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The Deep State

Germany, Immigration, and the National Socialist
Underground

Wildcat

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September 11, 2014

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04/04/2006	Murder of Mehmet Kubaşık in Dortmund
04/06/2006	Murder of Halit Yozgat in Kassel
4/25/2007	Murder of the police officer Michèle Kiesewetter
11/04/2011	The NSU becomes publicly known

List of Abbreviations

VS = German domestic secret service

BfV = Federal office of the domestic secret service

MAD = German military intelligence agency

BND = German foreign intelligence agency

BUA = Parliamentary investigation committee

NSU = National Socialist Underground

B&H = Blood & Honour

Trio = Böhnhardt, Mundlos, Zschäpe

BAW = German public prosecutor

BOA = Special investigation team

LKA = The “Criminal Police Offices” of Germany’s 16 federal states (*Länder*). Each incorporates a ‘state security’ division.

BKA = Federal equivalent of the LKA, with responsibility for “national security,” “counter-terrorism,” etc.

THS = *Thüringer Heimatschutz* (Thuringia Homeland Protection): coordinating network of the neo-Nazi *Freie Kameradschaften* groups in Thuringia, eastern Germany. See also footnotes 9 and 10.

Nearly three years ago, in November 2011, news of a double suicide after a failed bank robbery developed into one of the biggest scandals in postwar German history.¹ Even now, it remains unresolved. For thirteen years the two dead men, Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt, had lived underground, together with a woman, Beate Zschäpe. The three were part of the National-Sozialistischer Untergrund (NSU), a fascist terror organization which is supposed to have murdered nine migrant small entrepreneurs in various German towns and a female police officer, and to have been responsible for three bomb attacks and around fifteen bank hold-ups. Although the NSU did not issue a public declaration, the connection between the nine murders committed between 2000 and 2006 as obvious: the same weapon was used each time, a Ceska gun.

At the time they were called “doner murders” (as in doner kebab) and the police called their special investigation team “Bosphorus.”² Nearly all the police departments working on the murders focused mainly on the victims and their alleged involvement in “organized

¹ What follows is based on four articles previously published in *Wildcat*. These in turn were based on the research of antifascist groups, on newspaper articles, on the reports from parliamentary investigation committees and on books. We use a lot of names of German Nazis, German towns, German cops and politicians. Most do not have any meaning outside of Germany. But we hope that in the “Age of Google” they can help you if you want to check the facts or go deeper.

² We will refer to some of the German security agencies. There are three intelligence agencies in Germany. The Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND; Federal Intelligence Service) is the foreign intelligence agency of Germany, directly subordinated to the Chancellor’s Office. The Militärischer Abschirmdienst (Military Counterintelligence Service, MAD) is a federal intelligence agency and is responsible for military counterintelligence. The third agency, Germany’s domestic intelligence service, is called “Verfassungsschutz” and has a federated structure. Aside from the federal “Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz” (BfV; Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) there are also 16 so called Landesämter für Verfassungsschutz (LfV; State Authorities for the Protection of the Constitution) – one for each state – which are independent of the BfV. They are tasked with intelligence-gathering on threats against the state order and with counter-intelligence.

crime,” the drug trade, etc. Not only was it eventually revealed that the murderers were organized Nazis, but that the killers had been supported by some branches of the state apparatus and the search for the murderers had been systematically obstructed. As one famous public television news presenter said: “One fact is established: the perpetrators could have been stopped and the murders could have been prevented.” She also voiced “the outrageous suspicion that perhaps they were not supposed to be stopped.” The final report of the parliamentary investigation committee of the Thuringia state parliament, published in August 2014, stated a “suspicion of targeted sabotage or conscious obstruction” of the police search. The Verfassungsschutz (VS, the German domestic secret service) had “at least in an indirect fashion protected the culprits from being arrested.”

Since the supposed double suicide on the November 4, 2011, the intelligence services, the interior ministries of the federal and central state, and the BKA collaborated to cover tracks, just as they had collaborated before to keep the existence of the NSU from becoming publicly known. One day before the connection between the NSU and the last bank robbery was publicly announced, a consultation in the chancellery took place. Since then, the investigation has been systematically obstructed by the destruction of files, lies, and the refusal to surrender evidence. In the current criminal case against the alleged sole survivor of the NSU (Beate Zschäpe) and five supporters at the higher regional court in Munich, the public prosecutor wants it to be believed that the series of terror acts were the work of three people (“the Trio”) and a small circle of sympathizers. “The investigations have found no indication of the participation of local third parties in the attacks or any of organizational integration with other groups.” But it is clear that the NSU was much larger and had a network all over Germany. And it is highly unlikely that the two dead men were the only perpetrators.

Research on the NSU has shown that the VS had the organized fascists under surveillance the whole time, without passing its infor-

NSU timeline:

1993/1994	Foundation of the “Kameradschaft Jena”
1996	Foundation of the Thüringer Heimatschutz (THS)
1996-1998	Small actions with dummy bombs and deactivated bombs
1/26/1998	Raid on the garage of Zschäpe; the Trio (Zschäpe, Mundlos, Böhnhardt) goes underground
1998-2011	Numerous bank robberies
07/27/2000	Bomb attack on eastern European, mostly Jewish migrants in Düsseldorf
09/09/2000	Murder of Enver Şimşek in Nürnberg
01/19/2001	Bomb attack in the Probsteigasse in Cologne
6/13/2001	Murder of Abdurrahim Özüdoğru in Nürnberg
6/27/2001	Murder of Süleyman Taşköprü in Hamburg
8/29/2001	Murder of Habil Kılıç in Munich
2/25/2004	Murder of Mehmet Turgut in Rostock
06/09/2004	Bomb attack on the Keupstraße in Cologne
06/09/2005	Murder of İsmail Yaşar in Nürnberg
6/15/2005	Murder of Theodoros Boulgarides in Munich

and helped to establish them, while at the same time it gave the left-wing opposition the opportunity to turn itself into a force supportive of the state. This fact paralyses many Antifa and other left-wing groups. Instead of naming the state's role in the NSU complex, they focus on the investigation committees and the trial, they lose themselves in the details which are produced there. There were no significant movements on the streets when the NSU became public. All this allows the state apparatus to minimize the NSU – but many people still feel the horror.

mation on to the police. It had many Confidential Informants (CIs)³ in leading positions in the fascist structures – or rather, the CIs even built up large parts of these structures. It is very unlikely that the secret services acted without consultation with the government – but it is certain that we will never find any written order. Sometimes public prosecutors and leading police officials were included in the cover-up. For example, the current President – at the time Vice-President – of the Landeskriminalamt (LKA) or Criminal Police Offices of Thuringia ordered his police in 2003 to “go out there, but don't find anything!” after receiving a tip about Böhnhardt's whereabouts.

Obviously the German state apparatus has erected a (new?) parallel structure that operates in accordance with government policies and out of the reach of parliamentary or legal control. The National-Sozialistischer Untergrund was a flagship project of this “deep state,” supporting the new policy towards migrants that started in 1998 at the instigation of Otto Schily, then Interior Minister. Since the NSU became known to the public, this apparatus has even been financially and operationally strengthened.

The NSU complex gives us a glimpse of the way the German state functions, and can therefore sharpen our criticism of the capitalist state. This is of international relevance for two reasons. First, many countries, such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Morocco, and Russia, have recently seen mobilization, pogroms, and violence against migrants. In a weaker form this has also happened in Germany, and as usual one can see a pattern: the government stirs up hatred, fascists take action (there have been at least five arson attacks in the first half of 2014). Second, many states are preparing militarily for mass strikes and social unrest. In accordance with an operational scheme that has shaped interior policies in many Western countries

³ In the language of the German police and intelligence, confidential informants are called “V-Leute” or “V-Männer.” The V stands for Vertrauen, which means confidence. ☒

since the Second World War, state institutions make use of paramilitary fascist structures. A recent example is the relation between the Greek security apparatus and the fascist *Golden Dawn*.⁴

The Background: The State Lays the Ground for Racism

In October 1982 the new German Chancellor Helmut Kohl told Margaret Thatcher in a confidential conversation that he wanted to reduce the number of Turks in Germany by half within four years. They were “impossible to assimilate in their present number.” A few months before this conversation his predecessor Schmidt blared: “I won’t let any more Turks cross the border.” In October 1983, the government passed a repatriation grant. In the following years, the Christian Democrats (CDU) began a debate about the alleged rampant abuse of the asylum law. Although hate was stirred against “gypsies,” “negroes,” and others, in its core this racism was always aimed against “the Turks,” the largest group of immigrants. Kohl made this clear in his conversation with Thatcher: “Germany does not have a problem with the Portuguese, the Italians, not even the Southeast Asians, because all these communities are well integrated. But the Turks, they come from a very different culture.”⁵

Already in the second half of the 1980s, this government policy was accompanied by Nazi attacks on foreigners. After German reunification this process culminated in the racist pogroms of Rostock-Lichtenhagen in August 1992.⁶ Less than four months later,

⁴ Wildcat has published an article about the *Golden Dawn* in Greece, “Fascists in Greece: From the streets into parliament and back.”

⁵ Claus Hecking, “Britische Geheimprotokolle: Kohl wollte offenbar jeden zweiten Türken loswerden,” *Spiegel Online*, August 1, 2013.

⁶ There were many racist pogroms in Germany at the beginning of the 90s. The first peak was in September 1991 in Hoyerswerda, a town in northeastern Saxony. On four nights there were attacks against a hostel mainly used by

of this, the Bundestag investigation committee arrived at the non-factual conclusions that there is “no evidence to show that any authority was involved in the crimes (of the NSU) in any manner, or supported or approved them” and that there was no evidence “that before November 4, 2011 any authority had knowledge” of the NSU or its deeds or “helped it to escape the grasp of the investigating authorities.”²⁷

This *raison d'état* also includes the PdL (Partei die Linke – Left Party), which participated “constructively” in the BUA and supported its final report. The PdL is the left-wing opposition party in Germany. It was formed in 2007 through a merger of the successor of the SED (state party of former East Germany) and the Left opposition in the SPD. It is increasingly supported by sections of the radical left. So far, the VS had spied on the PdL. As part of the final declaration of the BUA the PdL has been assured that it will be no longer monitored by the secret services.

The Nazi scene is hardly affected: the unmasking of the NSU has not weakened it, instead many are encouraged to pursue their goals at gunpoint. They are arming themselves. In 2012, there were 350 cases of gun use registered. That was a peak, but in 2013, the use of firearms by Nazis increased further. Refugee shelters are attacked much more frequently again.

There is no reason to believe that we could take action against the brown plague via the state. At the trial in Munich, the public prosecutor is doing a political job, trying to deal with the case according to the ruling doctrine.

A weakness of large parts of the “left” opposition and the radical Left becomes apparent: after the pogroms of the early '90s many abandoned the working class as a revolutionary force. They could therefore only turn to “civil society” and thus ultimately the state as an ally against the Nazis. This ally supported fascist structures

²⁷ From the final report of the parliamentary investigation committee. Available at: <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/146/1714600.pdf>.

tifascist activities in cooperation with the VS whether they were from the SPD or the CDU, and so on.

The VS was an important tool in the domestic policy of all previous governments. In the mid-50s it helped to ban the Communist Party; in the 60s it worked with intelligence operations and agent-provocateurs against the youth movement. At the beginning of the 70s it helped the Brandt government to implement “professional bans”: 3.5 million applicants for civil service were audited, 11,000 applicants were banned from work as civil servants. There were unofficial disciplinary procedures and dismissals, too.

These structures survived the collapse of the Eastern Bloc: the security services were even able to use them to expand their sphere of influence. This was reinforced by 9/11: During the *war on terror* intelligence agencies worldwide had a massive boost, similar to that of the Cold War. The United States enhanced its security apparatus with the Patriot Acts to ensure “homeland security.” In Germany, the *Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre* was founded in 2004 to coordinate BKA, BND, VS and the LKAs. The BKA Act of 2009 provides the BKA with means “to respond to threats of international terrorism,” which were previously only available to the police authorities of the states (computer and network surveillance, dragnets, use of undercover investigators, audio and video surveillance of housing and telecommunications). In addition, the BKA can now investigate without concrete suspicion on its own initiative, without the approval of an prosecutor.

The development of the scandals surrounding the NSU and the surveillance of the NSA and its western partners (which include the German agencies) has made clear that the power of the ‘deep state’ in Germany is stronger than was expected. It was never touched and has survived all scandals. Across party lines, parliamentary investigation is conducted with special consideration for *raison d’état*. This ensures that the deep state is not affected and that police and intelligence agencies continue to be empowered, provided with additional rights and encouraged to cooperate more closely. Because

the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and the CDU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany) agreed to abolish the right of asylum almost completely.

The state racism was bloody, but it was not quantitatively successful in deporting large numbers or discouraging immigration. At the beginning of Kohl’s Chancellery there were 4.6 million foreigners in Germany; when it ended in 1998 there were 7.3 million. Consequently, interior policy focused on “police penetration” of “parallel societies” after the Rostock pogroms and especially under the Schröder government. Interior minister Kanther and his successor Schily imposed the definition of immigration as “criminally organized” throughout Europe. This policy, too, was primarily directed not against “newcomers” but against the “Turks” who already live here. Small businesses owned by migrants are generally suspected of involvement in organized crime. Even before 9/11, the financial transactions and phone calls of whole communities were screened and analyzed on suspicion of organized crime and trafficking. In particular, the investigations targeted small businesses frequented by large numbers of people: coffee shops, internet cafes, kiosks, and so forth. From these places migrants can transfer money to another country without the involvement of banks, using the *Hawala* system.⁷ “Police penetration” reached its climax with the search for the

Mozambican contract workers. The second peak was the pogroms in Rostock-Lichtenhagen in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: Between August 22 and 24, 1992, violent xenophobic riots took place; these were the worst mob attacks against migrants in postwar Germany. There were also arson attacks against Turkish houses in which eight people died. There are two Wildcat articles in English about these pogroms and their consequences, “Rostock, or: How the New Germany is being governed,” from Wildcat 60, 1992; and “Critique of autonomous anti-fascism,” from Wildcat 57, 1991.

⁷ The *Hawala* system is an informal value-transfer system based on a huge network of money brokers. This network makes it possible to send money to an acquaintance in a cheap and confidential way. There are no promissory instruments exchanged between the *hawala* brokers: the system is solely based on trust between the brokers.

Ceska killers: the “BOA Bosphorus” organized the largest dragnet among migrant communities in the history of Germany: massive surveillance of phone calls, mobile phones, money transfers, hotel bookings, rental car use, etc.

The Nazis

Although the global economic crisis of the early 1990s reached Germany a bit later than elsewhere because of the “reunification boom,” it was relatively more severe. Unemployment doubled, “floodgates opened wide” in the factories. The unions supported the crisis policy of employers with new collective agreements to ensure “job security” and company agreements implementing “working time accounts” over a full year. The workers were left alone in their defensive struggles, even though some were quite militant and creative. The (radical) Left was preoccupied with the struggle against fascism and racism. They no longer analysed racism as a governmental policy, but as a “popular passion.” Anyone who tries to fight against ethnic racism in all its shades but omits the dimension of social racism remains toothless at best: in the worst case s/he becomes an agent of state racism.⁸ Jacques Rancière described it this way: “The racism we have today is a cold racism, an intellectual construction. It is primarily a creation of the state... [It is] a logic of the state and not a popular passion. And this state logic is primarily supported not by, who knows what, backward social groups, but by a substantial part of the intellectual elite.” Rancière concludes that the “‘Leftist’ critique” has adopted the “same conceit” as the right wing (“racism is a popular passion” which the state has to fight with increasingly tougher laws). They “build the legiti-

⁸ By social racism we mean racism against people from lower social strata, people who don’t integrate well in society, people living from benefits, etc. Étienne Balibar uses a similar concept in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991).

he became president of the BND. Under his leadership the BND assisted in abductions and torture by the CIA. Among other things, Hanning argued against the return of Guantanamo prisoner Murat Kurnaz, although he knew of his innocence.²⁶ He became secretary of state in the interior ministry late in 2005. During his examination before the BUA he said in relation to the NSU complex that “the security structure of Germany has proved itself.”

Another important figure is Klaus-Dieter Fritsche (CSU). Since the beginning of this year he has been federal government commissioner for the federal intelligence services, a newly created post. He is at the height of his career now. In 2009 he succeeded Hanning as Interior Ministry Secretary of State: in this capacity he was known as “Germany’s most powerful official” and “the secret interior minister.” Previously he was intelligence coordinator at the federal chancellery and before that, from 1996 to 2005, he was vice-president of the BfV with responsibility for the management of CIs like Corelli, Tarif and Primus. At the BUA he expressed the self-image of the “deep state” clearly: “secrets that could affect the government’s ability to act if revealed, must not be revealed... the interests of the state are more important than a parliamentary investigation.”

This “deep state” has a long tradition in Germany: it survived both 1933 and 1945. In 1933 the Nazis could smash the (Communist) opposition quickly, because the political police had previously created files about them which they immediately made available to the Nazi government. After 1945 the secret services, police agencies, and the administrative apparatus continued with essentially the same personnel. The BND, the VS and the *stay-behind* structures were made up of old Nazis. But today this complex runs across party lines. In the case of the NSU, both CDU and SPD Interior Ministers of the states played a role. BKA chief Ziercke is member of the SPD, while the public prosecutor is from the FDP [Free Democratic Party, a liberal party]. In Thuringia, interior ministers openly fought an-

be used inside Germany. So far, Germany has had little direct experience of the “privatization of warfare,” but the Bundeswehr is actively trying to eliminate this “shortcoming,” seeking to create its own private shadow armies with the support of the Federal Employment Agency. (This agency finances the training and “certification of safety personnel for international assignments”).

Operational Cores and Control from Above

You can see that the structure that led the NSU is still intact by looking at the systematic action to destroy important files. The heads of the agencies were immediately operationally active. On a strategic level they set the course for the further upgrade of the law enforcement agencies with targeted public relations work. In total five presidents of VS agencies were forced to resign. These resignations were intended “to provide breathing space for the Minister of the Interior,” as one of these directors put it. But above all the resignations were supposed to allow the the operational work to continue undisturbed. The “deep state” – this dense web of intelligence agencies, military, and police that supports government actions and implements its regulations with extra-legal means, “freelance” employees and “auxiliary forces” – must not become visible.

August Hanning is certainly one of the strategic coordinators of this structure. From 1986 to 1990 he was Security Officer in the embassy in East Berlin, among other things responsible for prisoner ransom. In 1990 he moved to the German chancellery and in 1998

²⁶ Murat Kurnaz is a Turkish citizen and resident of Germany. He was arrested was arrested in Pakistan late in 2001 then imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay for five years. From 2002 onwards the USA was ready to return Kurnaz to Germany, but the German government declined that offer. According to the German government Kurnaz had lost his residency permit because he had left Germany for more than 6 months without notice. Kurnaz couldn't return to Germany until a court ruled that he still had his residency permit because in Guantanamo he was unable to apply for an extension of his “leave to remain.”

macy of a new form of racism: state racism and ‘Leftist’ intellectual racism.”⁹ After that shift, there was a strong tendency for antifascist activities to focus on the socially deprived and their primitive racism, and the state became increasingly attractive as an ally. From the mid-90s onward, it funded most of these anti-racist initiatives. All these changes were completed by the self-disarming of most of the radical Left, which started adopting the aim of “strengthening civil society” at the same time as it removed all references to class struggle.

The most important NSU members were born in the mid-1970s in East Germany and were politically socialized in the “asylum debate” in the early 90s. It was a phase of massive de-industrialization and high unemployment in the East of Germany. The young Nazis learned that they could use violence against migrants and leftist youth without being prosecuted by the state. They realized that they could change society through militant action.

In West Germany a new youth culture grew in the '80s as well: right-wing skinheads. The skinhead scene in the East and in the West was held together by alcohol, excessive violence, concerts, and the distribution of illegal videos and CDs. This music business allowed them to set up their own financing. Still, a large part of their money was organized through petty crime. From the beginning, many Nazis were involved in prostitution, and arms and drug trafficking. Later they became heavily involved with biker gangs and security firms, which are booming due to the the privatization of state functions.

In the mid-90s various militant groups and other groups from the rightwing music scene united under the banner of the Blood & Honour network (B&H).¹⁰ Soon after the German Nazi scene organized internationally, making contacts worldwide and building an

⁹ All quotes from a lecture by Jacques Rancière in 2010, printed in German translation in *ak 555*, November 19, 2010. The English translation is available at: <http://wrongarithmetic.wordpress.com/2010/09/21/ranciere-racism/>

¹⁰ *Blood & Honour* is a neo-Nazi music promotion network and political

infrastructure that stretched from CD production to arms dealing and shooting ranges. At that time the police could no longer countenance Nazi violence, and the Nazis had to hide their actions. In that context, the B&H/*Combat 18* concept of clandestine struggle and small, independent terrorist groups (“leaderless resistance”) helped them reorganize.

In the former East German state of Thuringia, the Nazi scene was built up by “Freie Kameradschaften,”¹¹ the Thüringer Heimatschutz (THS),¹² Blood & Honour, and the Ku Klux Klan. This is the environment that gave birth to the National-Sozialistischer Untergrund. The “Kameradschaft Jena” consisted of Ralf Wohlleben, Holger Gerlach, André Kapke, Böhnhardt, Mundlos, and Zschäpe. From 1995 onwards they were filed as “rightwing extremists” in the VS Information System. Organized in the THS, they practised the use of explosives and firearms, and committed their first attacks. The other members of the “Kameradschaft Jena” remained active in the scene after the Trio went underground in 1998. And they supported their comrades: Holger Gerlach gave them his driver’s licence, passport, and birth certificate, and he rented motorhomes for them. Kapke and Wohlleben organized weapons and passports. Those two organized the largest right-wing rock festival in Germany and maintained international contacts. In 1998 Wohlleben became a member of the NPD, the largest neo-Nazi party at the time. Over time he became its deputy chairman in Thuringia. With the help of this network, Böhnhart, Mundlos and Zschäpe could move underground and commit their attacks, probably with local support.

group founded in the United Kingdom in 1987. *Combat 18* was founded in 1992 as its militant arm.

¹¹ In the early 90s the militant neo-Nazi scene began to organize in groups called *Freie Kameradschaften* (free associations, free camaraderie). These have no formal membership and no centralized national structure, but keep in close contact. Over 150 such *Kameradschaften* exist in Germany.

¹² The *Thüringer Heimatschutz* (THS) was a coordinating network of the *Freie Kameradschaften* in Thuringia with up to 170 members. Its head Tino Brandt

Intelligence, Nazis, and the War

Since the mid-90s Germany has almost always been at war. The biggest missions were those in Yugoslavia since 1995 and in Afghanistan since 2002. The role of intelligence became far more important, playing a greater role in securing German territory, holding down the domestic opposition to the war, and monitoring the Bundeswehr (German army) soldiers. To these ends it uses intelligence operations against opponents of the war, it infiltrates Islamist groups, and it cooperates with neo-fascist soldiers and mercenaries.

Many German and Austrian Nazis fought in the Yugoslavian civil wars, especially on the Croatian side. This involvement was organized by contacts in the “Freien Kameradschaften” and was known to the German government all along. At the same time, the German government ignored the embargo and sent military instructors to Croatia. August Hanning (see below) told the BUA that they were fighting against the Islamists since the mid-90s – and could not be bothered with the Nazis. They were focused on the “presence of al-Qaeda terrorist groups” and not on the extreme right-wing terrorists in Bosnia. What this statement obscures, of course, is that they had previously had strongly supported the Islamist militias, when these were not yet called “al-Qaeda.”

These wars were quite lucrative for some Nazis. Normally they got no pay but they were allowed to loot. They took part in “ethnic cleansing.” The regular Croatian army and the professional mercenaries²⁵ conquered a town and marked the houses of “Serbs.” Then the Nazis were allowed to plunder and murder. After their return to Germany some Nazis could build up companies (and get leading positions in the NPD and other organizations).

The Bundeswehr has been called an “expeditionary force” since 2006. It became an all-volunteer military in July 2011 and can also

destags.

²⁵ U.S. companies heavily involved in the conquest of Krajna.

informed VS analyst. He gave the BUA members the impression that he knew a lot more about the Nazi scene than they did and reprimanded them repeatedly. The questions put to him centered on why the VS prevented any mention of the Trio in a joint internal paper by the VS and BKA. Menhorn said that the VS, in opposition to the BKA, knew that the Trio was “irrelevant.” That was after the first murders had already happened. When he was asked for the reasons for this fatal denial, his immediate reply was very brief but still revealed what the VS did at that time: “We adjusted our information.”²⁴

Menhorn, Richard Kaldrack (alias; Marschner’s handler), Thomas Richter, Mirko Hesse, Martin Thein (Dolsperg’s handler) and Gordian Meyer-Plath, Scepanski’s handler and head of the Saxony VS, are all part of a new generation, born in 1966 or later, who came straight from school or university and started working for the VS. They all stand for the extremism doctrine; some of them have used it for an academic career. Thein for example has published books on Ultras and “fan culture” with leftwing publishers. It is very unlikely that those agents/handlers, who were very young at the time, could have taken important decisions (not stopping the Trio, giving them arms, keeping information from the police ...) without consultation with the hierarchy. They were instructed by old hands like Norbert Wießner, Peter Nocken and Lothar Lingen (alias), who won their wings fighting the Red Army Faction. Lingen set up a department in the BfV exclusively for “right terror” at the beginning of the 90s. He could be called the highest-ranking agent/handler: it was he who coordinated the destruction of files after the existence of the NSU became public knowledge.

Behind them there was a strategic level of a very few high officials whose careers swung between the interior ministry, the chancellery and the top levels of the services (e.g. Hanning and Fritsche).

²⁴ Hajo Funke, *Abbruch der Untersuchung auf halber Strecke. Das vorzeitige Ende der öffentlichen Ermittlung des NSU Untersuchungsausschusses des Bun-*

The Informants System

The German State is directly involved in organized fascist structures. But the direct and extensive involvement in the Thüringer Heimatschutz and the National-Sozialistischer Untergrund stands out. In and around these groups the VS positioned more than two dozen Confidential Informants, or CIs. These CIs were not used to catch violent Nazis like the Trio, instead they organized the militant Nazi scene in Germany, developing it ideologically and militarily. The VS recruited mostly very young fascists and made them into leaders of the scene. In an internal document of 1997, the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal Police Office, or the BKA) called these CIs “incendiaries” in the Nazi scene.¹³ It saw “the danger that the CIs egged each other on to bigger actions” and found it questionable “whether some actions would have happened without the innovative activities of the CIs.” There are many statements by former CIs describing how they discussed their political actions with their handlers. In some of those cases the handlers prevented their CIs from leaving the scene or told them to appear more aggressive. For the German intelligence agencies, maintaining CIs is more important than law enforcement. They protected them from the police in multiple cases so that they could operate undisturbed. In the mid-90s there was a brief debate about this problem, because it became known that CIs of the German intelligence agencies fought and killed as mercenaries in the Yugoslavian civil war.

In 1996 the Federal Interior Ministry began *Operation Rennsteig*: the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV, federal domestic secret service), Militärischer Abschirmdienst (MAD, German military intelligence agency), and local VS agencies of Thuringia and Bavaria coordinated their intelligence activities relating to the THS and the

was a paid CI for VS in Thuringia.

¹³ Von Baumgärtner, Maik; Röbel, Sven; Stark, Holger, “Innere Sicherheit: Der Brandstifter-Effekt,” *Der Spiegel* 45, November 5, 2012; “Der »Brandstifter-Effekt« des Verfassungsschutzes,” *Antifaschistisches Infoblatt*, March 8, 2014.

NSU, at least until 2003. They discussed the recruitment of informants but also how they could achieve discursive hegemony within “civil society.” *Operation Rennsteig* marks a turning point in German interior policy, which really took hold when Otto Schily, a former ’60s student radical and defense lawyer of the Red Army Faction, became interior minister in 1998. There was an unseen extension of the security apparatus and an adjustment of the focus of the intelligence agencies. To adapt themselves to the new international constellation (Yugoslavian wars, the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993), they centralized the German intelligence structure and unified the handling of the Nazi scene. In this process they also expanded intelligence activities within the Nazi scene. All this happened at the same time as the shift in “foreigners policy” from the attempt at “reduction” under Kohl to the “fight against parallel societies in our midst” under Schily.

Everyone involved in *Operation Rennsteig* knew that it was an explosive and not entirely legal operation. Most of the files concerning recruitment and handling were incomplete, some CIs were not even registered. Between November 12, 2011 and the summer of 2012, 310 case files were destroyed in the BfV alone. They tried to destroy everything connected with *Operation Rennsteig*, CI “Tarif” and other important CIs around the NSU. Again, the commands were coming from the top of the hierarchy. A few days after the first destruction of files, the Federal Interior Ministry gave the order to continue the destruction. Not only did they destroy physical files, they also manipulated computer files and deleted the phone data of CIs in contact with the NSU.

Who Was in Control?

When more and more high-level CIs in the NSU’s immediate environment were exposed, they began to tell the fairy tale of “CIs out of control.” This was just the secret service’s next smokescreen, after

behind). But it also had to prevent Communist Party election victories and other forms of radical social change. In West Germany the stay-behind troops were called *Technischer Dienst* (technical services) and were built up by Nazi war criminals such as Klaus Barbie under US leadership. This became publicly known for the first time in 1952.²¹

According to a German government report of December 1990, in which the existence of stay-behind structures was admitted, “preparations for the defence of the state” were made in cooperation with the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND, German foreign intelligence agency) from 1956 onwards. Heinz Lembke was part of these structures. He delivered weapons to the *Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann*²² in the ’70s. Lembke’s huge arsenal was discovered incidentally by forestry workers in 1981. The night after Lembke agreed to disclose who had pulled the strings, he was found hanged in his cell.

The stay-behind structures obviously changed their character in the 70s and 80s (in Italy they were called *Gladio* and took part in something they must have understood as a civil war from 1969 to 1989.) In the 1990s they changed their direction again: now Islamism was the main enemy – it was perhaps at this point that new personnel were recruited. The thread connecting them: fascist groups as reserve intervention forces.

Christian Menhorn’s testimony at the penultimate session of the BUA²³ is typical of the secret services’ self-confidence. Menhorn was responsible for the THS at the time. He appeared as the best-

²¹ See Daniele Ganser, *Nato’s Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe* (Cass: New York, 2004).

²² The Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann was one of the largest paramilitary groups in Germany. It was founded by Karl-Heinz Hoffmann in 1973 and prohibited in 1980. Part of the group subsequently went to Lebanon to receive military training. In September 1980 a bomb exploded at the Oktoberfest in Munich, killing 13 people. The alleged individual perpetrator Gundolf Köhler, who died in the explosion, was a member of the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann.

²³ Before that, the BUA had not paid attention to the BfV. The delegates had not even known about its department for right-wing terrorism.

the investigations still had not gotten anywhere. After the NSU became publicly known, politicians and the public prosecutor insisted obstinately that Kiesewetter had been murdered by chance and that Böhnhardt and Mundlos had been the sole perpetrators. But that story does not add up!¹⁹ In the case of Kiesewetter, the poor performance of the investigation teams cannot be explained by “racism.” The murder victim was part of the police. Why the need for a cover-up?

After the murder in Heilbronn, it became quiet around the NSU. Four and a half years later, suddenly there were two bank robberies that were attributed to the NSU. After the second of these failed, Böhnhardt and Mundlos allegedly committed suicide and the NSU became a matter of public knowledge.

Germany’s “Security Structure” and the Nazis

One has to make use of the far right, no matter how reactionary they are... Afterwards it is always possible to get rid of them elegantly... One must not be squeamish with auxiliary forces.

– Franz Joseph Strauß²⁰

Since at least the disclosures starting in Italy in the second half of 1990, it has been known that NATO keeps armed fascist troops as a reserve intervention force. Only states with such a “stay-behind” structure could become NATO members after the Second World War. In case of a Soviet occupation this reserve was supposed to fight as a guerrilla force behind the front (hence the name *stay-*

²⁰ Franz Josef Strauß was a German politician. He was the chairman of the CSU (independent party in Bavaria, but in an electoral union with the CDU), a member of the federal cabinet in various positions and for a long time minister-president of Bavaria. During his political career Strauss was a controversial figure, a law-and-order politician, well connected to the intelligence agencies and often leaning to the far right. He was involvement in several large-scale scandals.

such cover stories as “we didn’t know anything” and “we were badly coordinated” collapsed when *Operation Rennsteig* became publicly known. It is a lie, but many on the Left believe it because it fits into their picture that “the Nazis can do what they want with the state.” It is therefore worth taking a closer look at this point.

Who are CIs? The services usually try to recruit people with problems: prison, debts, and personal crises. These people then receive an allowance that can amount to a normal monthly income for important CIs. CIs get support for their political actions and warnings before a house search. On the other hand, there is a lot of control: surveillance of all telephones, tracking of movements, sometimes direct shadowing. In order to crosscheck the reports, the VS runs more CIs than it would otherwise need. Time and again there are meetings of Nazi cadres with four or five CIs sitting around the table. There were several CIs within the NSU structure who did not know about each other. The great majority of them did what the VS wanted them to do – passing on information, betraying everything and everyone, while also directly supporting armed struggle by providing passports, logistics, propaganda and weapons.

Some examples of CIs in the NSU structure:

- Tino Brandt, the chief of the THS, was the best paid CI of the Thuringia VS from 1994 to 2001; he helped the Trio go underground, and afterward provided passports and money.
- Thomas Starke (LKA CI in Berlin from 2000 to 2011) organized weapons and the Trio’s first hideout, and he delivered explosives before they went underground. He gave clues as to where they could be found in 2002, but these were “not investigated.”
- Thomas Richter was CI “Corelli” for the BfV from 1994 to 2012; after this became public he was kept hidden by the agency and was found dead in April 2014. He had “immediate contact” with Mundlos as early as 1995, and was the link

between the NSU and the KKK and co-founder of the anti-antifa.

- Andreas Rachhausen – “GP Alex” – brought back the getaway car the three had used for going underground in January 1998, when Rachhausen was already a CI.
- Ralf Marschner was CI “Primus” for the BfV from 1992 until about 2001. He rented motorhomes through his building company at exactly the time when two of the murders occurred.
- Carsten Szczepanski tried to build up a German branch of the KKK in the early 1990s, while monitored by the VS. Between 1993 and 2000, he was imprisoned for a brutal attempted murder. In prison he co-edited the Nazi magazine “Weißer Wolf” (White Wolf), which propagated the concept of *leaderless resistance* and sent greetings “to the NSU” even then. He became a CI in prison. For his work he received many prison privileges (besides lots of money). He supplied much information, for example that Jan Werner had organized the Trio’s weapons. Immediately after his release he tried to set up a terror cell like *Combat 18*. When his cover blew in 2000, the VS got him a new identity and sent him abroad.
- Michael von Dolsperg, (formerly See), a member of *Combat 18*, close to the THS. From 1995 to 2001 he was a BfV CI with the code name “Tarif.” He was rewarded with at least 66,000 D-Mark. After 1994 he was editor of the magazine “Sonnenbanner,” which proposed “going underground” and “forming independent cells.” We know that some of its articles were discussed by Mundlos, Böhnhardt, Zschäpe and their close contacts. Dolsperg produced a total of 19 issues. In an interview he claimed that “the BfV got all issues in advance.”¹⁴ This

¹⁴ *Der Spiegel*, September 2014.

2006-2007: Murders of Migrants Stop, Police Officer Kiesewetter is Murdered

In April 2006 two people were killed within three days: kiosk owner Mehmet Kubasik in Dortmund and Halit Yozgat in his internet café in Kassel. The body count of the Ceska murders went up to nine. The victims’ relatives organized joint demonstrations in Kassel and Dortmund, shouting the slogan “No tenth victim!” After the demonstrations the series of murders stopped.

The murder in Kassel showed clearly that the VS wanted to sabotage all investigations – and that this was a decision from the top of the hierarchy: at the time of the murder the Hessian VS officer Andreas Temme was present in Yozgat’s internet café. Temme was known as a gun fanatic and collected fascist literature. He was the only person present at the murder scene and did not come forward to the police. At that time he was the handler of a fascist CI with whom he had a long phone call an hour before the murder. The police saw Temme as a suspect for the entire Ceska series. Nevertheless, the Hessian VS refused to give the police any information; otherwise someone “would just have to put a dead body near a CIs or a handler” to “paralyze the whole VS.” The dispute between the police and the VS was taken up to the Hessian interior minister Bouffier, who stopped the investigations after consultation with the BfV.

Just over a year later, on April 25, 2007, the police officer Michèle Kiesewetter was shot in her police car. Her colleague Martin Arnold, sitting next to her, survived a headshot. After four and a half years

¹⁹ Why would Böhnhardt and Mundlos go all the way to Heilbronn to kill at random a police officer who was also from Thuringia? A police officer whose immediate superior was a member of the KKK? Kiesewetter’s uncle is a police officer involved in fascist structures himself; he said to the police in 2007 that the murder of his niece was connected to the Ceska murders. The police officers investigating Heilbronn concluded from eyewitness accounts that there were six perpetrators and made composite sketches, but those were not used in the investigation, etc.

2003-2005: The Manhunt is Discontinued; Bomb Attack in Cologne

In 2003 four immigrants from Turkey had already been killed. Evidence piled up that the murders could have a right-wing extremist background. In March 2003 the Italian secret service gave the VS evidence of a network of European Nazis that prepared murders of immigrants. The FBI had analysed the murders and regarded “hatred of Turks” as a motive for the murders. In Baden-Württemberg CI “Erbse” revealed that there was a Nazi group called NSU and one member was called “Mundlos:” the handler was advised to destroy this information. It was decided to let the Trio disappear.

In June 2004, a nail bomb exploded in the Keupstraße in Cologne. The attack resembled other right-wing attacks, for example the London nail bombings by the Nazi David Copeland five years earlier. But the Federal Interior Minister Schily announced two days later: “The findings of our law enforcement agencies do not indicate a terrorist background, but a criminal one.” He definitely knew better!

The shops and restaurants in the Keupstraße are almost exclusively run by immigrants. Many of these shops are very successful; some businesspeople even joined in an initiative to become active in local politics with their own demands. The attack ended these attempts. The uncertainty as to who was behind the attack and the crackdown by the police on the victims directly after created great distrust in the Keupstraße, which is still felt to this day.

The Keupstraße bombing and its aftermath exemplify the structural interaction of state institutions with the fascist terror: first the attack terrorizes the immigrants, then they are harassed by the police and the media. This harassment makes the intentions of the NSU a reality: “foreign profiteers” and “foreign mafias” were marked and cut off from the German “Volkskörper” (“German people’s body”).

is not the only case where the VS partly financed and “fine-tuned” the contents of a Nazi magazine. In Thuringia, the VS was consulted for anti-fascist leaflets and did the proof-reading.¹⁵ In 1998 Kapke asked Dolsberg if he could provide housing for the Trio in hiding. Dolsberg refused after his handler advised him to do so.

Parallel to the story about “CIs out of control,” the intelligence agencies created another one: “too much chaos in the intelligence apparatus.” To support this legend they put on display all the internal conflicts between the various law enforcement and intelligence agencies, cases of “conflicting authorities” and the competition between different agencies. One highpoint was the scandal around Roewer, the former President of the local VS agency in Thuringia.¹⁶ All this show of confusion was used to make the NSU a pretext for the enhancement of the security apparatus.

1998: The So-called Disappearance of the Underground

In January 1998, the LKA found pipe bombs and explosives in a garage rented by Zschäpe in Jena. The VS had known about these explosives all along. Nonetheless, Böhnhardt was able to leave undisturbed in his car during the raid. It took days until the police is-

¹⁵ “Der Thüringer NSU-Untersuchungsausschuss,” *Antifaschistisches Infoblatt* 101 / 4.2013, 28.01.2014.

¹⁶ From 1994 to 2000 Helmut Roewer was president of the Thuringia Verfassungsschutz. He is famous for his excessive leadership of the VS, involving prostitutes and spiked helmets. In summer 2000 he had to resign because it came to light that he financed important militant Nazis not only with help of the ‘normal’ VS structures but also with a system of front companies. Exactly who got the money remains unclear. Roewer himself said some time ago that the Thuringia Verfassungsschutz funded the neo-Nazi scene with 1.5 million DM. Today Roewer publishes with the right wing Ares-Verlag.

sued a warrant for the Trio because all those responsible were on sick leave, on vacation, or otherwise unavailable. Obviously they wanted the Trio to go underground. Already in November 2011, the famous German feuilletonist Nils Minkmar described the nature of the “underground” as follows: “They didn’t have to hide very deep, it was more like snorkeling in a bathtub: They used to have a social life in *Zwickau*, kept in contact with a wide circle of supporters and attended demonstrations, concerts and other events. Many did know where the three were hiding. And if the right wing scene in Germany has a problem, it is certainly not that it is extremely sealed off, but that it is heavily interspersed with CIs.” In fact, today we know that the three operated in an environment that was structured and monitored by the VS; most of their main supporters were CIs. After searching the garage, the police even found two address lists belonging to Mundlos containing 50 names, including at least five CIs.¹⁷ The lists displayed the national network of the NSU, with contacts in Chemnitz, Jena, Halle, Rostock, Nuremberg, Straubing, Regensburg, Ludwigsburg. Officially, the police never analyzed the lists or used them for investigation purposes!

2000: The Extremism Doctrine and the Beginning of the Murders

Two and a half years later, on September 9, 2000, the Ceska murders began with the death of Enver Simsek. In early summer the BfV had informed the interior ministry that “a few groups” were trying to get the “structure and the equipment” to “attack certain targets.” These groups were especially active in the states of Berlin and Bran-

¹⁷ Von Maik Baumgärtner, Hubert Gude und Sven Röbel, “Ermittlungsspanne: Fahnder werteten NSU-“Garagenliste” nicht richtig aus,” *Spiegel Online*, February 14, 2014; Wolf Wetzel, “Die Garagenliste – die Gold Card des Nationalsozialistischen Untergrundes/NSU,” *Eyes Wide Shut*, November 16, 2011.

denburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony. The BfV also kept an eye on the Trio – after they went underground they were closely watched by the unit for right-wing terrorism (!). Nevertheless the BfV claimed that these small Nazi groups had “no political concept for armed struggle,” although they actively propagated such concepts by supporting newspapers such as the “Sonnenbanner.” Federal Interior Minister Schily used this information to make a press statement in which he warned of the “danger of Antifa actions radicalizing individual right-wing extremists. These militant right-wing extremists or small groups could decide to retaliate.”

The strategy was to build up fascist structures and to blame the radical left for their existence in the public discourse, employing the extremism doctrine.¹⁸ The film *Youth Extremism in the Heart of Germany*, made by the Thuringian VS in May 2000, is a clear example. At the beginning it states that fascist and antifascist “scenes need each other, they cannot live without each other” and that “violence as a means to an end is accepted in the left-wing scene.” It describes the fascists with the usual clichés: unemployed, uneducated, disorganized, committing crimes when drunk. Roewer, the president of the VS, explains the high number of right offenses “solely with the fact that scrawling swastikas, roaring *Sieg Heil* ... are offenses in Germany ... because of that the statistics appear very high with over 1,000 crimes per year, but nearly all are propaganda offences.” The THS is mentioned positively, Kapke and Tino Brandt are allowed to speak: “the Anti-Antifa Ostthüringen was formed in response to violence from the left, to bring those perpetrators to light,” and “We are representatives of the *National Democratic Party* of Germany in Jena ... We are fundamentally opposed to violence.”

¹⁸ The “extremism doctrine” is the state doctrine in the Federal Republic of Germany, which says that the democracy of the Weimar republic (1918-1933) was destroyed by the violent extremism of the right and the left. The term was coined in the 1970s by the VS. Before the 1970s it was called “radicalism,” but had to be changed because in the 60s “radical” became a positive term.