

Main witness in German neo-Nazi party trial exposed as secret service agent

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Publication of the fact that one of the principal witnesses in the trial to ban the neo-fascist National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) was, for many years, an informant of the German secret service has caused considerable difficulties for Interior Minister Otto Schily. At a press conference in Berlin last week, Schily (a member of the Social Democratic Party, SPD) categorically rejected demands by the opposition Christian Democrats that he resign. He did, however, admit to “serious errors” on the part of several prominent staff members in his ministry.

The day before, the Federal Constitutional Court had called off the preliminary oral hearing of the case to ban the NPD, scheduled for February 5, after it discovered “more or less accidentally” that one of the seven NPD executive committee members, on whose testimony the case to ban the party rested, had been collaborating closely with the secret services for 36 years.

Much of the press focussed attention on the sloppy operations in the interior ministry. Prominent officials were said to have kept the “explosive information” to themselves, to have acted arbitrarily, only informing the interior minister at the last minute, if at all, and to have handled the business “sloppily”. The opposition accused Interior Minister Schily of not having his ministry under control.

However, the actual circumstances of the case are far more important than the procedural matters and so-called sloppiness in the interior ministry. They throw a sharp light on the long-standing, close links between sections of the state apparatus and the neo-fascist NPD and its racist supporters. The unprofessional handling of secret service information is a result of the fact that the connection between the neo-fascists and the secret service was long known in government circles and was regarded as completely normal.

Concretely, it concerns 66-year-old Wolfgang Frenz, who is a founder member of the NPD and sits on its national executive committee. According to his own admission, “from the first day” he played a key role in the NPD’s regional organisation in North Rhine-Westphalia and worked intensively on the party’s publications *Deutsche Zukunft-Laenderspiegel NRW* and *Deutsche Stimme*.

In a recent television interview, Frenz admitted he had been an informant and contact of the secret service for 36 years. During regular meetings with his secret service handlers, however, he claims he passed on only “publicly accessible information” and nothing internal. Frenz told reporters said he was able to square this collaboration with his conscience “since I did not reveal any secrets”.

Asked how this collaboration with the secret service began, Frenz answered that a secret service official had spoken to him “because as a founder member, I had the most intimate and longest knowledge of the NPD”. He received between 600 and 800 German marks (US\$400) for acting as an informant, money he claims to have declared on his tax returns and then paid to the party as a donation. Over 36 years, this means between 250,000 and 300,000 marks in state funds flowed into the NPD as a result of Frenz’s collaboration alone.

According to several press reports, which have not been denied, about 100 secret agents are active in the NPD. If one assumes that at least some of them acted similarly to Wolfgang Frenz, then a majority of the racist and anti-Semitic agitation and building of the skinhead goon squads was financed with public funds.

An initial statement by the speaker of the parliamentary home affairs committee, Dieter Wiefelputz (SPD), tried to play down the affair. According to Wiefelputz, the evidence of Wolfgang Frenz is of only secondary importance in the case against the NPD, just a “small part in a large puzzle”, without which the case still stands. But this is not true. In the indictment, the main proof for the aggressive anti-Semitism of the NPD cites two people: Horst Mahler and Wolfgang Frenz. According to one leading newspaper, “Frenz is thus a principal witness for the prosecution.”

The charges calling for the banning of the NPD quote extensively from an anti-Semitic text that Frenz had published in 1998. In this, he calls Adolf Hitler “a historic figure of millennial stature”, and writes: “With his anti-Semitism, Hitler was really a stroke of luck for the Jews. Out of this Hitlerite anti-Semitism arose the euphoric Semitic mass hysteria that led to the establishment of the state of Israel, whose nationalist aspirations have made the world hold its breath.” Frenz claims: “If there had been no Auschwitz, the Jews would have to invent it, because Auschwitz represents the seizure of power by the Jewish network.”

Frenz regards the “white race” as superior to other ethnic groups, and sees the “Orientals” overrunning Europe. People he considers inferior are “genetic scrap”, according to Frenz.

In the prosecution case calling for a ban on the party, his utterances are quoted in several places to show the essential similarity between the NPD and Hitler’s Nazi party. For example, Frenz writes of the “mulattoisation of the European centre” and warns against “bastardised American society”. The Nazis employed an almost identical vocabulary. One paper quotes Frenz saying the aim of the NPD’s opponents is to create “a multicultural Afro-Asiatic mixed race on our continent”.

When these utterances were published, Wiefelputz tried to smooth things over again. No connection existed between Frenz and the secret service at the time these views were published, Wiefelputz claims. Collaboration was terminated in 1995 on the part of the intelligence services. But this statement has also raised many contradictions.

First of all, it does nothing to change the fact that the secret service operated for many decades with a confirmed fascist and financially supported his activities. No one has claimed that Frenz’s hysterical anti-Semitism only began in the second half of the 1990s. Second, why does Frenz need permission from the secret service to give testimony, if it concerns evidence from long after he had been collaborating with them?

Finally, neither Wiefelputz nor secret service representatives have contradicted Frenz’s claim to have worked for 36 years as a state informant. Since the NPD was only founded in 1964, this can only mean one of two things. Either the collaboration had begun in 1959, which

would mean that the secret service was actively involved in preparations to establish the right-wing extremist NPD; or secret service involvement developed only with the establishment of the NPD, as Frenz claims. Under this scenario, the collaboration extends to the year 2000 and thus existed when Frenz published his anti-Semitic diatribe.

In recent years, it has been revealed time and again that German secret service agents not only monitor and control right-wing parties, but function as agents provocateurs, i.e., encourage and carry out right-wing extremist acts of violence and help build up the organisational structures of the far right.

In 1993, five people died in an arson attack on a house in Solingen, in which Turkish families were residing. Three of the culprits had trained in a karate school run by Bernd Schmitt, a secret service informant.

In 1995, a skinhead named Carsten Szcpepanski tried to drown a Nigerian man in a lake near Berlin. Some time later it became known that at the time of the attack he was an undercover agent for the secret service.

At the beginning of June in 2000, *Der Spiegel* newsweekly reported that the neo-Nazi Thomas Dienel had been employed from 1996 to 1997 in Thuringia as an undercover agent. At the beginning of the 1990s, Dienel was NPD chairman in Thuringia and later created the German National Party. When he was arrested for incitement, anti-Semitic propaganda and fraud, he made contact with the secret service. Following his early release, he claims he had about 80 meetings with his secret service handlers, and received approximately 25,000 marks for his information.

Dienel told the press he had not used these funds for himself, but regarded them as a “donation” for the right-wing scene and used them to procure right-wing propaganda material. Even when his activities on behalf of the secret service had ended, Dienel did not have to forgo the state’s financial assistance. As editor-in-chief of a planned right-wing rag named *Voice for Germany*, the Thuringian Social Department paid Daniel a “small business” subsidy of 18,000 marks.

In 1997, the secret service in Mecklenburg enlisted NPD member Michael Grube and paid him 500 to 700 marks a month for his undercover activities. When he publicly revealed his role in 1999, the 21-year old Grube disclosed explosive information. His two secret service handlers, “Klaus” and “Juergen,” had recommended he seek election as regional NPD chairman for Wismar and Nordmecklenburg. Grube rose within the ranks of the NPD, and the local branch under his charge grew from 12 to 50 members.

Nevertheless, Grube left the NPD at the beginning of 1999 and together with other militant neo-Nazis created the Socialist People’s Party (SVP). With members of this organisation he arranged an arson attack on a pizzeria in Grevesmuehlen, which was carried out in March 1999. On his own admission, he smashed the window of a pizzeria and his accomplices then tossed two Molotov cocktails. The attack destroyed the livelihood of the Nepalese owner, who became unemployed and was later deported.

Another secret service collaborator in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania was Matthias Meier. He was NPD local chairman in Stralsund and also deputy regional chairman, before he abandoned all his offices in March 2000, after being unmasked.

In May last year, the *Thuringer Allgemeine* newspaper reported that the intelligence services in Thuringia had been utilising neo-Nazi Tino Brandt as an informer for several years. During his activities as an agent, Brandt became deputy regional boss of the NPD and was joint founder of a right-wing extremist goon squad called the Thuringia Home Guard, the paper reports. Under Brandt’s leadership the Thuringia Home Guard grew to become the region’s most important neo-Nazi organisation. This right-wing extremist goon squad won increasing influence within the Thuringia NPD. For his services, he received a “more than five-figure sum”, with which, among other things, the Thuringia Home Guard was funded, Brandt said in a television interview.

In light of these close relations between the secret service and the right-

wing extremist scene, the question arises: how many secret service employees are NPD members or sympathisers?

It is known that former Nazis occupied leading positions following the creation of the post-war German secret service in autumn 1950 in Cologne. From 1954 to 1972, Hubert Schruebbbers was able to cling onto the leadership of the service, although as a Nazi judge he had been responsible for sentencing communists and Social Democrats for terrorism. He appointed Albert Ratke as his deputy, who was active until 1945 in the espionage apparatus of SS *Obergruppenfuhrer* Schellenberg.

During Schruebbber’s term of office, one Dr. Halswick, a man who had been a former SS *Obersturmbandfuhrer*, was appointed special adviser to the secret service. And SS *Hauptsturmfuhrer* Wenger, who before 1945 had been a legal adviser to the German embassy in Paris, found a new post in the secret service leadership in Cologne. In 1963, at least 16 of 46 higher-ranking officials in the Cologne headquarters could look back on a Nazi career in the SS or the fascist SD security agency.

Above all, however, the recent events make clear how erroneous it is to call upon the state apparatus to prohibit a political party. Over one year ago, in an article headlined “What are the consequences of banning the NPD?”, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

“The banning of political parties by the capitalist state, even extreme right-wing parties, constitutes a fundamental infringement on democratic rights. The Constitutional Court, whose judges are not elected and thus lack the slightest democratic legitimacy, simply usurp the population’s right to decide which parties they have access to and which they don’t...

“But despite the fact that it is, for the moment, directed against the extreme right wing, an NPD ban would also set the precedent for restricting the political rights of the population and strengthening state authority and control. In the future such bans will be used to criminalise and suppress any opposition to the existing social and political conditions.”

Finally, another question arises. To what extent does the German secret service today represent a state within the state, which is not controlled by anybody and which intervenes independently into political events? One consequence of the machinations of the past weeks and days is that the way is now clear for the NPD to take part in the coming elections to the Bundestag in September. Should the trial procedures against the NPD collapse completely, then extreme right-wing political forces throughout Germany will boast their triumph.

Moreover, Schily’s predicament means the Social Democratic-Green Party coalition government now comes under considerable pressure. Was that intended? It would not be the first time that a Social Democratic government was pressurized by the activities of the secret service. In 1974, the unmasking of East German spy Guenter Guillaume played an important role in the resignation of SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt.



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