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## **Scholz orders closure of one of the opposition's largest media networks after interview with Zakharova**



On 16 July, Jürgen Elsässer (67) woke up startled at 6 a.m., opened the door of his house while still in his dressing gown, and in front of him were dozens of police officers, some with their faces covered, heavily armed, in a surreal image befitting any authoritarian state. However, it was in Brandenburg, on the outskirts of Berlin, in the Germany of the tragicomic Scholz government, aka the ‘Traffic Light’ coalition.

The police were about to raid his house, while more than 200 federal and Brandenburg state agents were deployed to carry out further searches in eight other houses and offices in the region. Other raids were carried out in the states of Saxony, Hesse and Saxony-Anhalt, ordered by Interior Minister Nancy Faeser (SPD), who had ordered Compact to be closed by decree as an ‘association’, when it was legally a publishing house. She also banned any activity by the audiovisual company that produced Compact’s content, such as its YouTube, Facebook and Instagram accounts.

The minister later explained that Compact ‘incites hatred against Jews, against people with a history of migration and against our parliamentary democracy in an indescribable way’.

According to the Ministry, the legal basis is the Law on Associations, according to which organisations that are directed against the free and democratic basic order can also be banned. ‘The ban shows that we are also taking action against intellectual arsonists who are fuelling a climate of hatred and violence against refugees and migrants and who want to bypass our democratic state,’ the minister explained. “Our message is very clear: we will not allow ethnicity to define who belongs in Germany and who does not. Our rule of law protects all those who are harassed because of their faith, their origin, the colour of their skin or even their democratic position.

As early as 2022, the German intelligence services (BND) considered that Compact, ‘as a multimedia company, conveys anti-democratic positions in society and against human dignity’, and since then, it has been classified as far-right by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and under suspicion.

Interviewed by journalists during the police search of the house where he lives with his wife and partner in the company, Elsässer said that ‘in 14 years of existence there has not been a single criminal charge against his magazine’, which is why he was surprised by the minister’s announcement. He also said that he was in contact with his lawyer to defend his rights and jokingly imitated Donald Trump with his fist raised saying that he was ‘ready for a fight’.

### **Mixed reactions in the press**

While journalists from the mainstream media are refusing to give this episode its due importance, others have seen the government’s unusual decision as a clear warning sign. Opinions were divided between the established media and the few journalists still struggling to report, and the internet was abuzz with the event. The tag #Compact was the main topic on German Twitter throughout the day, and Germans and foreigners alike made the Scholz government’s persecution of the media viral. Germany is under the scrutiny of international public opinion for the worst reasons.

Elsässer complains that this is ‘the biggest attack on press freedom in Germany since the 1962 Spiegel Magazine scandal’. At that time, it was discovered that the Adenauer government wanted to silence several journalists by illegal means for political reasons. When this was discovered, Defence Minister Franz Josef Strauß and two state secretaries had to resign. However, not even then was a troublesome media outlet banned, as it is now with his case. Elsässer says that only in the GDR and during National Socialism were things like this scene.

### **The metamorphosis of Elsässer, the current standard-holder of Germany’s ‘new right’**

Jürgen Elsässer is a long-time political activist. With a degree in history and a short career as a teacher, he started out in the far-left anti-German movement in the 1970s, wrote books with a strong anti-national slant, worked on the editorial boards of various left-wing publications such as Junge Welt, Neues Deutschland, he collaborated with Der Freitag and the Jüdische Allgemeine and was editor-in-chief of Konkret magazine, until after disagreements with other elements, he founded Compact magazine in 2010, with the idea of bringing together the best of the left and the right in a transversal front ('Querfront'), based on national sovereignty, the multipolar world and the rejection of the EU and NATO.

In 2017, with the demonstrations against Merkel's open-door immigration policy, he joined forces with the leader of the AfD in Thuringia, Björn Höcke, considered a quasi-neo-Nazi, and Martin Sellner, leader of Austria's Identity Movement. Since then, the magazine has become a major reference point for the so-called 'new right' and Elsässer has become one of the central figures in the German nationalist spectrum.

His political proposal and trajectory are controversial and very heterodox. He clearly calls for the 'remigration' of non-European foreigners, makes claims to Polish territories, likes to provoke his opponents, has aligned himself with openly Islamophobic elements such as Michael Stürzenberger or the PEGIDA movement, has played on the edge, but always within the rules of the game. At least until today.

Elsässer is an experienced figure, with a huge culture and a large archive of articles and books written, where he has changed his mind, or at least his appearance. He says that he hasn't changed at all, that he remains in the same political position as he was 40 years ago.

He worked for the Die Linke parliamentary group as a member of the BND enquiry committee in the Bundestag. He is an insightful expert on geopolitical issues. In 2012, he was received by then president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad in Tehran, together with a German entourage. About that trip to Iran, he said he enjoyed everything, only missing a good cold beer, like the good German he claims to be. He recently teamed up with Maximilian Krah, the AfD's European frontrunner, who advocates a Germany that guarantees its status as a pole in the multipolar world that has already been born and is taking its first steps.

### **A quality magazine**

Compact magazine was the centrepiece of the network that included audiovisual channels, the organisation of events, conferences, the publishing and sale of books and Compact TV, with its YouTube channel, which recently reached one million views a day.

Over the years, you could say that the magazine has moved to the right. In 2014, it dedicated a cover to Netanyahu, in which it accused him of perpetrating a 'Genocide in Gaza', then

shifted its focus to criticising immigration, especially of Islamic origin. Later articles were also read against Hamas. With the pandemic, it took a clear stance against the government, the pharmaceutical industry and the accusation of a biological warfare conspiracy by the great powers of the West.

With Russia's entry into Ukraine, it advocated dialogue with Moscow and the resumption of Russian energy. It was one of the few media outlets to do an exhaustive report on the Nord Stream attacks, to which it devoted almost an entire issue. In its December 2023 issue, it details how an extremely powerful Zionist sect with global reach, currently in the Israeli government, is planning an eschatological end-of-times war with catastrophic consequences for the whole world.

The absence of the Compact has already been felt since the arrival of the 'Traffic Light' government. Heavy pressure on distributors led to the magazine disappearing from petrol stations, supermarkets, newsagents and bookshops. Little by little, it was confined to subscribers. It was one of the few magazines where you could read good geopolitical articles.

### **The German typhoon**

The magazine ban is just one more of the government's decisions that threaten to divide German society, but it doesn't seem to bother the establishment, either in the government or in the opposition on the traditional right.

Brandenburg's Interior Minister Michael Stübgen (CDU) welcomed the federal government's move. Stübgen accused the magazine of spreading 'Russian war propaganda and conspiracy theories against the democratic order'. He also said that 'this platform of enemies of democracy has only one goal, which is the destruction of our liberal society'.

In a comment on social media, historian Hermann Ploppa, identified with the left wing and linked to the famous alternative politics portal Apolut, confesses that 'the Compact is not to my liking. A lot of it is simply disgusting. But there is no violation of the law. It's also clear that the Compact ban is the opening fanfare to suppress the inconvenient media. That's why we shouldn't stand idly by. WE ARE NEXT.'

Across the party spectrum, only the AfD criticised the magazine ban. The party's leaders, Tino Chrupalla and Alice Weidel, jointly announced on Tuesday that it was a 'serious blow to press freedom'. 'The banning of a media organisation means the denial of discourse and diversity of opinion.' According to the far-right party, the interior minister is abusing her powers to 'suppress critical information'.

Sahra Wagenknecht's BSW had not commented on the Compact ban at the time of writing. Wagenknecht has been on the cover of the magazine on more than one occasion. In its

December 2022 issue, she was described as ‘The best chancellor: A candidate for left and right’. The relationship between Elsässer and Wagenknecht goes back to the 90s. In 1996, a still communist Elsässer interviewed his comrade Wagenknecht, long before he became one of the main ideologues of the new ‘Querfront’ between the ‘left of labour and the right of values’, an enterprise for which he has called on Wagenknecht to participate on several occasions in recent times.

### **The Zakharova interview**

If the move against Compact magazine didn’t come without warning, it did coincide with the interview with Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, conducted two days earlier by Compact’s Moscow correspondent Hansjörg Müller and broadcast on the magazine’s website and YouTube channel.

With hundreds of thousands of hits on the first day on the website and more than 250,000 on YouTube, Zakharova ridiculed the “traffic light” government in the one-and-a-half hour interview. She sharply criticised the policies of Scholz, Baerbock and the sanctions, which not only destroy relations between Berlin and Moscow, but also harm Germany’s own interests, all at the behest of “third-party interests”.

The Russian spokeswoman also alluded to the problem of immigration in Germany, which she said had geopolitical origins, with Berlin playing a subservient role to “US and British operations in the Middle East and Southern Africa”, which are causing the migratory chaos that is burdening Europe.

She also spoke about Germany’s obligations under the 1999 2+4 Treaty, the murky role of the German authorities in the case of Navalny’s alleged poisoning in 2020, the pandemic, vaccines and the announced abolition of paper money in Europe, the Federal Reserve, the destruction of Nord Stream, and much more. All in all, a fascinating interview, highly recommended, and very uncomfortable for Western liberal elites, especially Germans.

It’s clear that, once again, the German government is acting in accordance with the Washington Consensus, because the magazine in question was clearly in favour of peace between Germany and Russia, was gaining public influence and threatening several pillars on which Germany’s structure has rested since 1945. The fact that this doesn’t please many people is understandable, but it does make it an illegal outlet. Mrs Faeser’s decision sets a serious precedent, foreshadowing difficult days ahead for free information in Germany and Europe. Having found no illegality, the German government had to use two paragraphs of a law on associations to ban a publishing house because it was inconvenient. It’s all food for thought.

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