

Germany: Parliamentary inquiry into neo-Nazi murders concludes

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The parliamentary committee of enquiry into the National Socialist Underground (NSU) terrorist gang has accused Germany's security authorities of a "total failure". At the same time, it excluded the possibility that government agencies covered up the operations of the far-right terror cell or enabled them to commit their murders. These were the two main conclusions drawn following the committee's final official meeting last Thursday. The two statements, however, are incompatible.

The facts brought to light by the federal parliamentary committee, other state committees and various media sources lead inevitably to the conclusion that the 10 murders and two bomb attacks attributed to the NSU took place under the eyes of security agencies and were covered up by them.

The task of the enquiry was to obscure this. Cooperating closely with the security agencies, the enquiry determined which aspects of the case were to be passed on to the public. It now uses the tale of the agencies' alleged "failure" in order to defend and increase their power and effectiveness. A key role in this is played by the Left Party, which works so intimately with the other bourgeois parties that, in the words of Eva Högl, leader of the Social Democrats (SPD) in the committee, there is "not a hair's breadth" of difference between them.

According to committee chairman Sebastian Edathy (SPD), the police and intelligence services carried out their investigations of the terrorist cell in a highly prejudiced and blinkered manner. Edathy spoke of "multiple" and "historically unprecedented" failures on the part of the security agencies.

Wolfgang Wieland, chairman of the Greens' contingent in the committee, charged the security agencies with "complete failure on all levels". Högl (SPD) said right-wing extremism had been trivialised throughout the country for years.

The committee itself, whose 22 members interviewed 100 witnesses in 15 months and scrutinised 8,000 files, was confronted with the obstructive attitude of the authorities from the first day to the last. Files were shredded, redacted

and withheld. Witnesses stonewalled, claimed to be suddenly ill, were gagged by their political superiors or treated the committee with utmost contempt. Intelligence officers and their superiors acted as though they were suffering from collective amnesia.

On the last day of the proceedings, a scheduled appearance of the Federal and States Commission into Right-wing Terrorism failed to eventuate, because the interior ministers of the states insisted they would only testify in a secret session. Finally, as the last witness to stand before the committee, the federal intelligence office had sent a subordinate employee who could not remember anything.

Petra Pau, the Left Party's leading representative on the committee, said a thoroughgoing clearing up of the murders was "wrecked by the conduct of the government and the authorities".

Nevertheless, the committee denies that state agencies could have covered up for or supported the terrorist cell. Petra Pau stressed that her party had at no time in the work of the committee allowed itself to be guided by conspiracy theories currently in circulation. In other words, the Left Party—as well as all the other parties involved—rejected from the outset the possibility of any form of cooperation between state agencies and the NSU terror trio. The prevailing attitude was: What should not happen, could not have happened.

However, the available facts prove otherwise. It is now known that at least two-dozen undercover agents of the federal (BFV) and the state (LFV) intelligence offices, the Military Counterintelligence Service (MAD) and the state of Berlin's criminal police department (LKA) were active within the NSU milieu. The suspected terror trio thus operated under the very nose of the state. *Spiegel Online* reported last autumn that a certain Thomas S., who supplied Mundlos, Böhnhardt and Zschäpe, who were to form the NSU, with explosives in the 1990s, worked as an informant for the Berlin LKA for about 10 years. Ralf Wohlleben, who is accused in the Munich NSU trial of having procured the murder weapon, is also suspected of having worked as an

undercover agent for a security office. With respect to the principal defendant, Beate Zschäpe, it is known that there was at least one attempt to recruit her as an undercover agent.

The parliamentary committee was unable and unwilling to resolve these issues because important files were opportunely destroyed (or concealed), or the undercover agents' controllers were not permitted to testify. As Petra Pau reported at a meeting of the Left Party in March, some committee members were allowed to inspect the supposedly shredded files, but were not allowed to talk about them. "We're given access to certain documents, but we can never talk to anyone about them", she said.

Many other questions remain unanswered—for example, how the murder victims were selected and who supported the murderers in selecting them. Still unresolved is why and under what circumstances the last murder victim, a German policewoman, was killed in Heidelberg; this was a deviation from the pattern of the previous murders, which all involved traders or businessmen with Turkish or Greek backgrounds.

The attempt to explain all these links and inconsistencies by alluding to mishaps and lapses in duty—as the parliamentary committee does—is an insult to common sense. Glitches, accidents and regulatory sloppiness can happen. But when such mishaps and breakdowns accumulate for 15 years without a single exception, some kind of system must be in operation.

The conclusion that an extreme right-wing "state within a state" played a role in the NSU murders, supporting the perpetrators and thwarting their detection, is almost inevitable. This is not a "conspiracy theory", but well substantiated circumstantial evidence that must urgently be further investigated.

That is precisely what the parliamentary committee sought to prevent. Its real purpose was not to uncover the circumstances leading to the NSU murders, but to restore confidence in the state and the security agencies, which have been severely discredited by the racist murders. To accomplish this task, it had to raise at least some chiding questions and express its outrage over the "failure" of the authorities—otherwise it would have had no credibility at all.

The key role in this whitewashing of the security agencies was played by the Left Party. It is alarmed by the growing distrust of the police and intelligence agencies, and is cooperating closely with the other bourgeois parties to salvage confidence in the state. In February, Petra Pau even accompanied a six-member delegation from the committee to Ankara to solicit Turkey's trust in the German state.

Numerous media reports praised the "consensus that was unusual for a committee of inquiry". The *Westdeutsche Zeitung* wrote that the committee members cooperated

"largely without any vanity or political manoeuvring".

In March, the Left Party invited Hans-Georg Maaßen, the new president of the federal intelligence office, to a public forum and assured him of their support for a "reform" of the intelligence service (see "Germany's Left Party closes ranks with German intelligence"). Such "proposals for reform" are at the centre of the of the NSU enquiry committee's final report, which will be completed in the coming weeks and discussed in parliament on September 3, shortly before the federal election.

As things stand, the Left Party will not register a dissenting opinion on the final report—as is otherwise customary for committees of enquiry—and will follow the recommendations of other parties. These proposals will be aimed at centralising and strengthening the same security authorities that have shielded the NSU and covered up its activities.

Committee chairman Edathy (SPD) spelled out in the *Bild* newspaper what direction these "reforms" would take. He said the authorities would have to fight against right-wing extremism with the same determination that was shown in the fight against Islamist extremists following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001.

For the last 12 years, the September 11 attacks and the following alleged "war on terror" have served in the US and internationally as the excuse for imperialist wars and an enormous bolstering of state power, the real goal of which is to suppress social opposition from the working class. When it comes to the class struggle, the conduct of the Left Party in the NSU inquiry committee has once again shown it is on the side of the ruling elite and its repressive state apparatus.



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