

Witness in German NSU investigation dies in car fire

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In the scandal surrounding a series of murders by Germany's far-right terrorist group, the National Socialist Underground (NSU), there have been important developments in recent weeks that have gone largely unreported by the mainstream media.

In mid-September, there was a mysterious death in Stuttgart. The 21-year-old Florian H burned to death in his car. On the same evening, the state criminal investigation agency (LKA) in Baden-Württemberg had called him in for questioning. The young man from Eppingen in the Heilbronn region was to have given information on the extreme right scene, according to the newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*.

According to police sources, the young man committed suicide. Underlying the suicide, they added, were personal problems, suggesting that they stemmed from a break-up with his girlfriend. Although no suicide note was found, the police quickly ruled out the involvement of other people in his death. Therefore, there would be no further investigation, police spokesman Thomas Ulmer stated.

Despite this, witnesses have reported that shortly after Florian H got into his car, they heard an explosion. Only afterwards did the vehicle burst into flames, ending up burned out.

As the *Schwäbische Tagblatt* wrote, the mother of the victim also questions the suicide. In an Internet forum she described him as "a person who was full of life and critical" who had "dreams, desires and goals." "Those who knew him do not think it was suicide," she went on.

What was Florian H's connection to the extreme right scene?

The police designated him as a hanger-on of the extreme right. The police questioned H for the first time in January 2012 about the murder of policewoman

Michèle Kiesewetter, after they had received an anonymous tip about him. The crime, which took place in Heilbronn in April 2007, was blamed on the NSU. During questioning, H declared that he knew nothing about the murder of Kiesewetter.

Instead, Florian H reported that along with the NSU there was another dangerous right-wing group called neoschutzstaffel (NSS), named after Hitler's SS. Activists from the NSU and NSS even met on one occasion in Uhrlingen near Heilbronn, although H was not sure when.

For its part, the LKA has not been able to verify this statement. But they obviously thought it was plausible enough to ask H to return for a second round of questioning. The information was first made public in August of this year, when it cropped up in the final report of the parliamentary investigative committee as a short note. It is also known that the members of the NSU had close ties to Baden-Württemberg. Personal visits took place with neo-Nazi members in Ludwigsburg and Heilbronn.

However, the connection between the murder of Kiesewetter and the series of murders of nine immigrants by the NSU remains unclear. The murder of the policewoman does not fit into the picture of racially motivated murders. It is also significant that the series of murders came to an abrupt end with the crime in Heilbronn in April 2007.

The surroundings in which the murdered police officer worked are noteworthy. Two officers worked in her unit who were members in the German section of the racist Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the early 2000s. One of the pair was even a group leader of Kiesewetter's unit.

The German KKK, as has since become known, was a creation of the domestic surveillance agency in Baden-

Württemberg. According to statements by the chairman of the NSU parliamentary investigative committee, Sebastian Edathy of the Social Democrats (SPD), half of the organisation was made up of agents of the surveillance service. Thomas Richter, alias “Corelli,” who worked for the federal intelligence service for more than a decade, was also a member.

Michèle Kiesewetter’s uncle, who is also a police officer, speculated after the murder that it could have a connection to the “Döner murders.” In his opinion, there was still no official connection between these murders and the extreme right.

Did Michèle Kiesewetter know too much? Did she possibly intend to uncover something but ended up turning to the “wrong” colleagues?

It remains questionable whether the three NSU members, Mundlos, Böhnhardt and Zschäpe were directly behind the murder of Kiesewetter. The evidence proving their connection to this was the discovery of the officer’s service weapon in the burnt out caravan of Mundlos and Böhnhardt in November 2011.

However, there is evidence that the murder could have been carried out by others. Along with Kiesewetter, another police officer, Martin Arnold, was also a victim in the attack. He survived with gunshot wounds. Images of the suspects produced from his memory were concealed by the authorities, and only became visible several weeks ago. They show people who bear no likeness to the three NSU members.

The critical questions here are: what is the state trying to conceal and what methods are they using to do this?

According to media reports, it was Michael See, an intelligence agent, who developed the terrorist concept which the NSU based themselves on. The *Berliner Zeitung* reported that See worked out the theoretical conception of building autonomous cells. In his book devoted to the subject, entitled “Sonnenbanner,” he allegedly urged groups to go underground, according to *Zeit Online*.

In the early 1990s, See led the local cell in Leinefelde in Thüringen, where he led their paramilitary sports group and maintained good contact with the Thüringen homeland defence (THS) out of which the NSU emerged. In a report from the federal domestic intelligence services to the federal criminal investigation agency in February, it was stated that a

“relationship” between See and Mundlos could “not be totally ruled out.”

As an agent for the domestic intelligence service, See, who has been charged with attempted manslaughter, earned at least 66,000 marks between 1995 and 2001.

His handlers in the domestic intelligence agency were well aware of the explosive nature of these events. Just one week after the exposure of the NSU in November 2011, the responsible department destroyed the file of agent “Tarif,” as See was known in the intelligence service. The files on six other agents were destroyed during the same period. The domestic intelligence service explained publicly that this concerned people who were merely hangers-on or peripheral figures within the extreme right milieu.

With every week that passes, it is becoming clearer that state authorities cooperated with criminals, covered this up and in so doing at least made possible a series of racist murders which cost the lives of nine immigrants and a police officer.

They also undermined the effective exposure of right-wing extremist criminals. As the LKA official Sven Wunderlich, who was commissioned to locate the three NSU members after they went underground in February 1998, stated before an NSU investigative committee in Erfurt, his work had been blocked by the intelligence services.

The state intelligence agency in Thüringen, with which the detectives from the federal criminal investigative agency cooperated, concealed information and the measures that it had taken. “Our work was sabotaged,” said Wunderlich. He had only two possible explanations for this: “Either we were not supposed to find the trio at that time, perhaps because one of them already had ties with the intelligence services. Or the intelligence agency wanted to find the trio before us, so that that they could clear up particular matters with them, without the police or judicial authorities.”



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