

Chemnitz: German Neo-Nazi terrorist group relied on extremist network

By Christopher Lehmann
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Over the weekend, the print edition of *Der Spiegel* reported on the government investigation into the extreme right-wing terrorist group Revolution Chemnitz, whose existence was uncovered at the beginning of the month. According to the Office of the Federal Prosecutor, the group was planning armed attacks on foreigners and political dissidents.

Analysis of the internet communications of the eight people who were detained shows that the members of this far-right group had made extensive efforts to obtain firearms. An armed “action” had been planned for the Day of German Unity on October 3. The aim of the group was said to be the use of assassinations to foment an extreme right-wing “revolution.”

“If the investigators are correct, they wanted to outdo the series of murders carried out by the National Socialist Underground (NSU),” *Der Spiegel* writes. The magazine notes that most of those arrested have been in the neo-Nazi scene for many years, participating in far-right music festivals, torchlight processions and parades. Such events are being held with increasing frequency, aided and abetted by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is the official opposition in parliament to the grand coalition government. Some of these right-wing terrorists have long been known to the police and the secret service.

One of them is Tom W. The 30-year-old already led a right-wing association 12 years ago, spreading fear and terror in central Saxony. His gang of thugs called itself “Sturm 34.” The name comes from an SA brigade that was stationed in the Mittweida region during the Nazi era. The judiciary in Saxony dragged out proceedings against the group for years and ultimately sentenced the leaders to “lenient probation.”

However, one important detail is left unmentioned in the *Spiegel* report. The Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as Germany’s secret service is called, was

involved in the founding of “Sturm 34.”

Broadcaster Südwest Rundfunk (SWR) revealed in 2009 that one of the co-founders of “Sturm 34” was the former police officer Matthias Rott, who worked for the secret service. According to media reports, the Dresden district court had sought access to the CI (Confidential Informant) file on Rott from the Chemnitz-Erzgebirge police department. The file is said to include reports of conspiratorial meetings between Rott and state security officials. However, the Saxony State Interior Ministry refused to pass on the file, claiming that it could be detrimental to the welfare of the Free State of Saxony.

Although “Sturm 34” met all the criteria for the offence of establishing a criminal organization, the Dresden district court sentenced the defendants to a mere juvenile sentence of three to three-and-a-half years. The judge justified the minimal sentence with the claim that the accused lacked “an intellectual inventory.” Some years later, however, the Federal Court of Justice filed an appeal, and after delaying proceedings for many years, the Dresden district court had to sentence the five ringleaders, including Tom W., to probation and fines.

Broadcaster ARD’s programme MONITOR drew attention to the close links between the right-wing terrorists and the AfD. The programme revealed that several members of “Revolution Chemnitz” were spotted in early September on the so-called “funeral marches” of the AfD.

The authorities’ claims that the anti-immigrant rampage carried out by neo-Nazis in Chemnitz took them by surprise are not credible. The state government and the security organs must have had some foreknowledge because, since 2013, “Revolution Chemnitz” has had its own Facebook page. Anti-fascist activists have shown that even in the early stages of the group, a graphic, evidently a design for a group logo, was posted on its Facebook page. In the background can be seen “34” in

large numerals, an allusion to “Sturm 34.” In the “Internet Atlas 2014” of the state branch of the secret service, the Facebook page was explicitly cited as belonging to a neo-Nazi group from Chemnitz.

A prohibition order of the Saxony Interior Ministry makes it clear that this Facebook page was used by the “National Socialists of Chemnitz” (NSC), banned in 2014. At that time, this group organized shooting practice, among other things.

In July 2017, the website posted an appeal, “Let’s go to Themar,” promoting the largest ever neo-Nazi concert in Germany. Not only was an earlier member of “Sturm 34” involved in this, there were also contacts with the NSU. “There are indications of several former NSC supporters having links to the ‘National Socialist Underground,’” the Saxony Interior Ministry document states.

The claim that “Revolution Chemnitz” has only now come to the attention of the investigating authorities is not believable. Rather, it is becoming ever more clear how closely the right-wing extremist and terrorist scene is linked to the AfD and the state apparatus.

In an interview with the *Tagesspiegel*, Robert Claus, an expert on such groups, pointed out the extensive scope and long-standing presence of right-wing extremist networks in Germany. He said, “There is a highly dangerous brown Chemnitz network, and it has existed for decades ... The ‘Identitarian Movement,’ under observation by the secret service, plays a role in it.”

This network has been built up in Chemnitz and Saxony since the beginning of the 1990s. The hooligan group “Hoonara” (an acronym for hooligans, Nazis, racists) was founded by neo-Nazis from Chemnitz, Zwickau and Erfurt and was, until 2007, a leading organization in the region, existing alongside the neo-Nazi music label “Blood and Honour.” The scene in Chemnitz also had relations with the NSU. Groups broke up, but their members did not disappear. These networks are still organizing today. There has always been an overlap in the personnel of groups such as the National Socialists of Chemnitz, which was banned in 2014.

The following picture emerges from the report by Robert Claus: There are few right-wing milieus in Germany that are so closely connected and jointly undertake so much activity. The Chemnitz hooligan scene and the Chemnitz far-right associations have always been linked. This scene is closely related to the right-wing “Hools and Ultras” from Cottbus. They organize joint outings, fights, celebrations and attacks on political opponents.

According to Claus, the hooligan and neo-Nazi circles in Chemnitz and Cottbus have definite contacts with the Nazi party “III Weg” and the Identitarian Movement, which, in turn, maintains close ties to the AfD.

The “Empire Fight Team” from Leipzig had also been in Chemnitz, according to Claus. That the members know each other and are networked is obvious. Claus writes: “It comes from the far-right hooligan scene at Lokomotive Leipzig, including the group ‘Scenario Lok,’ which was also under observation by the intelligence services. Fighters from the gym also played a role in the attack on the left-wing district Leipzig-Connewitz.”

The *Spiegel* report states that the right-wing extremist marches in Chemnitz at the end of August would have affected the far-right groups “like a fire accelerator.” But that is only half the truth. What has strengthened and encouraged right-wing extremists is the fact that leading politicians and security officials have downplayed the right-wing scene and made the central slogan of the right—“Foreigners Out!”—the axis of the refugee policy of the grand coalition, comprised of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats.

Following the far-right riots in Chemnitz, the then-president of the federal secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen, denied that there had been attacks on journalists, immigrants and left-wingers. He provocatively challenged the authenticity of videos showing neo-Nazis hunting down immigrants in Chemnitz. Maassen’s statements were, as the WSWS wrote, “a deliberate political provocation, which aims to strengthen the most right-wing forces in the government and state apparatus.” The latest findings regarding right-wing terrorism in Chemnitz fully confirm this assessment.

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