

Germany: How Hesse authorities covered up the NSU and Lübcke murderers

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Andreas Temme, an employee of the Hesse state branch of the secret service, maintained an official relationship with the neo-Nazi Stephan Ernst, the alleged murderer of the Kassel district president Walter Lübcke. This was announced by state Interior Minister Peter Beuth (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) last week to the Interior Committee of the Hesse state legislature.

Beuth also did not rule out a possible connection between Temme and Markus H., who is in custody for aiding and abetting the murder of Lübcke, who was shot dead on June 2 on the terrace of his home.

The information is explosive. It confirms the existence of a wide network, ranging from the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU), responsible for at least 10 racist murders, to the Lübcke murderers, to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the German secret service is called, and into the highest government circles.

The Hesse state parliament is now expected to set up a committee of inquiry to look into the background of the Lübcke murder. Real clarification is not to be expected from such a committee, however. A former NSU committee had been dictated to by the state government, an alliance of the CDU and Greens, as to what it could and could not learn.

As we now know, this committee also dealt with Stephan Ernst in February 2016. At that time, he had been named on an internal list of the security authorities as one of seven relevant neo-Nazis in northern Hesse and had been described as particularly violent. Nevertheless, after the Lübcke murder three years later, the secret service claimed that Ernst had not been conspicuous for 10 years and had therefore dropped off the radar of the secret service—and nobody sounded the alarm.

The direct link between Temme and Ernst now confirms how close the relationship between the right-wing terrorist scene and the security authorities is and how hard the Hesse state executive has tried to cover up this relationship.

Andreas Temme is a key figure in the NSU complex. His role was never fully clarified, because former Hesse state interior minister and current state premier Volker Bouffier (CDU) and his successors refused to give their consent for him to testify and kept relevant documents secret for decades.

In the Hesse secret service, Temme was responsible for Confidential Informants (CIs) inside the right-wing extremist scene. When, in April 2006, Halit Yozgat was shot in Kassel as the NSU's ninth victim, Temme was sitting in the Internet café where the murder took place. Although he was sitting not three metres away from the scene of the crime, he claimed not to have seen or heard anything and, later, that he had not noticed the body when he left the café—which several experts consider impossible. Nor did he report to the police when the media reported the murder.

When investigators searched his apartment, they found numerous weapons and Nazi literature, including a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Temme, who was called "Little Adolf" in his youth, was obviously a right-wing extremist himself. But the Hesse state legislature held its protective hand over him. Then-Interior Minister Bouffier ordered that all CIs be barred from interrogation.

Temme later had to testify as a witness in the Munich NSU trial and before the Hesse NSU committee of inquiry. But since the secret service kept important files under lock and key, it never succeeded in clarifying his real role.

A 230-page internal report in 2012, in which the

Hesse state secret service summarised its findings on the right-wing terrorist scene in the preceding 20 years, is of particular importance. The parliamentary committee of inquiry only saw 30 pages of this report, which had been submitted to the Interior Ministry in 2014 in a redacted form.

The rest will be kept secret for 120 years! The Interior Ministry justified this unusually long period with the argument that not only the numerous informants in the right-wing extremist scene had to be protected, but their descendants as well. Later it reduced the period to 40 years.

While the state parliament accepted this censorship measure, *Welt am Sonntag* and its editor, Stefan Aust, who wrote a book and numerous articles on the NSU complex, lodged a legal complaint against it in October 2017. After two years of disputes, the Wiesbaden Administrative Court has now decided that the secret service must inform the newspaper how often the name of the alleged Lübcke murderer Stephan Ernst is mentioned in the secret report.

What this revealed is astonishing. While Ernst is mentioned 11 times in the original version, his name does not appear a single time in the final version. Why his name was erased is not known. Andreas Temme is mentioned 6 times in the original version and twice in the final version. Benjamin Gärtner, a Kassel neo-Nazi, whom Temme used as a CI at the time, appears 19 times in the first version and only 6 times in the second.

In the course of the NSU investigations, it had already become known that Temme had telephoned Gärtner immediately before Yozgat's murder. The CI, with the code name "Gemüse" (Vegetables), was the only proven connection between Temme, a member of the secret service, and the suspected Lübcke murderer Ernst. Gärtner was a friend of Ernst, as he testified in February 2016—three years before the Lübcke murder—as a witness before the Hesse NSU committee. When the Left Party member of parliament Hermann Schaus questioned him about Ernst, he said he had known a Stephan, "whom we called NPD Stephan," in a reference to the neo-Nazi Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German National Democratic Party).

Temme's direct connections to Ernst, which Interior Minister Beuth has now admitted, show that his relationship with the secret service was much closer

than previously known. Beuth (CDU) also denied, as a precaution, that Ernst had ever worked as an informant for the secret service. "Stephan E. was never active as an informant," he emphasised—which, given the previous information policy of the Hesse state government, strengthens the suspicion that this was indeed the case.

In any case, the claim that Ernst disappeared from the radar of the security authorities for 10 years before the Lübcke murder can no longer be upheld. The mere fact that he was mentioned 11 times in the internal report of the secret service in 2012 and that the NSU parliamentary committee of inquiry was already dealing with him in 2016 contradicts this. Moreover, he was also always seen in right-wing extremist circles. Obviously, Ernst had not disappeared from the field of vision of the secret service, but the latter had deliberately allowed him to disappear. The question is why.

Temme continues to enjoy official protection. In 2007, after the NSU murder in Kassel, he was transferred to the Kassel Regional Council, which Lübcke headed from 2009 until his assassination. He still works there today. When the Social Democratic Party (SPD) member of state parliament Günter Rudolph demanded his transfer because of his dubious relationship to the Lübcke murderer, both the Interior Ministry and the regional council rejected it. "Andreas Temme is a very normal employee who works very well," its deputy spokesman Harald Merz said.

The role of state premier and former state interior minister Bouffier—who, like no other, contributed to concealing the background of the right-wing terrorist network and its connections to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution—also remains murky. According to the book *Extreme Security*, which deals with right-wing radical networks in the state apparatus, Bouffier and Temme have known each other personally since 2000 at the latest. They met in an unofficial "CDU working group" within the Hesse Office for the Protection of the Constitution, which met regularly.



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