declared. “I do not accept this framework. I don’t accept the talk about refugees, the talk about distress at sea, but I do expect people to talk about what it’s really about.” In fact, the sea rescue missions, which can only save a small number of people from drowning, were a “shuttle service” to Europe, he claimed.

Maassen left no doubt that these brutal and radical right-wing positions have constituted the basis of his work as president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Talking to Lanz, he vehemently defended his public intervention regarding the right-wing extremist riots in Chemnitz. After neo-Nazis had rampaged through the city for days, attacked and hunted down immigrants and political opponents, Maassen falsely claimed in *Bild Zeitung* that there was no evidence of such activities and that it was possibly a case of “deliberate misinformation.”

In the meantime, it has been proven beyond doubt that there had been attacks and that a video, on which the press report was based, is authentic. Nevertheless, Maassen declared that his statement at the time was not an error. “I didn’t just do it intentionally, I did it deliberately,” he said on the programme. Then he made clear what his intention was.

Maassen accused the *Tagesschau* news broadcast of lying, and speculated about a conspiracy of the news programme with the Antifa, because the video concerned had been posted on an antifascist forum, among others, before it received news coverage. “Why did they accept an anti-fascist video as proof? What is the relationship between *Tagesschau* and Antifa? In my opinion, these are legitimate questions, which should be asked by the president of the domestic intelligence agency.”

Maassen was able to present all these right-wing extremist utterances on prime-time public television. And not only that. The moderator Markus Lanz described his right-wing extremist guest as an “excellent official,” agreed with him on several occasions and if he

was annoyed at all, it was expressed over “framework” or “wording”—i.e., the terms used by Maassen. In terms of content, he did not oppose Maassen in any way, despite some disagreements. “You are right,” Lanz declared bluntly, adding as a reason, “You know that we have a population growth in Africa that is enormous.”

This massive promotion of Maassen—not only by broadcaster ARD, but by numerous other media—shows that his views are not a matter of a single individual or an extreme right-wing aberration. Maassen’s right-wing and anti-refugee positions have been known for a long time. In August 2012, the government consciously appointed him president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in order to defend and continue the operations of the extreme right-wing networks within the agency that became known after the uncovering of the series of murders carried out by the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU).

In his official capacity, he had also maintained close ties with politicians of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and discussed the annual reports of the Verfassungsschutz (secret service) with them. While the AfD, its fascist Höcke “wing” and its neo-Nazi environment are not mentioned at all in the chapter on “Right-wing extremism,” anyone who criticises capitalism is defamed as being a left-wing extremist by the Verfassungsschutz and subject to secret service surveillance.

In 2018, Maassen included the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) as “left-wing extremist” in the Verfassungsschutz report for the first time, because it opposes the growing militarism and massive shift to the right in official politics, thus expressing the broad opposition in the population. In doing so, the secret service does not even pretend that the SGP is violent or anti-constitutional, explicitly confirming it pursues its goals by legal means. The secret service justifies its surveillance of the SGP solely on the grounds that it advocates a socialist programme and criticises capitalism.

The SGP has therefore brought a legal action against the federal Ministry of the Interior before the Berlin Administrative Court. “While the Office for the Protection of the Constitution holds its protective hand over terrorists and finances and controls the right-wing extremist scene via confidential informants, anyone who opposes the shift to the right and opposes the right-wing murder gangs and the AfD is placed under secret service observation,” the SGP states.

Since Maassen was forced into early retirement last November, he has repeatedly confirmed this assessment. In November, he published a fascistic manifesto in the Swiss

news weekly *Weltwoche*, in which he declared “the future of Germany” and “the stability of our democracy” were endangered by socialism. A month later, he stated in the right-wing Catholic daily newspaper *Tagespost* that anyone calling for the “expropriation of all so-called capitalists” should be classified as left-wing extremist.

Now, on one of the most well-known talk shows on public television, he declares that right-wing terrorists who hunt down refugees and set fire to their accommodation are not extremists.

At the same time, the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats has installed Thomas Haldenwang (CDU), who had worked for five years as Maassen’s deputy, to continue the course of the former head of the secret service. The 2019 *Verfassungsschutz* report does not mention the right-wing extremist terrorist networks in the military, the AfD and other organisations, while the SGP, left-wing youth groups and anti-fascists are defamed as “left-wing extremists.”

This shift to the right by the political establishment can only be understood as arising from its enormous fear of the social movements that are currently breaking out all over the world, and especially in France. The promotion of extreme right-wing positions and the aggressive action against socialists shows that the ruling class in Germany is increasingly using authoritarian and fascist methods to openly impose its policy of militarism and blatant social inequality against the growing resistance in the working class.

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