

# German secret service paid undercover agent “Hitler’s birthday” premium

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In recent weeks, there have been a series of revelations about the German secret service’s systematically build-up of neo-Nazi elements in the state of Thuringia in the 1990s. The National Socialist Underground (NSU) emerged from this milieu and went on to murder nine foreign workers in addition to a German policewoman.

Of particular significance are the statements of two former intelligence officials from Thuringia at the NSU trial currently being held in Munich. Both agents had worked for the Thuringian State Office for the Protection of the Constitution (LfV) between 1994 and 2001, supervising the activities of Tino Brandt, who operated for the LfV as an undercover agent. Brandt is expected to be called upon to testify at a later point in the trial.

Brandt was one of the leaders of the regional neo-Nazi scene and rose to become deputy chairman of the fascist German National Democratic Party (NPD) in Thuringia. He was also a co-founder of the Thuringian Homeland Security (THS), which he went on to head.

Over a period of seven years, Brandt was a paid agent of the secret services, receiving, according to his own account, a total of 200,000 Deutschmarks, which he expended mainly on building up the neo-Nazi network.

The statements by the two former intelligence officers provide details on the manner in which the LfV promoted the activities of Brandt.

Brandt met with his secret service mentors on a weekly basis at different locations, including hotels, service stations and parking lots. At each of these meetings, Brandt received a sum varying between 200 and 400 DM. Over the course of a month, he pocketed between 1,200 and 1,300 DM. In addition, the LfV paid his expenses and travel costs.

Brandt also received premiums on days of special

importance for the ultra-right milieu, such as the birthday of Adolf Hitler on April 20, the day of the Rudolf Hess memorial march, and solstice celebrations. Brandt reported on the activities of those involved in the celebrations.

According to one of the two former agents, Brandt was the “highest paid source at that time.” The former agent added, “He was able to set the tone in the milieu on the basis of our generous funding.”

Even Brandt’s retirement from active service in 2001 was sweetened with generous remuneration. He received a “departing bonus” of 6,000 DM, aimed at paying off his debts to the LfV, as trial testimony revealed. This leaves open the question: Did the LfV give Brandt an additional loan? And if so, for what purpose?

It remains unclear whether Brandt ever provided his intelligence service masters with reliable information. According to an internal secret service classification, Brandt was rated second-best in terms of credibility. One of the two former agents reported that he had never known whether Brandt “deliberately concealed any information or could merely not remember.”

The whereabouts of 2,500 DM Brandt was supposed to have passed on to the NSU remains unclear. The LfV claims it believed the money would be used by the NSU trio of Mundlos, Böhnhardt and Zschäpe to obtain false passports, and that the secret services could then uncover their false identities. Last November, another ultra-right extremist, André K, testified in the trial that the passports obtained through a contact of Brandt, which had not been filled out, had suddenly disappeared from the latter’s car.

These inconsistencies failed to interest the presiding judge in Munich, Manfred Goetzl. There was no further questioning of the former LfV agent regarding Tino

Brandt's credibility.

It is increasingly clear that neither the NSU trial in Munich nor the various parliamentary committees of inquiry have any interest in uncovering the extent of involvement by security forces in the series of murders carried out by the ultra-right terrorists. Although it is now known that the intelligence community had more than 20 undercover agents active in the immediate vicinity of the NSU gang between 1998 and 2011, everything has been done to sweep this collaboration under the carpet.

This is particularly evident in the case of Michael Dolsperg, who also went by the name of Michael Lake. Between 1994 and 2002, he was an undercover agent for the Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution (BfV) in ultra-right circles. Under the code name "Tariff," Dolsperg, who had previously been prosecuted for aggravated assault, received a total of 66,000 DM. He also published the pamphlet "Sun Banner," which contains instructions for the formation of right-wing cells. Since 2002, he has lived in Sweden under a new identity. His role as an undercover agent became public last fall.

"Tariff" was one of seven BfV undercover agents whose files were destroyed immediately after the NSU was uncovered in November 2011. The BfV claimed at the time that these agents were of only minor importance—a statement now revealed to be an outright lie.

According to Dolsperg, the BfV had good reason to destroy his file. Shortly after Mundlos, Böhnhardt and Zschäpe went underground in early 1998, André K visited Dolsperg and asked him if he could provide the trio accommodation. Dolsperg then spoke to his BfV mentor "Alex," who in turn consulted his superiors. In the event, the decision was made not to accommodate the trio because if "it had resulted in an arrest, I could have been exposed as an undercover agent and the BfV would have lost a source in the milieu," Dolsperg reported.

The BfV thereby allowed three right-wing extremists, already sought for bomb-making, to go free. The trio went on to commit 10 murders. This would also explain why officers for the Thuringian state police said they had the impression their search for the trio was being deliberately sabotaged.

The BfV denies Dolsperg's version of events, while

the German parliamentary committee says there is no evidence to back up his story. This is not surprising, however, when one considers that the BfV had already shredded its files on Dolsperg and his activities.

The recruitment of "Tariff" by the intelligence agencies also illustrates the latter's role in building up the ultra-right milieu. Dolsperg told *Der Spiegel* that he actually wanted to quit the fascist milieu in 1994 and requested assistance from the Federal Interior Ministry, declaring at the same time that he was ready to reveal what he knew about the neo-Nazis. He was subsequently intercepted by two intelligence service agents who invited him to dinner.

They asked Dolsperg if he was prepared to work for the BfV. "They did not want me to quit, but rather that I carry on. At first I could not believe it," Dolsperg said. In the event of being uncovered, the agents told him, he would get a new identity and a new name.

The fact that Dolsperg was publishing the "Sun Banner" at the time was regarded as an advantage. He should continue to distribute the pamphlet because it maintained his cover, he was told. A total of 19 issues emerged—most of them during Dolsperg's period of activity as an undercover agent.

Apparently, the BfV not only secured publication of the brochures, but also had a hand in the final edit. "The BfV received all copies in advance from me," Dolsperg said. Only on one occasion did the intelligence agency raise objections to a particular cover. Otherwise, there were no requests for changes.

Dolsperg claims he subsidised publication with part of the subventions he received from the state.

Such revelations highlight the significance of the NSU trial in Munich for the political and intelligence establishment. By placing the entire focus on a handful of right-wing extremists, the aim of the trial is to cover up the role played by state authorities in building up the ultra-right milieu, destroying vital evidence and funding criminals and terrorists in their murderous campaign.



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