

Germany: Undercover state agents active on periphery of far-right terrorist cell

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For at least 10 years, the Berlin state police (LKA) and federal secret service (BfV) have had an undercover agent inside the periphery of the far-right National Socialist Underground (NSU). The NSU members Beate Zschäpe, Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt are responsible for the murders of nine immigrants and a female police officer as well as a string of armed robberies.

According to a recent media report, Thomas R. from Halle operated for the secret service from 1997 to 2007 under the cover name "Corelli". This means he must have had early knowledge of the murders conducted by the NSU.

Among other things, he was registered as the manager of the "White Wolf" web site, on which the NSU was first mentioned in 2002. "Many thanks to the NSU, it has borne fruit. The struggle continues ..." reads the posting on the web site. At this point in time the terrorist cell had already carried out four murders. Over the next five years six more murders followed—directly under the eyes of the secret service.

The BfV claims it had "no intelligence links to the NSU". However, it did not deny having placed "Corelli" in direct contact with the NSU.

In 2001, Thomas R.'s name appeared in files of the Baden Wuerttemberg state secret service on a list of the German offshoot of the Ku Klux Klan. The list also contained the names of two police officers who belonged to the same police unit as Michèle Kiesewetter, who was later shot by the NSU, in 2007.

This link is especially interesting since no plausible explanation has ever been provided why the NSU, whose terrorist actions had only been directed against immigrants, murdered the female police officer in Heilbronn. Since both the German Ku Klux Klan and Kiesewetter's police unit both involved a relatively

small circle of people, it must be more than a coincidence.

Thomas R.'s name first came to light in January 1998. At that time, his telephone number appeared on a contact list of the NSU member Uwe Mundlos, who was arrested in the raid on the bomb-making workshop of the trio in Jena. The names of the other two NSU members, Uwe Böhnhardt und Beate Zschäpe, as well as Thomas Starke, who worked for the Berlin LKA for over 10 years, appeared on the list of 30 people.

As in numerous other cases, the parliamentary committee of investigation was not informed about "Corelli" for a long time. This can no longer be explained by reference to "mistakes" and "omissions". In just a week two undercover agents, Thomas Starke and "Corelli", have been exposed as having stood in direct contact with the three terrorists. Even before this, it was known that one in four members of the Thüringia Heimatschutze (THS, Thüringia Homeland Security), out of which the NSU developed, were on the payroll of one or other state body.

Given these facts, the opposite question could well be posed: Who in the orbit of the NSU was not financed by the state?

Over the last days, several incidents have made clear that the security services have no interest in clarifying the circumstances of the series of murders committed by the NSU, and are even acting to prevent this happening.

Berlin state interior minister Frank Henkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) had already sent the LKA files concerning Starke to the parliamentary committee in the spring, but for months did not make this fact public. In the meantime, he claims there was a corresponding discussion with the attorney general, who energetically denies this.

However, the Federal Prosecutors Office knew that the Berlin police wanted to keep Starke's involvement secret. According to a report in the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, in a confidential letter to the Federal Prosecutors Office dated April 3 this year the Berlin state secret service refused to hand over the files. In the letter, state secret service chief Oliver Stepien expressly pointed to the danger that "inspection by the committee of investigation is not excluded" and that the contents could get into the public domain.

The Berlin LKA was also fully aware of the explosive nature of the Starke case. But instead of contributing to clarifying the case, the LKA is doing everything to hide its own role in the periphery of the NSU.

Last weekend, Thomas Starke himself spoke out. In an interview with *Welt am Sonntag*, he freely admitted to having supplied explosives to the NSU, and of having had an affair with Beate Zschäpe. Following their escape from Jena in January 1998, he ensured the trio were "accommodated with a friend". However, he said he last had contact with them in April or May of the same year.

Starke's statement cannot be confirmed; but it certainly sounds quite dubious, especially since "there's always plenty of talk in the [far right] scene", as Starke says. In any case, it is conceivable that his statement that he had had no more contact with the NSU is designed to shield himself and his masters, the Berlin LKA. Asked about his motivation in working for the LKA, Starke said he did not want to speak about that. Asked if he had signed a confidentiality agreement, he responded, "no comment."

Perhaps the authorities in the capital have even more to hide. The *Berliner Morgenpost* reported on Monday that the suspicion exists that "important investigation files regarding a possible link between a car theft in Berlin and the Zwickau terrorist trio [had been] destroyed". Traces of DNA secured inside the car in question were also found in the ruins of the Zwickau apartment where the trio had lived. The exact connection is still to be determined. The LKA announced that it wanted to dispel the "terrible accusation of a coverup".

The involvement of Berlin city council representative Tom Schreiber (Social Democratic Party, SPD) is also worth noting. After the scandal came to light in recent weeks, in part via somewhat murky channels, he then

filed charges of betrayal of state secrets against persons unknown. Apparently, information from confidential meetings was deliberately leaked to the media. According to Schreiber, this would constrain "the investigation of the information mix-up considerably". Politicians who passed on such information had no real interest in uncovering this complex, he said. Moreover, passing on such information causes problems for the collaboration between the state and federal authorities.

What is Schreiber saying?

New revelations regarding the deep involvement of various state bodies with the periphery of the NSU have not come to light as a result of the committee of investigation, the secret service, or the police authorities. Indeed, the latter have been actively seeking to cover up their own role. Against this background, in an effort to silence them, Schreiber is threatening any possible informants who have the courage to tell the public the truth that they may face charges.



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