

Anti-Fascism on trial in Germany

1995

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In the fall of 1991, a series of investigations were started in the German city of Göttingen concerning the law Paragraph 129a (propaganda for, support for, formation of, or membership in a terrorist organization). The reason for these investigations were 52 unsolved anti-fascist “attacks” that had been carried out in the Göttingen region since 1981. The state prosecutor’s office in Celle (GSA) formed a special commission with Lower Saxony’s criminal justice department (LKA), the SoKo 606, which was supposed to “solve” these attacks. It soon became clear that the cops were focusing their investigations on autonomist anti-fascists. In Aug. 1992, the first series of house raids were carried out in connection with the 129a investigations in Göttingen, Osterode, and Berlin. The searches turned up nothing, and no criminal proceedings were launched. Another raid in Nov. 1992 in Ulzen, on the house of an anti-fascist linked to the Göttingen investigations, also failed to produce results.

The Big Anti-Antifa Raid

In June 1992, it first was made public that the 129a investigations were directed against the organization Autonome Antifa (M), whose name was continually mentioned in connection with the investigations. On June 5–6, 1994, the GSA-Celle and the LKA let the cat out of the bag. The homes of 17 people charged with being members of Autonome Antifa (M) were raided. The raids were not only carried out in Göttingen, but also in various places in the states of Lower Saxony, Hessen, and North Rhine-Westphalia. The Students Association (AStA) office at Göttingen University was also raided, as was the infoshop ‘Buchladen Rote Strasse,’ a graphic design studio, and a printing shop. A total of 30 searches were carried out, the largest anti-Antifa raid ever in the Federal Republic of Germany. But these raids were no longer concerned with explaining the 52 attacks or claims of the formation of a terrorist organization. The cops were suddenly silent about these accusations. The charges now were based on Paragraph 129 (formation of a criminal organization) and Autonome Antifa (M)’s violation of public assembly laws. Some of these 129-investigations are also 129a-investigations. Now the claim was also being made that Autonome Antifa (M) were in direct contact with the Red Army Fraction (RAF), which is a pure state propaganda lie. The 129a accusations are largely directed at the spreading of one KuK (‘Kunst und Kampf’, Art and Struggle) poster by alleged members of Autonome Antifa (M). This poster was used to publicize an Autonome Antifa (M) event held on May 6, 1993. Speakers at the event, besides Autonome Antifa (M), included two former RAF—prisoners, Gisela Dutzi and Gunter Sonnenberg, as well as the editors of the newspaper “clockwork 129a.” The poster for the event showed the remains of the Weiterstadt prison that had been blown up by a RAF commando in March of that year.

Investigations Against Autonome Antifa (M)

Besides the 129/129a investigations directed against Autonome Antifa (M), there is now also a separate 129a investigation underway against the infoshop ‘Buchladen Rote Strasse’ because they sold a pamphlet entitled “Selected Historical Documents: Federal Republic of Germany—Red Army Fraction,” which was published by GNN-Verlag [a major publisher] and which is now circulating in its 6th edition, and because the infoshop allegedly sold photocopies of a RAF communique that had already appeared in a nearly complete form in several daily newspapers. In

Nov. 1994, the people who run the infoshop were charged with 129a: spreading propaganda for the RAF.

Shortly before Christmas 1994, lawyers representing the 17 people charged with membership in Autonome Antifa (M) were sent huge boxes with 31 files from the GSA-Celle. The files showed the massive amount of observation that had been carried out in Göttingen over the last three years. These dictated serious violations of individual privacy: telephone tapping, observations, research into peoples' private lives, etc. These 31 files are only the tip of the iceberg. There are several more boxes full of files not released by the Celle authorities, presumably because they are not relevant to this case. After looking at the files, it is now clear the number of people being accused of membership in Autonome Antifa (M) has risen from 17 to at least 25.

New 129a Investigations

In Jan. 1995, new 129a investigations were launched. In addition to the separate charges filed against the infoshop and the 25 criminalized persons accused of membership in Autonome Antifa (M), there is now an investigation under way of the anti-fascist cultural initiative KuK. The LKA's reason for this is a brochure produced by KuK for an exhibition that took place in Göttingen on Oct. 9, 1994 entitled "Forbidden Art". This criminalization of KuK's art is truly unique for Germany.

The KuK Initiative was formed in the early '80s in connection with the German autonomist and anti-imperialist movements. Starting in 1985, KuK posters, oil paintings, and actions were continually banned. The house searches, confiscations, and investigations have continued to this day. Even the 'Verfassungsschutz' (VS), the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, keeps its eyes on KuK. For example, in the chapter entitled "Autonomists" in the 1991 Lower Saxony state VS report, there is a line that reads: "Several 'anti-fascist struggle' initiatives have arisen from this scene in Göttingen. These are closely connected to the 'KuK Initiative.'"

So it's no surprise that during Germany's biggest-ever anti-Antifa raid on June 5-6, 1994 the cops were especially interested in objects bearing KuK's logo. In total, more than 200 KuK posters were confiscated.

The "Forbidden Art" Exhibition

The KuK wanted to publicly expose the methods of the state apparatus with its Oct. 9, 1994 exhibition in the lobby of the Jung Theater in Göttingen. The exhibition displayed posters that had been banned by the political police, oil paintings, and pictures of various agit-prop actions from 1983-1994. These agit-prop actions were mostly street-theater performances, such as those that have become traditional in Göttingen every Oct. 3; Germany's Reunification Day. The exhibition was entitled "Forbidden Art," and a special 60-page brochure documenting the illegal KuK posters from 1985-1994 was published for the event. A text accompanying the exhibition is now part of a 129a investigation (propaganda for a terrorist organization).

Subpoenas And Investigations

Two people accused of membership in Autonome Antifa (M) and three people from the infoshop 'Buchladen Rote Strasse' have been issued subpoenas by the LKA in conjunction with the KuK investigation. LKA agents have also been showing up at a local graphics design studio. Already, the "lines of argumentation" used by the LKA and the GSA sound very similar to those used by the nazis when they started banning art. All art, on account of its style and content, is to be banned that does not conform with the state's ideals. Anyone who thinks that's bullshit is advised to take a look at the images documented in KuK's "Forbidden Art" brochure.

The right-wing police and justice department operations have been supported by Lower Saxony's justice minister, Heidi Alm-Merk, and Lower Saxony's interior minister, Gerhard Glo-gowski, both of whom are members of the social democratic party SPD.

Paragraph 129a is an old weapon to be deployed in politically motivated repression in Germany. In this case, it's a means of criminalizing and destroying the anti-fascist movement. But we will not be silenced by the state's actions. The KuK exhibition will, as planned, becoming a traveling exhibition in Germany and in neighboring countries, and the accompanying brochure can still be ordered.

A long and expensive trial is expected, which could result in long sentences for the accused. The struggle will be carried out juridically and politically. The accused expect to be portrayed as organized criminals in the media, and for the state to attempt to discredit their politics and scare off their coalition partners. International media coverage and press, like what the firebombings in Moelln and Solingen inspired, has been important in building political pressure in Germany. While the trials against leftists in the '70s and '80s were regularly carried out with partially illegal methods, international trial watchers have helped to keep pressure on the courts to proceed legally in trials in the last few years. To win this case and to defend their politics against criminalization, strong international solidarity is needed. Press coverage and international trial watchers are needed immediately. The trials should begin sometime in the summer of 1995 and last for several months. The trial watchers should come for at least two days and are welcome for longer.

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