

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Terrorism and the Stasi heritage

The networks of former East German secret police are still active in the West, but who controls them now?

Specialists of the "Stasi," the intelligence agency of former East Germany, are a fertile ground for extremism and terrorist actions, an alarming report of the BfV, the German agency for constitutional protection, warned in October last year. The report listed two "gray zone" cadre formations as a live threat to domestic security: ODOM and ISOR—restricted membership groups of officers and "specialists of armed formations" of the former East German state.

Guenther Scheicher, the chairman of the Hesse state section of the BfV, since retired, was even more specific in a DLF radio interview Oct. 9, 1991. He warned that former Stasi specialists who received training in sabotage would likely be among future violence-prone opponents to the unified Germany. They could, he said, even draw on "hidden arms depots and explosives to pursue their aims."

The former Stasi specialists who, as Scheicher explained, received "training in sabotage" against the West, include, prominently, the staff of Section 22 of the Stasi. This section was officially run as a body for the observation of extremist groups and for the defense of the East German state against potential destabilization from the West. But it also had the task of selecting and building contact with terrorist groups that might serve East German interests in the West.

The West German Baader Meinhof group (RAF) was in the latter category. Select RAF members received special training at remote military camps in East Germany. They were,

for example, trained in the use of the same type of Soviet-made RPG-7 anti-tank weapon that was used in the failed terrorist attack on the car of U.S. Gen. Frederick Kroesen near Heidelberg on Sept. 15, 1981.

The man who is said to have been in charge of these Stasi contacts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Helmut Voigt, was arrested with a false passport in Athens Sept. 6. Underground at the time of the unification of Germany in late 1990, Voigt has been wanted by German police on charges of links to terrorism and other hostile activities against the state. An arrest warrant by Interpol led to Voigt's apprehension at the Balaskas Hotel in Athens, but Greek police had also been searching for him on charges of playing a role behind the terrorist group "November 17" that has claimed responsibility for most acts of terrorism in Greece.

In Germany, Voigt is also a suspect in the Aug. 25, 1983 bombing of the French Institute in West Berlin which was carried out by a team from East Berlin, supplied and protected by Section 22.

It is not decided yet whether Voigt will be extradited to Germany immediately, or first face trial in Greece. But his being in jail may help to derail the functioning of the network of Stasi-run terrorism.

Voigt has been portrayed as key in the underground network that continued after the collapse of the East German regime. An article, for example, in the Dec. 30, 1991 *International Herald Tribune* identified Voigt as "the Stasi man most talked about."

The paper wrote that Voigt headed the Stasi subdivision responsible for terrorism before German unification, but "on the morning federal police seized five of his subordinates, he slipped away."

The paper quoted Jürgen Lochte, the late head of the Hamburg state security, as seeing the "good possibility that he has gone to the underground." Lochte said that "such Stasi people disappeared with millions in cash and with weapons—and with international contacts."

Voigt and his Section 22 are mostly mentioned only in connection with incidents of leftist terrorism and sabotage internationally. But in the case of the Palestinian groups with which the Stasi had cultivated contact during the 1970s, the label "leftist" does not hold, as they often define themselves in terms of "rightist" views on such issues as race, territorial rights, chauvinistic notion of "nation," and straight anti-Semitism which is known in Europe only among neo-Nazi groups, and in the United States, through the Ku Klux Klan.

Several right-wing extremist groups like the "Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann" that made headlines in West Germany during the late 1970s and early 1980s, received combat and sabotage training in camps run by extremist Palestinian groups in Lebanon, Syria, South Yemen, and Iran.

During the neo-Nazi riots in the east German city of Rostock in late August, three men were arrested on charges of instigation who had been members of the Stasi structure. This, and the case of Voigt, may tell more about the Stasi role in the surfacing of neo-Nazi activity in Germany since 1989.

This brings up the question: Who is the new "owner" of this Stasi network, two years after the demise of the East German regime?