

German Ku Klux Klan founded by state's intelligence agency

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1 November 2012

The German branch of the racist secret society, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), was set up and led by an undercover agent of the state of Baden-Württemberg's secret service.

According to a report in the *Tagesspiegel* daily newspaper, an organisation called the "European White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan–Realm of Germany" was established by a white supremacist government spy in October 2000. A short time later, the man was appointed by a KKK group in the US to the position of national leader, a "Grand Dragon". The German branch existed until early 2003.

But that was not all. The agent was not only working for the secret service of a German state; it appears he was also operating with the official protection of one of his colleagues. An employee of the intelligence agency is suspected of having passed on to him "anonymous confidential information" in 2002. In particular, this person allegedly warned him that his phone was being tapped.

The Ku Klux Klan is one of a long line of ultra right-wing organisations set up by German secret service agents with the help of state funds.

Investigations into the extreme right-wing National Democratic Party (NDP) associations in the states of Thuringia and North Rhine-Westphalia had already revealed they could not have developed as they did without funding provided by the secret service. Several neo-Nazis openly boasted they had drawn funds from the intelligence service for a number of years.

Baden-Württemberg's Interior Minister Reinhold Gall (Social Democratic Party, SPD) would not confirm that the founder of Germany's extreme right-wing KKK organisation was an undercover agent belonging to his state's secret service agency. However, he also did not deny the allegation, instead

drawing attention to the case's highest level of secrecy that ostensibly made it impossible for him to comment on media reports.

Beate Bube, head of the state's secret service agency, also refused to confirm whether an agent was associated with the founding of the local KKK. She said the identity of undercover agents had to be protected and added: "The issue could involve a criminal betrayal of state secrets, and that's precisely what we want to avoid doing".

Although Gall had confirmed before the domestic affairs select committee that a member of the secret service had cautioned the leader of the KKK about certain state surveillance measures, he avoided repeating this to the press.

As is now customary in such episodes, Gall and Bube asserted that the case was an "isolated" one. According to *Die Welt*, the daily newspaper, Bube said there is "no reason to doubt that agency employees fulfil their statutory duties correctly and irreproachably, and there is no reason to believe that they lack awareness of democratic procedures".

The close links between the state and the Ku Klux Klan raises new questions about possible links between government agencies and the right-wing terrorists of the National Socialist Underground (NSU). Plenty of overlap has been discovered between the KKK and the NSU.

Two of the three members of the NSU, Uwe Böhnhardt and Beate Zschäpe, were spotted near Jena at a cross burning attended by 20 neo-Nazis in the mid-1990s. Zschäpe even had photos of the scene and personally informed the public prosecutor about their attendance. That was before Zschäpe, Böhnhardt and Uwe Mundlos went into hiding and began their killing spree.

The identity of another undercover agent, operating in the KKK's ranks under the code name "Corelli", was discovered by police in 1998 on an address list Mundlos had hidden in a garage. But the main cause of suspicion is the fact that two members of the relatively small KKK group in Baden-Württemberg were close colleagues of the NSU's last murder victim, policewoman Michèle Kiesewetter. Kiesewetter was shot in April 2007 and the series of NSU killings then abruptly ceased.

The murder of a German policewoman is not commensurate with the criminal operations of the NSU. All the other murders had immigrants as their victims and were obviously racially motivated. To date, there is no plausible explanation why Kiesewetter became a target of the NSU. The question arises as to whether the former KKK memberships of her squad leader and another police colleague played a role.

A parliamentary committee of inquiry into the NSU is now dealing with the case. But no clarification can be expected from that quarter because the investigation is systematically blocked by the authorities and the committee itself has little interest in bringing the facts to light. Finally, all the parties represented on the committee are involved to some extent in government office and are therefore responsible for police and the intelligence service.

Only occasionally, when it is all too obvious they are being led around by the nose, do the committee members allow some measure of the truth to surface. Responding to the new revelations about the KKK, Free Democratic Party deputy Hartfrid Wolff groaned: "Were there then any members [of the KKK] who were not in the police or secret service?" A legitimate question!

The authorities are continuing their attempt to prevent any further unravelling of the events. They have stopped referring to undeniable revelations as "mishaps", "slips" and "isolated cases"; they append the official designation of "secret" to files that could lead to further clarification, or they destroy huge numbers of them. It is now known that far more records relating to the NSU affair have been destroyed than was initially announced.

Heinz Fromm resigned in July from his post as president of the Federal Office of the Secret Service, following the official revelation that numerous files

relevant to the case had been shredded immediately after the breaking up of the NSU cell last November.

A secret interior ministry report in possession of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper has now revealed that, between the discovery of the NSU gang and Fromm's resignation, not only folders detailing 26 wiretappings of right-wing extremists were destroyed. The obliteration of evidence also extended to 94 personnel files, eight evaluation case files, 137 research and public relations records and 45 files on so-called "warranted persons" of the secret service.

During his appearance before the parliamentary committee, former vice president of the Constitutional Committee Klaus-Dieter Fritsche displayed an arrogance that infuriated even the normally meek parliamentary deputies. He pointedly told them they would be receiving only officially approved documents, and more or less declared them an outright security risk.

Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich (Christian Social Union, CSU) did assure the committee that it would be given the files of all the secret service authorities. But these will be heavily redacted. Friedrich also said the real names of undercover agents could not be disclosed to the deputies. Insight into the "inside operations" of the security agency will not be permitted, because "the life and death of people are concerned. And it's a matter of public welfare".



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