

# Left Party defends the German secret service

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More facts are continually emerging demonstrating the links between the German domestic intelligence service (Office for the Protection of the Constitution—VS) and neo-Nazi terrorists. Yet under conditions where broad layers of the population fear the emergence of a new version of the Gestapo, the German Left Party is explicitly defending the secret service and calling for structural changes aimed at optimizing its activities.

Late last year media reports revealed that a neo-fascist organization called the National Socialist Underground (NSU) had been operating in Germany since 2000 and was responsible for at least nine racially motivated murders as well as the killing of a policewoman.

The investigation showed that the VS had been informed about the activities of the NSU from the start and indicated that the intelligence service was deliberately protecting NSU members from prosecution. The VS had installed undercover agents in the periphery of the organization, yet it ignored evidence linking NSU members to bomb-making operations and helped at least one NSU terrorist obtain a new passport.

Despite these revelations, no serious probe was carried out. Rather than launch a comprehensive investigation, the German parliament (Bundestag) decided to expand the powers of the agency. The VS is now entitled to access crucial files of the police and state intelligence forces—a linkup of the police and secret service that had been officially banned in Germany since World War II as a result of the crimes of Hitler's Gestapo.

At the end of June it emerged that one day after the initial revelations about the NSU last November, a VS officer destroyed seven personnel files of undercover agents operating in the environment of the NSU. This willful destruction of evidence was covered up until a week ago.

Earlier this week, Heinz Fromm, a member of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), resigned from his post as director of the VS. A few days later the head of the VS in the state of Thuringia also resigned. These steps were aimed at silencing internal critics rather than throwing any

light on what had gone on.

It remains unclear whether members of the NSU were on the payroll of the secret police. There are many indications, however, that the VS played a central and active role in building up the NSU. The latest facts also suggest that the collaboration with the neo-Nazis was not the initiative of just one or two agents, but was coordinated at the highest levels of the VS.

All attempts to uncover these relations, however, have been hampered not only by the VS, but also by all of the political parties represented in parliament. All of these parties have representatives in the parliamentary monitoring body PKGr, which is empowered to investigate every unit of German intelligence and gain access to any of their files. But none of the members of the PKGr have made public any substantive information.

Instead, all of the parties are defending the intelligence agency and downplaying what has taken place as mere “failures” and “mistakes”. They are not calling for a full investigation and the disbanding of the service, but rather for “structural reform”, in the words of the Green Party’s Claudia Roth, or “fundamental reform”, as proposed by the SPD’s Thomas Oppermann.

The aim of any such reform is to increase the powers of the intelligence service. The Christian Democratic interior minister for Lower Saxony, Uwe Schünemann, has already announced steps in this direction. It is necessary “that the [VS] be involved even more in concrete security and law enforcement”, he declared last Wednesday.

The most vehement defense of the secret service, however, has come from the Left Party faction in the Bundestag. Their representative in the PKGr, Wolfgang Neskovic, declared on German radio that Germany needed the intelligence agency. “I understand the criticism, it is justified”, he said, “but we can’t just abolish the fire brigade because it fails to extinguish a fire”.

Neskovic and the Left Party thereby line up behind the cross-party attempt to present the VS’ collaboration with the NSU as a regrettable mistake by an otherwise efficient

and legitimate authority.

The reality is that from the start of its existence, the VS played the role of arsonist rather than fire fighter. It was built up after 1955 by Hubert Schrübbbers, who had served the Nazi regime as a member of the SA storm troopers and as attorney general. According to Wikipedia, he filled a huge number of posts in the secret service with former members of the SS and its intelligence service, the SD.

Since the early 1990s there have been numerous reports of VS operatives, mostly undercover agents, playing a leading role in the neo-Nazi scene in Germany. They have included convicted criminals and their associates. It was revealed that one in seven functionaries of the extreme-right National Democratic Party (NPD) was on the payroll of the VS.

From its inception, this reactionary institution was directed exclusively against left-wing organizations and any independent movement of the working class. Following the introduction of the 1972 Radical Decree by SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt, the agents of the VS raked through the files of 1.4 million mostly young aspirants for public service in order to prevent those with links to left-wing organizations from obtaining jobs. The ban was justified with the claim that left-wingers were enemies of the Constitution, i.e., guilty of treason.

The same argument has now been taken up by Neskovic to silence opponents of the secret service. He justifies his rejection of calls for the disbandment of the intelligence agency by stating that infringement on the “duty to protect the Constitution [would itself] be a constitutional violation”. This choice of words is very important in Germany, where in the name of protecting the Constitution, the state is empowered not only to ban individuals from certain jobs, but to ban entire political organizations.

The stance adopted by the Left Party clearly illustrates its role as a party of bourgeois law and order. The Left Party was born from a merger of the union bureaucrat-dominated Labour and Social Justice—Electoral Alternative (WASG) and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successor party to the East German Stalinist ruling party. As such, it embodies a long history of police-state measures to suppress the working class.

Emerging from the Stalinist party that created the notorious Stasi secret police, the PDS played a crucial role in suppressing independent strikes, factory occupations and demonstrations during the period of the capitalist reunification of Germany. The chairman of the Council of Elders of the party, Hans Modrow, has often

boasted that the most important role of the party was “to maintain law and order” during those volatile months.

The fact that the Left Party has now so clearly returned to its roots in the VS affair and committed itself to the struggle against “enemies of the Constitution” is bound up with the growth of social inequality and the escalating assault on the working class. Throughout Europe workers are being driven into poverty while the banks receive hundreds of billions in public funds.

This will inevitably lead to social convulsions and an explosive growth of the class struggle. The ruling class in Germany, as throughout Europe, in the US and internationally, is preparing for this eventuality by building up the repressive powers of the state.

Basic democratic rights are being eroded under the auspices of bourgeois governments of all political stripes, and, where necessary, as in Greece and Italy, elected governments are being replaced by unelected technocrats, while far-right parties are groomed by the state to step in. The role of the intelligence service in Germany in cultivating and protecting fascist terrorists and killers provides a glimpse of how far the ruling elite is prepared to go.

The polarization of class forces compels every political tendency to display its true colors and reveal its class character. It has clearly exposed the right-wing bourgeois character of the Left Party.

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