

German Christian Democratic official gives interview to neo-Nazi newspaper

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The German state of Brandenburg has for the past few years been at the centre of activities by the extreme right. Since 1990 nearly 20 people have been killed by neo-Nazis. At the end of last year a new case came to light. Three young men from Brandenburg were arrested after they had dragged a 17-year-old youth onto deserted agricultural grounds where they tortured him to death and finally dumped his body in a cesspit. The reason given by the fascist offenders was that their victim looked as if he was “left-wing.”

The connections of the right-wing scene extend to the Brandenburg *Verfassungsschutz* (the “office responsible for the defence of the constitution”—the official name of the German secret police). This was confirmed in the recent trial against the neo-Nazi Toni Stadler, from Cottbus, after Judge Hans-Jürgen Brüning came to the conclusion that the *Verfassungsschutz* had “covered up” the criminal offences committed by the accused and “could have prevented this crime”.

It is not only lower levels of the Brandenburg secret police which have connections to the extreme right wing. These connections reach up to the head of the service. Four days after the pronouncement of judgement in the Stadler case, the extreme-right weekly paper *Junge Freiheit* published an interview with the minister of the interior of Brandenburg, Jörg Schönbohm (CDU—Christian Democratic Union).

The very fact that Schönbohm gave an interview to this paper constitutes an open display of solidarity with the extreme right. The *Junge Freiheit* paper is regarded as the leading mouthpiece of the so-called “new right” in Germany and has, as a result, been put under surveillance by the intelligence services of another German state, Baden-Württemberg.

The content of Schönbohm’s statements in the *Junge Freiheit* also unambiguously fall into line with the political positions held by spectrum of the extreme right.

Besides taking up the well-known hobbyhorses of the conservative right wing—family, nation, law and order and hostility to immigrants—Schönbohm mockingly comments on the officially sanctioned “fight against the right wing” in Germany. He derides the “rituals of anti-fascist struggle” and denigrates such activity.

Schönbohm claims that the fight against right-wing extremism was itself responsible for the increase of right-wing criminal offences. “When the ‘rebellion of the responsible and the decent against the right’ reached its climax, so did the number of right-wing offences. Since this movement has begun to fade, the number of offences has also clearly declined.”

Schönbohm is referring here to German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Two years ago Schröder reacted to widespread indignation at the increasingly bold activities of right-wing skinheads and neo-Nazis by calling for a “rebellion by decent people.” The mass demonstrations which followed were supported by all the parties represented in German parliament and effectively covered up their own role in the growth of xenophobia. But for Schönbohm even such state-sponsored demonstrations went too far. He is proud of proclaiming that he did not take part in these marches.

Schönbohm’s remarks concerning the last federal elections also reveal an extreme right-wing cast of mind. Referring to the opposition of the CDU towards liberalisation of German laws governing citizenship (“double citizenship”), he adds an additional point, claiming that naturalised immigrants were responsible for the defeat of the CDU in federal elections last September. Asked about the reasons for the defeat he answered: “We must not forget the naturalisations that have already taken place because of possible ‘double citizenship’. I assume that this decision was made by the SPD (German Social Democratic Party) and the Greens first of all with the elections and not integration in mind. With a wafer-thin

margin between the government and opposition, this new group decided the elections.”

Schönbohm regards Germany’s SPD-Green government as a conspiracy aimed at undermining the foundations of society. The former German army general explained to *Junge Freiheit*: “We have lost a battle, but not the campaign.... Indeed, during their election campaign the SPD and Greens covered up their real plans for their second term in office, the completion of their own social conceptions. The milestones of this path are double citizenship, immigration laws, disintegration of the family, homosexual marriages, increase in nationalised industry, the rejection of a performance-oriented society, negation of elitism, policies for minorities at the cost of the majority, limitation of Germany’s military capabilities and destabilisation of NATO.... For the CDU this means that we must use all means to avert this ideological path leading towards catastrophe.”

If one translates these accusations into a positive programme, an extreme right-wing orientation come to light: closed borders for immigrants, the strengthening of the family, discrimination against homosexuals, privatisation, strengthening a performance-oriented society, elitism, mistreatment of minorities and strengthening of NATO.

It is neither a coincidence nor the first time that Schönbohm has given an interview in the *Junge Freiheit*. This paper seeks political respectability for a right-wing conservative body of thought. Similar views were widespread among conservative and nationalist circles during the Weimar Republic of the 1920s. But their openly anti-democratic positions and their help in assisting Hitler’s coming to power discredited conservative policies and pushed them into the background after the war.

After the failure of independent projects like the Republican Party, the “new right” around *Junge Freiheit* increasingly turned towards the right-wing of the CDU. Here numerous connections exist, some from the past, but new ones have also been established. The paper is regarded to be a connecting link between the radical right and conservative circles. Here Schönbohm plays an important part. This is why the editors of *Junge Freiheit* sing his praises as one of the few conservative leaders of stature in the CDU.

A further interface between the extreme-right and conservatives is a study centre set up in Weikersheim. It has made a name for itself as a conservative elite school. For a long time this school was run by the former minister

president of Baden-Württemberg, Hans Filbinger, who is still its honorary president. Filbinger was forced to resign from his official posts after it became known that as a naval judge under the Nazis he had sentenced people accused of minor offences to death—even after the war had ended.

The new president of the centre, Klaus Hornung, regularly writes contributions for *Junge Freiheit*. Jörg Schönbohm is the vice president. He had previously given an interview to the paper three years ago, in March 1999. One of the speakers during the centre’s yearly conference last summer was another prominent member of the CDU, Roland Koch, the minister-president of the state of Hesse.

Schönbohm holds office in Brandenburg within a coalition government led by the SPD. The veteran East German politician Manfred Stolpe, who agreed to form a coalition with Schönbohm, is one of those Social-Democrats whose main priority is to preserve the authority of the state, regarding social policies are only a means to this end. In the former East Germany he was a high-ranking official of the church who played a key role mediating between the repressive GDR state and the opposition, while at the same time collaborating closely with the Stasi (East German secret police). He only joined the SPD after reunification. Following the latest federal elections he has been appointed minister of transport in Schröder’s new cabinet.

His successor as minister-president of Brandenburg is Matthias Platzeck (SPD), who, like Stolpe, has no real objections to the right-wing positions of his interior minister. All Platzeck has said is that Schönbohm’s views are well known and in part differ considerably from his own.



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