

German government sets up neo-Nazi database

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The German government has responded to revelations of neo-Nazi murders by the Zwickau terrorist cell by centralizing and expanding the security authorities, although there is growing evidence that they are part of the problem.

At the beginning of November last year—just two weeks after it was revealed that Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Böhnhardt and Beate Zschäpe had committed a series of racist murders, bombings and bank robberies, about which the police and intelligence agencies supposedly knew nothing—Federal Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich (Christian Social Union, CSU), tabled a ten-point plan to expand the security authorities.

On 16 December, the so-called “Joint Defence Centre (GAZ) against right-wing extremism” in Cologne began its work, bringing together representatives of all the intelligence services and police representatives from the federal and state administrations.

Last Wednesday, Frederick announced another “milestone,” the building of a composite database with information from over 40 police forces and intelligence agencies about some 10,000 violent right-wing extremists. “This database is a very valuable and useful addition to the Joint Defence Centre,” said Frederick, who expressly thanked the Presidents of the Federal Criminal Police, Jörg Ziercke and of the Federal Office for Constitutional Protection (as the secret service is called), Heinz Fromm.

Several anti-racist groups also welcomed Frederick's initiative. With the database, “a long overdue and important step in the right direction has been taken,” said Anetta Kahane, chair of the Amadeu-Antonio Foundation. Finally, they implied, the security authorities would be able to pursue right-wing violence.

This hope is misplaced. Under the pretext of fighting right-wing extremism, basic democratic rights are being abrogated. In the end, this strengthening of the powers of the state apparatus bolsters the far right, while weakening

the defence of democracy and social equality.

The establishment of the GAZ and neo-Nazi database erodes the separation of the intelligence agencies and police. This principle of post-war German law was the conclusion drawn from the sinister work of Hitler's secret police, the Gestapo. For this reason, the Federal Data Protection Commissioner Peter Schaar has filed objections to the GAZ and to the database that he does not believe are addressed in the current draft law. The database “should continue to be regarded critically”, he said.

A Joint Defence Centre and database already exists on “foreign terrorism”. It will not be long before a pretext is found to set up a “left-wing extremism” Defence Centre and database. By the term “left-wing extremism” the government, intelligence agencies and police understand all initiatives against racism, neo-Nazism and generally directed against the official policy of Berlin.

Immediately after the massacre by the far-right Norwegian Anders Breivik last summer, Frederick said he saw no immediate danger of right-wing terrorist attacks in Germany. Now he wants to give the impression that the Zwickau terrorist cell's activities were “overlooked” by the German security authorities, for purely technical reasons.

This is false. For months, new evidence has become public knowledge that the intelligence and police authorities are working closely with the neo-Nazis whom they supposedly combat. For example, it was soon revealed that the Zwickau three had promoted right-wing radicalism, preached violence, and eventually gone to ground under the eyes of the secret service.

As has been known for some time, Tino Brandt, the leader of the extreme right “Thuringian Homeland Security” (THS)—to which Mundlos, Böhnhardt and Zschäpe belonged between 1994 and 2001—was collaborating with the Thuringian state secret service

(LFV) and had collected 200,000 German marks, which he used to build up the THS. Brandt also collected funds for the three terrorists after they had supposedly disappeared without a trace.

Now the *Berliner Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Rundschau* have reported that, in addition to the federal and state security authorities, other state bodies maintained undercover agents and informants inside the THS; it is said there were at least five paid informers.

According to a report by the Thuringian LFV, on 26 April 2000—two years after their supposed disappearance—a contact of the right-wing terrorists asked “a representative of the Thuringia LFV to make contact with one of the families of the people in hiding.” When asked, Tino Brandt, denied that he was the undercover agent. He said he knew nothing about such procedures. He was never spoken to about this matter, Brandt told the *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

According to the newspaper, beyond the LFV, “apparently at least three separate federal agencies had sources inside the THS”. Based on information available to the Thuringia Ministry of the Interior, the federal secret service had their own undercover agent in the THS. The identity of this informant and the duration of his collaboration with the secret services were unknown.

The Military Counter-intelligence Service (MAD), answerable to the Ministry of Defence, also reportedly had its spies inside the THS. On 20th November 201, it became known that a MAD informant had told his handlers of the whereabouts of the neo-Nazi trio shortly after they went to ground in January 1998. At the beginning of the year, *Der Spiegel* cited a secret investigation report of the federal secret service of 12 December 2011, which shows that the MAD had a trusted “contact” inside the THS.

According to the report, an official of the Thuringian State Office for Criminal Investigation had said at a school graduation ceremony on 10 December 1999 in Bad Blankenburg that the three THS terrorists had been found dead in Crete. This was probably also heard by a MAD undercover agent who passed on this story. Apparently, this undercover agent had direct contact with the THS leadership, because the secret service report states: “The following day, the MAD handler was asked about it by THS leading activist B”.

In September 1999, a man from Jena told MAD officials that he had been a messenger in contact with the trio.

According to the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, as well as MAD and the federal secret service, a third federal agency

also maintained an informant inside the THS, who had had direct access to Zschäpe, at least temporarily. Furthermore, there is supposedly a note about this in the files of the Thuringian State Office for Criminal Investigation. The *Rundschau* did not say which federal agency this was, but there only remains the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Foreign Intelligence Service (BND) to choose from.

The Vice-President of the League for Human Rights, attorney Rolf Gössner, has criticized the close involvement of the security forces and neo-Nazis for years.

Last year, when the activities of the Zwickau terrorist cell were known, Gössner recalled that in 2003, the Berlin State Executive Committee of the NPD, the violent neo-Nazi party, was “infiltrated to such an extent that the secret service informants would have been able to pass a decision to dissolve the NPD in Berlin.” They did not do this; on the contrary: “The informants were diligently at work all over the country stabilising and expanding the NPD.”

In a recent interview with the television station *3sat*, Gössner said: “the secret service has itself become a neo-Nazi problem due to the number of its informants.” The secret service had “not even begun to contribute to the solution” of the problem.

The secret service informants are all avowed racists and neo-Nazis on the payroll of the state. It is therefore difficult to draw a distinction between the state and the neo-Nazis. In 2003, the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe rejected the banning of the NPD on these grounds: the numerous informants inside the NPD, it ruled, made it an “affair of state”.

The concentration and strengthening of the security authorities does not resolve the neo-Nazi problem, but intensifies it.



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