

Third witness dies in German trial against far-right NSU

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On March 28, 20-year-old Melissa M. died in a Heidelberg clinic of a pulmonary embolism, according to official reports. Three weeks earlier, she had testified as a witness before the NSU investigative committee of the Baden-Württemberg state assembly in Stuttgart. Her testimony was given behind closed doors because the witness felt threatened.

Melissa M. is the third witness to die under mysterious circumstances in the investigation into the terrorist murders of the “National Socialist Underground” (NSU).

On September 16, 2013 her boyfriend at the time, the 21-year-old Florian Heilig, burned to death in his car. Eight hours later, he was to be questioned about the NSU by the state criminal police.

On April 3, 2014, 39-year-old Thomas Richter, aka “Corelli”, was found dead in his apartment. The official cause of death was given as a severe sugar imbalance resulting from undiscovered diabetes.

Both Heilig and “Corelli” possessed background information about the death of Michèle Kiesewetter, the last of the 10 murder victims ascribed to the NSU. While the first nine were immigrants who died between 2000 and 2006 in apparently racist killings, there appeared to be no obvious motive for the 2007 murder of the police officer Kiesewetter, who came from Thüringia.

Even before the NSU flew apart, the Nazi dropout Heilig had already claimed he knew who had shot Kiesewetter in Heilbronn. He had been interrogated by the state criminal police once and was to testify a second time on the day of his death.

Up to 2012, “Corelli” had been an undercover informant of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as the Secret Service is called), and at the time of his death was in a witness protection programme. Among other things, he had also been a founding member of the Ku Klux Klan in Baden-Württemberg. Two police officers who were part of Kiesewetter’s 10-strong squad at the time of her murder also belonged to this racist group.

In an earlier article, we asked, “Did Kiesewetter have to die because she had information about the far-right scene or about the relationship between far-right extremists and the security agencies?”

As for Melissa M., apart from her brief connection with Heilig, she had no known close relations with the right-wing scene. She had been summoned by the Stuttgart committee of inquiry to shed light on the death of her previous boyfriend.

Despite the horrific circumstances of the death of Florian Heilig, within a few hours of his death the authorities were claiming it was suicide; any third party negligence was to be excluded. At first, frustration at bad grades was cited as a motive, and then a broken heart.

However, neither Melissa M. was questioned (the cause of the alleged broken heart), nor were the objections of his family taken into account, who have always vehemently rejected the suicide theory. The parents say their son had never shown suicidal tendencies and was, moreover, “terrified of fire.”

A forensic study of evidence at the crime scene was practically non-existent. The burned-out vehicle was not thoroughly examined and was then released for scrapping after just one day. The police did not even secure the mobile phone and laptop of the deceased, which were in the car. This was only done by the family, who then handed them over to the parliamentary committee of inquiry. The keyring of the deceased, including his car key, has remained missing.

The investigation into the cause of death of Florian Heilig was given to a Stuttgart police officer who was also the “contact person between the police and the Ku Klux Klan”. This was reported by the *Südwest Presse* in a barely noticed article of 7 March (in German).

From 2001, Detective Superintendent Jörg B. acted as the contact between one of Kiesewetter’s later colleagues and the Ku Klux Klan in Schwäbisch-Hall. At that time, his brother held a high-ranking position in the racist group. He claims he himself was never a member of the Ku Klux Klan—at least this has never been proved.

It was Jörg B. who told the family about the death of their son Florian. He testified as a witness before the Stuttgart committee of inquiry on March 9.

It would appear that in her unpublished testimony to the inquiry, Melissa M. contributed little to clarifying the background, either because she did not know anything or was afraid.

The committee chairman Wolfgang Drexler reported that

Melissa M. was only together with Florian Heilig for three months. According to the father, Florian Heilig ended the relationship with her the day before his death by sending a message on WhatsApp. Both spoke against it being suicide as a result of a broken heart.

Drexler also stated that the young woman did not know anything about the right-wing scene; in their short relationship, Heilig had not said anything about his right-wing past. “She could make practically no contribution to our inquiry”, Drexler said. She had not been able to concretise why she felt threatened.

Nevertheless, the circumstances of Melissa M’s death are highly circumspect. As the police and prosecutors in Karlsruhe stated, on the evening of 28 March her boyfriend found her suffering a sudden seizure at her home in Kraichtal near Karlsruhe. The doctors summoned could not save the life of the young woman. Melissa M. died in a hospital in Heidelberg.

The police immediately claimed there was no sign of any third party negligence. The subsequent autopsy also did not reveal any clues. According to the official version, four days earlier, after a minor motorcycle accident, she suffered a bruised knee and sought outpatient hospital care on the evening of the accident. Two days later, she went to the doctor.

Both the hospital and the doctor should have undertaken treatment to prevent a thrombosis, the formation of a blood clot. “Nevertheless, it is likely a thrombosis developed from the accidental haematoma in the knee and ultimately caused the embolism,” the press release issued by the police and prosecutor’s office in Karlsruhe stated on 30 March.

The daily *taz* interviewed a professional in dermatology and phlebotomy from the Freiburg Vein Center about the death. He explained that the risk of thrombosis in a healthy individual was low. Pulmonary emboli were rarer still. Theoretically, it was possible to cause a pulmonary embolism artificially, he said. “To do this, a foreign substance must be injected into a deep vein, which has direct access to the lungs.” However, he had never seen a case where a pulmonary embolism was the result of criminal intent.

Melissa M’s death is above all suspicious because of her relationship with Florian Heilig. After the circumstances of his death had been covered up for 1-1/2 years, more details came to light as a result of the Stuttgart committee of inquiry, indicating that he did indeed know something about the murder of Kiesewetter.

Heilig had told his family that the trial of NSU member Beate Zschäpe was a “pure farce” as long as no other people sat in the dock. He mentioned a man named “Matze”, whom he knew in the right-wing scene.

When questioned by the state criminal police, he had also mentioned “Matze”, who had been his “mentor” in the neo-Nazi scene. “Matze” had introduced him to the scene, and brought him to meetings with the NSU and another right-wing underground organization called “Neoschutzstaffel” (NSS) in

east Öhringe near Heilbronn. The meeting took place in the local “House of Youth”.

This statement was explosive. If it proves to be true, then the NSU did not act alone, but in conjunction with at least one other right-wing terrorist group whose members have still not been unmasked. The murder of Kiesewetter, whose service weapon was found in the burned-out NSU apartment in Zwickau, might have been carried out by another group, or in conjunction with another group.

The police officials classified Heilig’s statements as not credible. They claimed not to know any “Matze”. They said a meeting of neo-Nazis in the “House of Youth” in Öhringe had not taken place on the day in question, as if terrorists would officially book rooms in a council-owned building.

One police official from the earlier investigation told the Stuttgart inquiry that this man was known. His name was Matthias K. and he comes from Neuenstein in Hohenlohekreis. He had the conspicuous tattoos that Florian Heilig described: a swastika on his arm and an NSS logo on his hip. His father was a social worker and had his office in the basement of the “House of Youth” in Öhringe. According to information from the *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, Matthias K. is currently a soldier in the German army.

The committee of inquiry would invite Matthias K. as a witness, its chairman Drexler said. Should it come to that, it is to be hoped that Matthias K. stays alive, after the experiences with Heilig, Corelli and Melissa M.

Since the spectacular exposure of the NSU in November 2011, evidence has mounted that numerous threads lead from Uwe Bönhardt and Uwe Mundlos, who were found dead in a motor home, and Beate Zschäpe, on trial in Munich and adamantly remaining silent, throughout the right-wing extremist scene and deep into the state apparatus.

The neo-Nazi scene, from which the NSU emerged, had been built up and financed by the state secret service in Thuringia. The 10 murders for which the NSU is blamed, took place under the eyes of the secret services. According to the most recent information, at least 24 undercover operatives of the various secret services were active in the environs of the NSU. The Hesse secret service agent Andreas Temme had even been present at the scene of the murder of Halit Yozgat in Kassel.

After the NSU breakup, masses of documents were destroyed by the authorities. There are doubts whether Mundlos and Bönhardt actually killed themselves, as the official version runs. And the murder of police officer Kiesewetter raises many more questions.



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