

Germany: Brandenburg intelligence service slanders the World Socialist Web Site

By WSWs Editorial Board
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The intelligence service of the east German state of Brandenburg (*Verfassungsschutz*) has published an article on its web site accusing the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) of promoting violence. The article claims that the WSWS is part of a milieu of violent “left extremism.” The Editorial Board of the WSWS completely rejects this slanderous accusation and reserves the right to take legal action to force the intelligence service to retract its report and to publish a reply from the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The intelligence service’s article is a malicious slander of an online publication that pursues socialist and democratic aims. It is an attack on freedom of speech by a department of the state that is supposedly obliged to uphold the German constitution.

The intelligence service justifies its insinuation on the basis of a WSWS article published two and a half years ago that it says was found at the scene of an attack on an immigration office in the city of Frankfurt (Oder). Someone had broken the office’s windows in the early morning hours of September 16 and tossed a foul-smelling liquid inside. In addition, glue was inserted into the outer doors and slogans spray-painted on the outside of the building.

The WSWS article was a political critique of the German government’s refugee policies. The intelligence service was compelled to concede that it was “legally unassailable.” Nevertheless, it cites the article as evidence of an “extreme leftist background to the deed.” It goes on to assert that the article can be “ranked alongside a number of similar publications which taken together promote or produce a propensity for violence.” They conclude with the words: “The road to criminal acts is paved with such texts.”

The following must be said about these allegations:

1. The *World Socialist Web Site* is a socialist and not a “left extremist” publication. It is published by the International Committee of the Fourth International and

its section in Germany, the Socialist Equality Party (PSG). It stands for a socialist orientation and the defence of democratic and social rights. The PSG has repeatedly taken part in German elections and is officially recognised as a party by the German electoral commission. It rejects as a matter of principle the methods of individual violence.

2. The article that was allegedly found at the scene of the attack, published by the WSWS on February 24, 2001 (March 8, 2001, in English), under the title “The deadly consequences of Germany’s refugee policy,” criticises German state policy towards foreigners. The article is correct in both its presentation of the facts and its political evaluation. It criticises the outrageous conditions confronting immigrants and gives concrete figures on the number of victims who have died or been injured as a result of police actions on the German and European borders. It bases itself on generally accessible sources of information that can be easily checked, including the ARD television programme *Monitor*, the *Antiracist Initiative Berlin* (ARI) and the daily newspaper *tageszeitung*. The article castigates the double-speak of the German federal government, which routinely condemns the “violence against foreigners when the violence is committed by neo-Nazis and racists on the street,” while “the message communicated by the anti-refugee actions of the German state reinforces the neo-Nazi calumny that the lives of ‘unwanted’ foreigners are worthless.”

3. The Brandenburg Intelligence Service’s claim that the publication of such an article promotes or produces an inclination toward violence has broad implications. It places any criticism of government policy in the orbit of illegal activity. If this is accepted, it is sufficient for a confused person or provocateur to break a few windows to provide the pretext for silencing political opponents of the government. With the same argument, any critic of the

German government's "Agenda 2010" program of social cutbacks could be made responsible for the actions of a desperate unemployed person who runs amok. Or one could accuse any opponent of the introduction of the euro in Sweden of "paving the way" to the murder of Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindt—a prominent advocate of the euro—who was stabbed to death at the height of the referendum campaign.

4. This sort of argumentation recalls the darkest days of German history. There have been decades of experience here of police states—both fascist and Stalinist. The police regimes of such states always maintain that political criticism of the government is equivalent to support of violence—and thereby justify the suppression of political opponents. The right to free speech guaranteed in the German constitution, on the other hand, expressly includes the right to criticise a government without in any way making oneself liable to prosecution.

5. The intelligence service justifies its claim of left extremism with regard to the WSWS with an amalgam of half-truths and falsehoods. On the one hand, it maintains that the text published in the WSWS proves the "left extremist background to the deed." On the other hand, it substantiates the left extremist nature of the article by the fact that it was allegedly found at the scene of the attack. This is obviously a circular argument.

Unable to find anything in the article that could in any sense be interpreted as the advocacy of violence, the intelligence service foists its own statements on it. They write: "In many left extremist publications it is argued that through its own activities the state directly encourages the extreme right wing to deal violently with foreigners and refugees. Thereby the state shows its real—fascist—face. This is why anti-fascists must regard the state as their enemy."

Once again, the intelligence service employs a circular argument. It maintains that the article by the WSWS is "left extremist" and then goes on to demonstrate this by introducing statements from fictitious "left extremist publications." Such statements are nowhere to be found in the already mentioned WSWS article, or any other article published on the WSWS. The statement that the state "shows its real—fascist—face," echoing the banal language of the Red Army Faction (RAF), is foisted on the WSWS, although it is nothing but an invention of the intelligence service itself.

6. It is a matter of public record that the German intelligence services work with the methods of infiltration and provocation. They have extensively penetrated

extreme right-wing circles, and undercover agents of the intelligence services have on occasion taken part in acts of violence by these groups.

As early as the end of the 1970s, secret service agents blew a hole in the wall of the prison in the town of Celle, in order to fake a violent attempt to free an apparent member of the Red Army Faction. In the spring of this year, attempts to legally ban the neo-Nazi NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany) collapsed when it was revealed that one in seven leading members of the organisation was on the payroll of the German secret service. The extent of infiltration of the NPD led one constitutional judge to comment that many of the activities of the party could be regarded as "organised by the state." There are a series of known cases where the Brandenburg Intelligence Service has employed right-wing extremists with a history of violence. The left radical milieu has also been penetrated by state agents in a state whose interior minister, under conditions of widespread right-wing violence, regularly warns of the danger of "underestimating left extremism."

In light of this situation, it is necessary to pose the question: Were agents of the intelligence services involved in the attack on the Frankfurt immigration offices on September 16? Does the Brandenburg intelligence service know more than it is saying? Was it directly involved in planting the WSWS article at the scene?

There is a strange disparity between the accusations levelled against the WSWS and the official investigation into the attack on the Frankfurt immigration office. According to the state attorney in charge of the case, two weeks of investigation into the attack have proven fruitless. There is apparently little effort being made to further the probe. For its part, however, the Brandenburg Intelligence Service has published shortly after the attack an article devoting just a few lines to the actual assault and four fifths of its content to an attack on the WSWS.



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