

All-party coalition suppresses truth about Love Parade tragedy in Germany

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Nearly a month later, the irresponsibility of the organisers and all those politically liable for the tragedy that befell the Love Parade on July 24, claiming 21 lives and injuring over 500, is clearly evident.

The city of Duisburg and Mayor Adolf Sauerland (CDU, Christian Democratic Union) has lodged an injunction against the Duisburg Internet blog Xtranews because the website has published internal documents concerning the organization and approval of the Love Parade.

The city council and Sauerland are citing copyright as the grounds for the injunction. The documents, protocols and policies of the city authorities, police and Love Parade organisers Lopavent form the appendix to the so-called official “interim report”. This is a report commissioned by the city of Duisburg by attorneys Dr. Ute Jasper and Andrew Berstermann from the law firm Heuking, Kühn, Lüer, Wojtek.

Many newspapers (including *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *der Spiegel*, *Rheinische Post*, *Augsburger Allgemeine*, *WAZ*) and several TV stations have quoted from these documents to show that the official “interim report” is a doctored document aimed at playing down the responsibility of the authorities. But none of them has published the documents themselves. “We wanted to contribute to illuminating this case”, a spokesman for Xtranews said.

But while people have a right to examine the case for themselves to find out how the decision-making processes unfolded and who is responsible for the deaths of 21 young people, Mayor Sauerland has gone to court and is threatening a fine of €250,000.

Moreover, he is using the same law firm in Düsseldorf that the city council had commissioned to prepare the doctored report, and who have advised the city on other projects.

The lawyer Dr. Ute Jasper is well known in the Ruhr area. Eight years ago, she was commissioned by the CDU mayor of Mülheim, Dr. Jens Baganz, to prepare a report concerning the sale of the city’s shares in the municipal water company RWW to the energy group RWE. The two concealed the fact that she had also signed a consultancy agreement with the electricity giant RWE—the beneficiaries of the sale. When it then came to light that Jasper was Baganz’s lover, Baganz resigned. He was later promoted to secretary of agriculture in the Düsseldorf state

legislature.

When Jasper’s and Berstermann’s “doctored report” on the Love Parade failed to produce the desired effect, the city council engaged the PR consultant Karl Heinz Steinkühler—for no less than €2,000 a day—to optimize the image of the city officials, above all Adolf Sauerland.

In a televised interview with WDR on Sunday, Sauerland maintained his stance that since he could be held neither personally guilty nor responsible, his resignation would be inappropriate.

Sauerland justifies maintaining his office by claiming that only he as mayor has access to documents and information. He says that he wants to be involved in the clarification of what happened and his resignation would only delay this process unnecessarily. In reality, Sauerland wants to keep important information under lock and key, and prevent those affected and the public from finding out what happened.

He also used the interview to perpetuate the myth that there is no guilt attached to the city of Duisburg or to him personally. We have—Sauerland rarely speaks of himself in the first person—not compromised on safety, he insisted. “We have implemented our ideas as an administration and did not cut corners”.

This is demonstrably false, as evidenced by the internal documents now published on the Web relating to the granting of approval for the event. Time and again, pressure was placed on city council employees to bypass safety restrictions.

The 20-minute interview by WDR provided Sauerland with an opportunity to once again show his contempt for the victims. “We tried to find the addresses of the deceased. But we still don’t have them today”, he gave as the reason why he had still not made contact with the families of the victims.

Such an explanation is implausible. It turns out that the Duisburg registry office had issued the death certificates for all the victims of the Love Parade. The registry office is part of the city council, whose top boss is none other than the mayor.

In the interview, Sauerland denied any personal complicity in the deaths of the 21 people: “You know, something like that needs to be clarified: Who were the perpetrators of this tragic event? We are not yet that far”.

From the internal documents—which once on the Internet can

no longer be suppressed—it is clear that Sauerland and his close confidante, Wolfgang Rabe (CDU), exerted massive pressure primarily on the planning department.

A Berlin law firm wrote to mayor on July 19 on behalf of organiser Rainer Schaller of the fitness chain McFit: The permits should be issued with “immediate effect”, the firm stressed. The lawyers warned of the “huge economic and ideological damage caused not only to the organiser but also to the Ruhr area and the city of Duisburg should the event be cancelled”.

Thus, such manoeuvring was taking place right up to the date of the Love Parade, July 24, and pressure was being applied until approval was finally granted.

Twenty-one people have paid with their lives for the greed for profits on the part of operator Schaller and to supposedly improve the image of the Rhine and Ruhr, as well as the city of Duisburg, as a “business location”.

Mayor Sauerland is able to act so callously because he can rely on the direct and indirect support of all the parties in the city council. In a similar way, all the political decision-makers at the federal, provincial and city level have sacrificed the safety of the visitors to the Love Parade to naked economic interests. “Everyone wanted the Love Parade”, he said in his WDR interview.

The Greens are now playing a particularly vile role in the all-party coalition responsible for the disastrous Love Parade festival in the first place. After the CDU faction on the city council rejected voting out the mayor, Green Party faction co-chairs Dieter Kantel and Doris Janicki declared in early August, “No personal guilt is currently attributable to the mayor. We will not participate in the witch-hunt against him”. They referred specifically to the report prepared by Jasper and Berstermann.

Kantel and Janicki rose to prominence in 2004 under the then newly elected mayor Sauerland, and made possible a CDU-Green Party city government. Janicki was rewarded with the post of deputy mayor, which she then used mainly to be freed from her job as a teacher and to devote herself to the amenities of her office—parties, celebrations, junkets.

After decades of the SPD dominating the city council, the Greens and the CDU continued where the SPD had left off: the pursuit of private economic interests via the local party bodies; in other words, devoting themselves to the spoils to be gained from the city council. As a result, working people in Duisburg no longer “only” confront the SPD, but a cross-party network of mutual dependencies, wheeling and dealing.

At his press conference, Kantel correctly pointed out that the entire city council, not just Sauerland, bears responsibility. “All of us twice charged the mayor with bringing the Love Parade to the city. He took this task seriously”, said Kantel, who added, “I too voted in favour as a city council member”.

The Left Party faction on the Duisburg council also voted unanimously for the Love Parade, and are noticeably reticent

when it comes to uncovering what took place. The Left Party is primarily seeking to position itself as a “reliable partner” for all the other parties. The party’s state representatives Anna Conrad and Marc Mulia, who is also an executive member of the Left Party’s state committee, expressed this in a press statement immediately after the tragedy: “We have known Adolf Sauerland personally for over 10 years, and understand that he has acted with great commitment to bring the Love Parade to Duisburg. We also understand that he is all the more affected by the events”.

No one from the official political parties is interested in a serious and conscientious investigation of the Love Parade tragedy. There is a good reason for this. Increasingly, more facts and connections are becoming known in various Internet forums making it clear that the serious safety deficiencies, the authorities’ negligence and corruption were not an isolated case.

The neglect of safety requirements for reasons of cost is a daily experience for many workers. In Internet blogs, security staff have reported that one day before the Love Parade, the organisers sacked between a third and a quarter of the already numerically weak security workers and stewards.

Schaller behaves no differently than the Dortmund environmental services company Envio, which is responsible for poisoning a still unknown number of temporary workers through cancer-causing PCBs; he is no different from the energy companies that insist obsolete nuclear power plants continue operation, or drill in the deep ocean for oil.

Regardless of whether Sauerland resigns or is removed, it is clear in Duisburg that working people confront a broad alliance of big business, profiteers and political parties who subordinate the safety and lives of the population to their commercial interests.

While the drama in Duisburg has drawn the attention and aroused the horror of millions, the little dramas occurring every day in private or in the workplace as a result of unemployment, poverty and government harassment, remain largely hidden from the public.

We repeat what we wrote in a statement a few days after the tragedy: “A significant change in political direction is necessary. This requires the building of a new party that places the interests of society higher than the profit interests of the banks and corporations, and that fights for a socialist programme. The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Socialist Equality Party), the German section of the Fourth International, is building such a party”.



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