



An Antisemitic Double Murder

The Forgotten History of the Right-Wing Terrorism in Postwar West Germany

March 07, 2024

57 minutes, 44 seconds

Speaker: Uffa Jensen

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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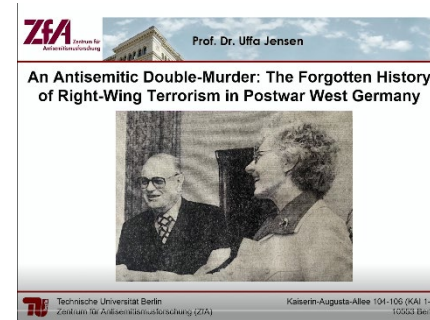
An Antisemitic Double-Murder: The Forgotten History of the Right-Wing Terrorism in Postwar West Germany (2024)
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Time Transcription

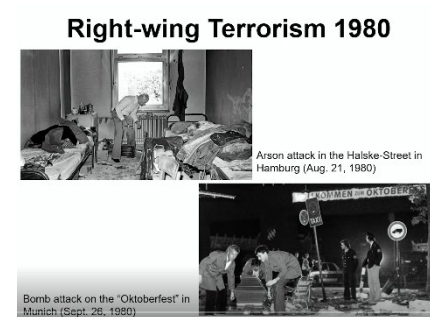
00:00 [UC San Diego / The Library Channel / uctv.tv/library]

00:05 Uffa Jensen: Thank you all for having me here. I'm very honored I feel honored to speak at this Holocaust Living History Workshop on at the University of California here in San Diego on this topic. Thanks for Susanne to organize this and to get me here. I also want to thank many of the administrators who did many much of the work and help me to process um um the application or the the the the all the stuff that needs to be done for such a trip. When I give talks like this I'm always feel a bit bad um because it's actually a depressing subject that I'm going to discuss with you and I'm sorry about this. It's part of my job, to be honest, uh and this one is particularly depressing because it's a murder case in in many ways. I try to make this or I I try to use this to understand some fundamental problems of postwar German, West German history. And I'm sorry if it's depressing. I will present to you so, I will present to you a historical case of right-wing antisemitic violence, a murder uh in postwar Germany in the year 1980. I will explain the problems for the contemporaries uh and among them the police and as also the journalists and media to understand this violence and I would try to explain why this act of violence and some of the other acts in the same year were almost completely forgotten until a few years ago.

01:56 Uffa Jensen: Also, I myself barely remembered uh this history and so the book is also was also sort of a constant revelation of facts to me myself when I did the research. Let me start by saying that the double murder in Erlangen was not the only case of murderous violence at the time. In fact, the year 1980 um was the deadliest year of political violence in postwar German history and one of the worst in history overall if we ignore the Nazi period for a moment. Eighteen people were murdered in this year and in addition two of the assassins did die as well. The most fatal attack you see in the image below was uh took place in Munich. It it targeted the famous Oktoberfest and um it



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killed indiscriminately 13 visitors to this festival um and wounded over 200 uh 220, many of them severely. Even much less well known is the arson attack that you see on the top um in in a street in Hamburg. This was an an arson attack against the home of Vietnamese refugees, killing two of them at that night. And this was maybe the first - we're not yet sure, we're doing more research on this - if not the first, possibly the first racist terrorist attack killing refugees in post-war Germany.

[Right Wing Terrorism 1980 / Arson Attack in the Halske-Street in Hamburg (Aug. 21, 1980) / Bomb attack on the "Oktoberfest" in Munich (Sept. 26, 1980)]

03:45 Uffa Jensen: So, all of these victims were killed by right-wing terrorists with often quite substantial organizational structures enabling them to do so. And this was not just a German development um and often other European events in the same year are completely forgotten as well. The train station attack in Bologna, one of the worst cases of terrorist violence in Europe killing 85 victims um in the same year, or the attack against the Paris synagogue with four victims also in the same year. While we know that the first attack, or we're pretty sure that the first attack, was also committed by right-wing activists and right-wing terrorists we're not quite sure about the second. The second remains a mystery in many ways, so the attack on the synagogue in Paris. In the end when you look at this, and you have to add the story that I will talk about just now, um when you look at the there is a quite simple question emerging. How and why was this violent history forgotten in post-war Germany? We could ask the same question about Italy but I won't do this uh tonight.

05:13 Uffa Jensen: In many ways, the double murder that I will talk about gives us some indications why that happened. But it also is a special case because it's also a case - and probably the first one as far as we know - of an antisemitic murder and in because it involved um a Jewish victim. So, I will start by explaining what happened that night. It happened in Erlangen, south of Germany, the northern parts of Bavaria, Franconia actually, on September 19th. Shlomo Lewin and Frida Poeschke were shot dead in the houses in Erlangen. It was a Friday evening the Shabbat had just begun. The former chairman of the Jewish community in Nuremberg, Lewin opened the door

19th December 1980



[19th December 1980]

unprotected also because it was quite custom, uh it was quite customary for the two to receive visitors from the community um in their house. It was an open house, so to speak, for interactions and communication between Jews and non-Jews, or Christians. The perpetrator shot them both, immediately disappeared again without stealing anything or leaving a letter claiming responsibility. This is important because the police expected such a thing for political violence I will explain in a moment.

06:42 Uffa Jensen: What he did leave behind was this uh sunglass, these sunglasses. Several months later these glasses provided the clue um that the crime had been committed by Uwe Behrendt a leading member of the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffman, a West German right-wing militia group. I will talk about them in a moment. So however the problem for the in investigators initially when they arrived at the spot, and and in the days afterward, was that this is a difficult case. There was nothing, no apparent motivation on on on the site. There was, it wasn't a robbery because nothing had been taken away. From the perspective of the time, the police believed that this could also not be not have been a political murder because the note of confession that I mentioned was missing. So, there was no declaration of responsibility and there seemed no ideological reason for this um event. In addition, the investigators found some traces at the crime scene, especially some footprints, uh some footprints in in the snow um which they believed to have come from a woman's shoe which later on they didn't see that way anymore for reasons that I could never find out. But they believed at the time initially that a woman must have been involved in this murder and they believed as well that this would speak against an offense with a right-wing extremist background because, in their eyes, women were supposedly playing no role in right-wing circles.

08:34 Uffa Jensen: This was actually not true in general, and it's not true today as well um, and it wasn't true at the time, and it wasn't true in the group that was later on responsible, found out uh to be responsible for this - the Hoffmann group. There were women in this and the police could have known this, or

19th December 1980



[19th December 1980]

actually, they didn't know, because they had publications photos in of women in in the group. However, the investigators concluded that some private motivation had caused the double murder, some family affair with a female perpetrator for example a former wife of Lewin. So, they they opted for this direction and they the investigation was led to understand the private life of the couple. Of course, this assumption made a lot of sense. As we all know if you watch crime, crime stories, most of the murders in the end turn out to be committed by people from the private surroundings of one of the victims, and the police knows this, and has to do, has to act accordingly. So, it's true also in this case that they needed to consider this. On the other hand, though, this case involved a Jewish victim. A political motive was therefore obviously possible. In fact, the investigators included uh an act of political violence by right-wing extremist or Palestinians, Palestinian terrorists - remember the 1970s - in their list of possible motives.

10:17 Uffa Jensen: But when you look at how they actually investigated the case, they were much more interested in the private story. So, they were putting much resources into investigating the personal surroundings of the victims and this also revealed a certain bias which I think is interesting. They shared, they searched for the perpetrator primarily in Lewin's surrounding and much less in the environment of Frida Poeschke, the other protestant victim. Thus, they tended to believe that the offense had something to do with the Jewish victim. At the same time, people were unable to imagine antisemitic, an antisemitic motive for the offense. Antisemitism, as I will explain later on a little bit more, was no longer supposed to exist in postwar German society. This was the official attitude of the state and the government, in light of what had happened during the Holocaust. But let me say a few words about the two victims, first of all, because I think it's important to remember them, and that's an aim in itself but second also, it is crucial to explain their lives because the perpetrators actually knew them, um not personally but they knew who they were, or they knew who Lewin was.

11:45 Uffa Jensen: Here you see one of the few private photos that I could find of the two, probably a few years before the murder. Frida Poeschke was a Protestant, born in 1923, and she was the widow of the former mayor of Erlangen Michael Poeschke, a Social Democrat who um the Nazis had imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp in 1933 and who then got the post after the war as um an opponent to Nazism and became the mayor of Erlangen. After her husband, and and he died already in 1959 and then Frida Poeschke, the widow, withdrew from public eye in many ways. A few years later she met though Shlomo Lewin um at an event organized by the Franconian Society for Christian Jewish Reconciliation. That, this these were groups in all over Germany that were very important for for starting a reconciliation between Jews and Christians, and um also there was a very active chapter in Franconia and Shlomo Lewin was very very much involved. Frida Poeschke thus began to work for Lewin's publishing house *Ner Tamid* uh which is Hebrew and the name translates into eternal light. This was one of the few publishing houses that published uh books on Jewish history and on antisemitism in the 1980, [19]70s, and [19]60s.

Shlomo Lewin and Frida Poeschke



[Shlomo Lewin and Frida Poeschke]

13:27 Uffa Jensen: They, the the two cultivated a special kind of hospitality in their home in 1980. As a contemporary said afterward, a bridge between Christians and Jews were built there which was still very rare at the time. Frida Poeschke was only 57 years old when she was murdered. Shlomo Lewin on the other hand was born in Jerusalem in 1911 and he came from a very old Jerusalem family, a sort of family dynasty that had lived in the city for many decades, possibly even generations. And his father had accepted, reasons that I don't know, uh in 1917 - so in the middle of the First World War - a post as a rabbi in Poznań, in what is today Poland but but used to be Germany uh during this time. So Lewin actually grew up in Germany. In 1935 he had to flee from the National Socialist who had briefly um took him into protective custody, as they called it. He eventually ended up in Palestine and he took part in the Second World War in the British Army, and then uh transferred to the Israeli

Army and took part also in the War of Independence. Interestingly, he um choose to return to Germany in the 1950s. It's a bit unusual but then again, it's not that unusual. In the 1950s around almost 6,000 uh Jews from Israel returned to Germany for various reasons, some of them to the East Germany, some of them - many, I think a majority - to West Germany.

15:19 Uffa Jensen: And um he there start, then started um to set up a publishing house there. From 1977 to 1979, and this is very important for my talk, he was the chairman of the Jewish community in Nuremberg and just and when he was killed uh, a few days later, he was scheduled to open a um a community also in Erlangen which was not, which due to his death, did not take place until 1995. Lewin was therefore a well-known man in the Franconian region. He was known to politicians. He was known to the public. He was also particularly active in the, as I said, in the society for Christian Jewish cooperations or reconciliation and increasingly became an admonisher against rightwing extremist tendencies at the end of the 1970s. He specifically focused quite often on the Wehrsportgruppe – I'll explain uh in a moment what that was – who later on killed him, or from whom the killer came. This became very clear in a – now I get to a very strange, I think it's somewhat strange, source – an Italian article in an Italian magazine called *Oggi*.

16:46 Uffa Jensen: *Oggi* is sort of a um, was was a popular magazine with somewhat political as well with um a lot of images. And you can tell by the, by the, by the image itself. What they had commissioned, this journal, they had send um because there was a lot of right-wing activities also in Italy they had sent a journalist Luigi Benardi to Germany to find out about the right-wing activities there. And he met virtually all the important heads of the right-wing movement, of the Neo-Nazi groups partly and um to talk to them. So, among others, he also talked to um Hoffmann and this is the guy with the large cat which is actually a puma and he really had one which scared the, scared the journalists a lot when, when they tried to interview him. I think the journalist Bernardi, you know, had this, interviewed this row of Neo-Nazis and he felt the need to have

Article in "Oggi" (26 Feb. 1977)

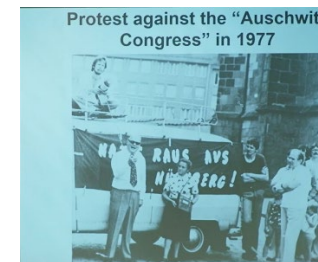


[Article in "Oggi" (26 Feb. 1977) / Lewin: "You shouldn't underestimate people like Hoffmann. I the beginning, Hitler also seemed to be a man without success."]

one voice of possible victims of this. So, he met also Shlomo Lewin and you see him in the smaller picture on the left at the bottom in the room of the Nuremberg congregation of the Nuremberg small synagogue which was not actually a synagogue, was more a praying room.

18:19 Uffa Jensen: So, you know, this this article placed Lewin and his later - well the head of the Wehrsportgruppe next to each other and um in this text, or in this article, in the interview um Lewin even referred directly to [Karl Heinz] Hoffmann and the Hoffmann group and he um warned about him. So, he said you shouldn't, you shouldn't underestimate people like Hoffman. In the beginning [Adolf] Hitler also seemed to be a man without success. This is not the only event. There was another event which um in the end did not take place but wasn't, was important and interesting in itself. That in 1977 in Nuremberg there was supposed to be an what what was called an Auschwitz Congress. It was actually a meeting of, you know, world famous Holocaust deniers among them, some of you you may know, Arthur Butz um an engineer Professor from Northwestern [University] uh who famously wrote the book *The Hoax of the 20th Century* referring to the Holocaust. And he was very internationally in this, in these circles widely known so he was invited to this Congress in 1977.

19:49 Uffa Jensen: This did not take place in the end because the local authorities in Nuremberg forbade this Congress but um there were, never nevertheless, already in the, in the, in the development before the days or in the, in the, in the in the yeah. Before the Congress was supposed to take place there were rallies against this and on one of these rallies Shlomo Lewin, you see him here in the middle, or on the left, um protested publicly on the Square in Nuremberg against this Congress which was partly also organized by Hoffman. So, it's very likely I, you know I think, it's almost we can be sure that Hoffmann realized um that Lewin protested against him and uh the event. I would also like to point out to you that Hoffmann actually had a copy of the *Oggi* article. The police knew this as well because the police found this copy lying on his bed when



[Protest against the "Auschwitz Congress" in 1977]

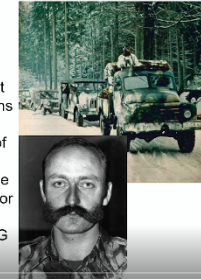
they searched his house. So, the connection between Lewin and Hoffmann was not only known to the Hoffmann group but was also known to the police or the it was known that the, that the Hoffmann group um knew this. So, it made perfect sense, I think, to assume that Lewin could be a target or could become a target by Hoffmann and the Wehrsportgruppe as a Jewish opponent.

21:24 Uffa Jensen: Let me now describe the perpetrators a little bit. First a few words about the Wehrsportgruppe, about this military group, and then about the right-wing extremism at the time. So this is the Wehrsportgruppe. You see Hoffmann on the bottom. The Wehrsportgruppe was founded in 1973 by this man as a military training group. And the image actually is also from the *Oggi* which is the reason why Hoffmann had a copy because he was very proud of this and he used to, used to present this article to uh followers and people who were interested because it made him look like he really had a military, he was organizing a military group, right? He was doing real military uh activities. This group developed into a rallying point for right-wing extremist youth in the 1970s. We estimate that about 400 to 600 members joined eventually. It was somewhat of a loose structure. You could take part in some of these training sessions and then leave again. This is also the connection uh to several acts of violence in the year that I reported earlier. The uh guy who, the assassin of the Oktoberfest, the attack against the Oktoberfest Gundolf Köhler had taken part in two or three of these military training sessions and was in private contact with Hoffman.

23:07 Uffa Jensen: For all of these reasons because it was you know military - ex, you know, military group - and they were increasingly threatening um the before all of these attacks though in January 1980 the group was forbidden by the Federal Ministry of the Interior Gerhart Baum. So, the German government basically forbade the group. The remnants of the group did not stop to be active. Actually, they left Germany and uh joined the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], the Fatah, in Lebanon. So, they actually became, got into a

“Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann”

- Founded in 1973 by the graphics entrepreneur Karl-Heinz Hoffmann as military training group
- Develops into a rallying point for right-wing extremist youths in the 1970s
- Connection to several acts of violence in 1980
- January 1980: Banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior Gerhart Baum
- Afterwards, parts of the WSG are active in a PLO training camp in Lebanon



[“Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann”

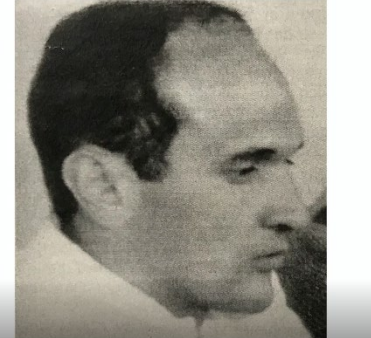
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training camp next to Beirut and acted there. This is important for the murder because it made the murder case even more difficult to solve because uh the murderer himself and the whole group were not present in Germany. They actually were in Beirut.

24:04 Uffa Jensen: And this is, in the end, the guy who killed uh the two, Uwe Behrendt. And you see that he um died in 1981; he actually killed himself, shot himself as far as we know, in Beirut uh when the group dissolved. One of the things that I try to do, I think for the first time in my book, is not to just discuss this group as a right-wing radical group but to focus on their antisemitism. So, of course, this is a group with its which is very hostile to the democracy. It is authoritarian. There is a military cult there. You could describe them maybe not as Nazis but as fascist and and uh Hoffmann himself always wanted to make this distinction. He saw himself more as a fascist and not as a Nazi um if there is any distinction like this but in his eyes there there was. The the kind of antisemitism that you find here is twofold I would say and may, that made it maybe a bit bit difficult for the contemporaries to understand.

25:27 Uffa Jensen: The contemporaries in many ways the police, as well and also the investigators uh and later on also the judges, understood antisemitism very much as a Nazi ideology. And that's still a problem in in many cases, I think. But um this is a group that actually focused their antisemitism to some degree on two other subjects. First of all, the denial of the Holocaust. I already mentioned that Hoffmann was involved in organizing the Congress. He was actually in contact, in in contact, uh contact with many Holocaust deniers and he wrote in his own publication against the memory of the Holocaust which was very important in 1979. I don't know if you remember, some of you may have seen the movie or the series, *Holocaust* um story about a family uh which came out I think in 1978 in the United States but then was shown on German TV and caused a huge amount of interest in Germany and really a wave of recognition and and millions of people watched uh the series on TV.

Uwe Behrendt (1952-1981)



[Uwe Behrendt (1952-1981)]

- 26:42 Uffa Jensen: So this was hated by the right-wing radicals and Hoffmann actually published against this and made fun of it and made jokes about this. Antisemitism was also commonplace in the communication within the group. So, if they were amongst themselves uh they often said made jokes about Jews. At the same time also, when the the remaining group in Beirut found out that Lewin had been killed, they celebrated. And the other element of their antisemitism was directed against Israel. That was the one of the reasons why they were in Beirut because they wanted to fight against Israel. And there's a lot of evidence also uh of a conspiracy thinking that, you know, they were that they believed that there the ban and and also some of the persecution by the police was actually caused by the Israeli Mossad uh and and so you know there's a conspiracy thinking in this group going on. Despite such findings, some of which were already known to the police at the time, it did not occur to them to look for a connection initially between Hoffmann and the uh and this group and um and Lewin.
- 28:04 Uffa Jensen: It becomes very clear and this is the story of the glasses. Actually, police spent weeks searching for each there was on on on the glass, uh the the manufacturer was mentioned. And so, they could find out how many of these were had been sold and unfortunately, they had been sold around the world. I think about 50 uh so the police tried to get hold of each copy uh of this, or each each version of this uh glasses. And they spent weeks and weeks but they didn't ask a very obvious question. The address of the manufacturer was next door to where the Hoffmann group had resided for a long time. And I'm still struck by the fact that they didn't make that connection. Actually, the story in the end was that the senior chef of the the senior head of this company went to the police and remembered suddenly that he had given uh the uh um the the glasses to the Hoffmann group next door. So, and then the police finally found out that this was um that this was had been caused by the Hoffmann group uh or by one member who had used this these glasses as a disguise.

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29:25 Uffa Jensen: You could say okay so they failed to find this this evidence, or they didn't make the connections and it's not my job necessarily to really correct the police or anything. I'm asking questions about how and why was this possible. Why was it possible that antisemitism was not so present on their mind when they investigated uh the crime? And I think there are two difficulties that, two kinds of difficulties that the that the investigators faced and I'm going to talk a little bit about them. The predominance of left-wing terrorism that was on the minds of investigators and thus made them not see uh the the right-wing terrorism. The other one is the problem of understanding antisemitism as a post-war uh as a post-war ideology and a possible motivation for the murder. So let me start with the first one. I brought you statistics so, since and this is an official statistic from the from the security forces in Germany. So, um these are the right-wing incidents and violent offenses. The red line is the violent offenses. Sorry for the missing German translation um uh, the English translation from German. So, the red line is the violent offenses. This, these are really physical attacks. The blue line is general attacks. This could be also slogans, this could also be demonstrations, etcetera.



[Right-wing Incidents and Violent Offences 1970-1980]

31:02 Uffa Jensen: But you could see that around about 1977, or 1976, 1977 the the numbers go up. And this was recognized by the police. I'm not saying that they were ignorant. They saw this but they didn't interpret it correctly. There was a creeping radicalization that had not been properly recognized I think by the authorities. In in my book, I've um collected a lists of weapons that the police in um in this period between 1977 in 1980 found and the list is really impressive. So, I'm just going to go through a few things, 35 machine guns, 370 rifles, 14 small caliber rifles, more than 1,000 other weapons, six knives, a lot of ammunition, a bazooka grenade launcher, over 16 kilos of explosives. So, you know, and list goes on. So the police, this is just what they found, right? So, the police had clear indicator of uh a mobilization, a radicalization, and a potential violent turn on the right. And they noticed this.

This is from official documents. So, this not my invention or anything. This was known to them.

32:25 Uffa Jensen: So, when the 1980 became the uh terrorist year in German history, in West German history, it did not happen out of the blue but we encounter here a fundamental problem. Right-wing extremism and right-wing terrorism were not taken serious, especially in comparison to left-wing terrorism of the Red Army fraction. And this is due to, you know, another development in German history at the time, the what the German call call the German Autumn the *Deutsche Herbst* in the year 1977. This was the high time of left-wing terrorists and Hanns Martin Schleyer, who was um leading uh um uh a leading entrepreneur in Germany, was kidnapped and then killed um um in in September 1977. And also, in October the airplane *Lansdhut* was hijacked by the Red Army fraction and Palestinian terrorists. And uh, you see after there had been captured, successfully captured, you see the hostages being freed. In comparison - and this is but this is very much on the minds of of of the security forces, of the police, etcetera - in comparison to this many Germans, and I could include for example my my parents, who were really felt personally threatened by these developments. I remember this as a young boy and they admitted it later as well. Although they lived in the north of Germany and, you know, there was no danger whatsoever but they felt personally threatened by this kind of left left-wing terrorism.

34:20 Uffa Jensen: In comparison to this, right-wing violence seemed less important and not really to be taken serious. I think you could have make an argument now, and this is has been very prominent in the literature, you could make an argument now that we have in the security forces, and in, you know, in the police, and the leadership of the police, maybe in even some higher-ups in the politics, we still have people connected to Nazism. Yes, true. So maybe, uh to some degree at least, uh so maybe uh they did not look to the right because, you know, that's their heritage, right? So, they downplayed it, ignored it for political reasons and there could be, maybe we could make an argument,

“German Autumn“ 1977



[“German Autumn“ 1977 / Hanns Martin Schleyer / Airplane “Landhut” (Oct. 1977)]

especially about Bavaria - remember Erlangen is in Bavaria - and Bavaria was a very right-wing state and I do see a case in point there. On the other hand, though, I'm interested in the fact that this goes well beyond the parties. This goes well beyond beyond the right. You know, many groups also in other political camps, among the them Social Democrats, believed the same had the same kind of focus on uh right, on left-wing terrorism and ignored the right-wing terrorism.

35:39 Uffa Jensen: So why is this? I think um it is for various reasons um but there are structural reasons, structural elements of misunderstanding. I think the concept of right-wing terrorism is basically fundamentally different at the time. Right-wing terrorist works differently than left-wing terrorists um and this was not understood. I give you one other uh indicator of this. This is from a document by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the highest office of security force in Germany. And that's what they published about right-wing extremist um in 1979 so right before the wave of violence from this group, from these groups. Right-wing extremists do not have an ideology in the sense of a coherent structure of thought or argumentation. In its place is a conglomeration of heterogeneous splinters of ideas that are usually combined at random and, on closer inspection, lack any intellectual penetration and argumentative underpinning. They regularly exhaust themselves in a series of emotionalized superficial thesis slogans and political slogans with racist, antisemitic, nationalist, xenophobic, Germanophile, and ethnic-collectivist and anti anti-party and totalitarian objectives.

37:07 Uffa Jensen: If you just take the adjectives from the final sentence and you link it to the first sentence, it's very interesting. There is a lot of ideology here. You know, it's like racism, antisemitism, nationalism, xenophobia - you can go on and it still says there is no ideology. And in the middle part, it basically says - and I'm often putting this a bit provocative - these right-wing, these right-wing groups are a bit stupid. You know, it says in the middle they lack any intellectual penetration and argumentative underpinning. I would translate this

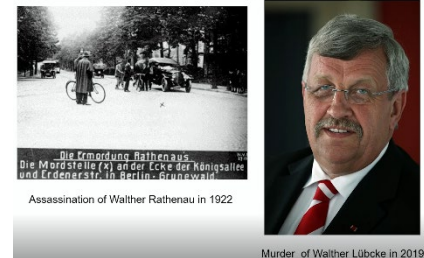
as they're a bit dumb. That is interesting, you know, the the the person who actually committed the murder in 1980 had studied at a university. He was not dumb at all. He was actually highly intelligent. But here we have a notion that is still existing in Germany to some degree that you, these right-wing Neo-Nazis are, you know, they they go to a pub, get drunk, and then they beat up somebody and that's their kind of loose terrorism. That's not to be taken serious. I think that that's flawed, um um and I think they they actually are serious political actors. Also, there is a different structure to right-wing terrorism.

38:45 Uffa Jensen: As I told you, there was no letter of confession found at the spot of the murder. That's because right-wing terrorists, as one colleague of mine had had phrased that, don't communicate. They're not interested in communicating their motives to the public. This has changed recently but never mind. Historically in the 1980s, they were not interested in communicating their ideology. They had a different structure of communication. They were still communicating. How did they communicate? They communicated through the act. That sounds a bit in weird, right? But you could describe right-wing terrorist acts as signaling acts. Ideology was not their point. Their point was to communicate through violence uh, and the message through violence. They they call it often deeds not words is a a slogan *taten statt worten* in German is a slogan that you find in right-wing circles quite often. And part of it is because they select different victims. The left-wing terrorists looked at the heads of state. Remember the famous entrepreneur that I just showed you, Hanns Martin Schleyer? He was actually the head of the organization of the German entrepreneurs.

40:07 Uffa Jensen: So they they target, left-wing uh radicals, target the elites, the political elites of the State in order to destabilize the State. Right-wing terrorists don't do that usually. They target um um they they target uh individuals from the society. There are a few exceptions, I admit, and maybe because they're in your mind I will point them out to you. There are two cases of famous, by now infamous of course, cases of murder in West German, or in German history where right-wing terrorists actually attacked uh politicians. And on the left, you see the assassination of Walther Rathenau, the foreign minister of Germany in 1922 who was assassinated by right-wing terrorist of a Neo-Nazi, of a Nazi, not at the time, Nazi group. Or on the right, a case that you might not be familiar with, but a very recent case, the killing of uh Walther Lübcke um who um was a Social Democrat in Kassel and he had been killed, he has been killed in 2019 by a right-wing radical um, or right-wing terrorist, uh because he had supported the refugee policy and and the taking in of refugees into Germany. So yes, it does happen at times but structurally I would argue that right-wing terrorists usually, target individuals from certain groups in the society.

41:48 Uffa Jensen: They want, today it's often immigrants or refugees and both of these individuals were targets also because they were representatives of a certain politics, Walther Rathenau now because he was Jewish, Walther Lübcke because he was in favor of um of the admission uh uh and the integration of foreigners and refugees. So, the difference is that they, that right-wing terrorists, identify and attack the society and not the State. So, from a certain perspective, they are less dangerous for the State because they don't threaten the heads of State but they threaten parts of the society. So that makes us understand a bit better what the signaling act actually is. What do they want to achieve? How do they communicate through violence? I think there are three elements of signals that right-wing terrorists actually uh use. One is, some groups within society need to be erased from society and we start to do this by killing some of them. So, in this case, um Jews and refugees. There's also more specific signals that are sent. There is a signal to other right-

Right-wing Terrorism against Politicians



[Right-wing Terrorism against Politicians / Assassination of Walther Rathenau in 1922 / Murder of Walther Lübcke in 2019]

wing radicals. We could say that, you know, we do this and we can successfully do it, and please follow us, and do the same.

43:27 Uffa Jensen: And the third, and maybe most important element of this, is a specific signal to the victims. We can target you, and we can hit you wherever you are. I think these are elements that uh um uh are important in this signaling communication form of right-wing terrorists. Okay let me move to the other explanation, the more specific explanation for the double murder or or why the double murder was so difficult to investigate. One of the biggest problems in the investigation uh was the fact that um they could not imagine an antisemitic motivation for this. How? Well, because antisemitism was not supposed to exist. It is a founding ideology of the German State - in in some call it *Stadts Raison d'être* of the German State - that antisemitism should not exist and this goes back way back to the founding of the State. Actually, goes back to an American uh founder of the State uh John McCloy, who was the High Commissioner of the Allies in Germany. And he actually said that the German State um uh should protect Jews um uh in and and this would be a sign of their success of, the success of the state.

44:53 Uffa Jensen: And thus, the first German president uh Theodor Heuss actually said um into, actually, interestingly to a foreign news agency um he already said in 1949, right after the state was found had been founded, and I quote German democracy will have to suffer less from antisemitism and un other manifestations of the Hitler era than many other countries. There was no longer any, there is no longer any real antisemitism in Germany. He said that in 1949, four years after the end of the Holocaust, and four, and after the Nazi period. And he knew very well that this was wrong, right? He knew that of course there was a lot of antisemitism. Some even claimed that there was more antisemitism after 1945 than uh before in the population, But they said it because they wanted it to not be there, right? They, you know, they repeated it, especially to foreign audience, that antisemitism does not exist. And at the

The Problem of Antisemitism in West-Germany



John McCloy (1895-1989)

[The Problem of Antisemitism in West-Germany / John McCloy (1895-1989)]

The Problem of Antisemitism in West-Germany



John McCloy (1895-1989)



Theodor Heuss (1884-1963)

The Problem of Antisemitism in West-Germany / John McCloy (1895-1989) / Theodor Heuss (1884-1963)]

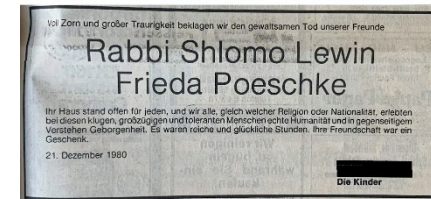
An Antisemitic Double-Murder: The Forgotten History of the Right-Wing Terrorism in Postwar West Germany (2024)
Holocaust Living History Workshop

same time, of course, they integrated the Nazi, former Nazi perpetrators, into uh into the offices, and into the economic structure.

46:16 Uffa Jensen: Okay, so in many ways uh the uh the yeah, the antisemitism was not supposed to be there. So, to understand that in 1980 another antisemitic murder had been committed in Germany was something that nobody really wanted to admit. And that's why it's absent when you go through some of the sources, you will not find any mentioning of an antisemitic motive for this when it's obvious from the end result and obvious from the sources of the Wehrsportgruppe that this was caused by antisemitism. Let me move on, um and give you a few more details about how Germany actually dealt uh with the events. And I think it's important for that to understand how the events were framed initially. If you look at the press coverage, um you find a very depressing sub a very depressing picture. Only a few remembered the two dead uh uh persons in a positive way and this is - sorry uh the German original - it um um it's a family family friends uh who uh remember and who placed this obituary in a local newspaper who remember the evenings that they had with this, with the two victims. And they praised the victims as intelligent, generous, and tolerant people with whom they experience true humanity and mutual uh understanding and comfort. And the word in German is *geborgenheit* which is a very very positive term.

48:04 Uffa Jensen: But this was uh unusual and not the case at all. The rest, the basic trend of the news coverage uh of these events was quite clear. All kinds of rumors about Lewin appeared uh within hours after the event happened. Allegedly Orthodox Jews had resented Lewin's relationship with the non-Jewish woman Poeschke was one version. There were also, had been conflicts in the Nuremberg leadership and that's true but that was not enough for a motive for murder I would say, but they believed of course they, so they the Jews kill each other, obviously. There was also immediate speculation that the 69-year-old Lewin was a Mossad agent. And when the Israelis explicitly denied this, this was taken as a confirmation because what the secret Israeli service

Obituary



in: "Fränkischer Tag", 22 December 1980

[Obituary in: "Frankischer Tag," 22 December 1980]

denies is always true. And they wrote this and they meant it. In this case, of course, you can see that there are antisemitic stereotypes in the reception already and there is a kind of twisting of victims and perpetrators here. The victim become the perpetrator and uh so then the event in many ways quickly vanishes because it's seen as not an important event even in the local newspapers.

49:32 Uffa Jensen: And I brought you a quote from the closest friend of um of uh Lewin who actually was scheduled to go with him to open the Erlangen Jewish Community a few days after the murder. And this is how we remembered this in an interview in 2011 and he said, they didn't want to take it up on upon themselves that after the whole Holocaust, there was such a case in Germany that you shoot a Jew at night in the parlor, in the flat. They didn't want it. The newspapers wrote about it from all over the world, what Germany, what happened here in Germany. They didn't want it. They always wanted to keep themselves clean. They always rejected it. They always rejected. They also rejected today the whole antisemitism - it's not like that. The massive questioning of Lewin I think is the background to this sad uh, uh the sad insight of uh Josef Jakubovicz um, and um this is also how the the Jewish community in more general terms perceived and remembered this event.

50:44 Uffa Jensen: And I brought you another quote from - also after the fact - from the then head of the German Jewish Council, so the highest office of German Jews and the highest representative of German Jewry, Paul Spiegel. And remembering the double murder he said, there was sheer horror in the Jewish communities but also horror that this was apparently not perceived by the general public as it should have been because it was really the first time after 1945 that Jews were killed by people close to National Socialism. And we didn't understand at the time why this didn't result in an outcry from the entire population. And exactly, that's the case. There was really no outcry of this. Hoffmann and his partner uh were put on trial a few years later for the double murder. What were not um were not found guilty. Actually, they are free. They

"They didn't want to take it upon themselves that after the whole Holocaust there was such a case in Germany that you shoot a Jew at night in the parlour - in the flat. They didn't want it. The newspapers wrote about it from all over the world - what happened here in Germany - they didn't want it, they always wanted to keep themselves clean - they always rejected it - they always reject it - they also reject it today, the whole anti-Semitism - 'it's not like that' [...]."



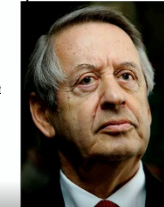
Josef Jakubovicz (1925-2013)

(Transcript of an interview with Birgit Mair in 2010)

[Josef Jakubovicz (1925-2013) / transcript of an interview with Birgit Mair in 2010]

Paul Spiegel about the Double Murder (2001)

"There was sheer horror in the Jewish communities, but also horror that this was apparently not perceived by the general public as it should have been, because it was really the first time after 1945 that Jews were killed by people close to National Socialism. And we didn't understand at the time why this didn't result in an outcry from the entire population."



[Paul Spiegel about the Double Murder (2001)]

they, Hoffmann was was sentenced to a long uh uh prison um prison uh sentence but not for the double murder. Actually, the double murder case was completely forgotten from this moment onwards.

52:09 Uffa Jensen: Nobody really un, nobody really remembered it until the 2010s when, after the um the uncovering of the National Socialist underground. I don't know if you're familiar with this these three uh individuals um formed the National Socialist Underground in 2000 uh in 1998, I think it was. And between uh 2000 um and 2001 and 2010 they murdered um ten people, most of them uh of Turkish, Greek, and Kurdish descent, and they launched three bomb attacks which also um um um which also um harmed many people. The the group was detected in 2011 and only after then the German Society focused more on right-wing terrorism and realized, wow this is a problem. And and uh we have to go back into history and remember some, or uncover some of the stories that well we didn't understand. There is a structural problem here, I think, especially for the victims. While left-wing terrorists, as I said, primarily threaten the State authorities, right-wing terrorists sought out victims from minority groups and committed signal and commit signaling acts against them. And with the Spiegel quote, you can see that this indeed had an effect on the small Jewish Community. They were frightened about this development and they realized that the general civil society did not care about this.

53:52 Uffa Jensen: And I think in in some ways the logic of the antisemitic terrorist right-wing acts were actually fulfilled in some ways because it said you, they separated the general society and the Jewish victims. And in that way, um you know, one of the the the signal and effect somehow in a way worked. It also had a very complex and I think difficult connection to this story in 2011. And let me maybe it's a bit theoretical, but it's my final point. You know the police, the security forces are actually in a in a way working with historical memory. When they when they get to a site of a political violence, they need to understand what is going on here. Is this private or is this, has this a political meaning? And of course, you know, they will evaluate what they see by what they had

National Socialist Underground (NSU)



[National Socialist Underground (NSU)
/ Beate Zshape (1975) / Uwe
Bohnhardt (1977-2011) / Uwe Mundlos
(1973-2011)]

previously understood to be possible. That's, you know, in a way they have a memory of possible um historical cases. And since this case or and the entire terrorist activity of the 1980s was not remembered in many ways the police you know was not able to look at this. And of, of course, they did not. They followed all of these murders um from 2001 onwards that the NSU [National Socialist Underground] committed but they could not comprehend them. They thought it was done it had been done from within the Turkish Community, uh some form of organized crime.

55:44 Uffa Jensen: They didn't think about right-wing terrorists. And I gave you one last quote. The chief criminal director uh of the police headquarters who was in charge of investigating these cases is actually also in Franconia - so there's a regional uh continuity there - was uh the most important investigator for the murders of the NSU. And he admitted after the fact, so in 2011, that he could not have imagined until the end that right-wing terrorists existed on this scale. Actually, one politician said the very same thing when Walter Lübcke, the person I showed you uh a moment ago, in 2019 was killed. Again, they said oh, we didn't know that we have so much right-wing terrorism. Well, my argument is yes because you didn't study the history, and you didn't understand uh that this is possible, and that this has happened quite uh for a long time. So, in some ways, it's a sad story for the victims because it's, you know, in in some ways it isolated them from the general society and made them into targets again. But it's also a sad story for the political system of Germany because it wasn't possible to process this terrorist activity in the year 1980 and thus, was in a way bound to repeat uh itself of failing to find the reasons for these acts. Thank you very much. Thank you

57:24 [An Antisemitic Double-Murder: The Forgotten History of the Right-Wing Terrorism in Postwar West Germany / Featuring / Uffa Jensen / German Historian / March 7, 2024]

- 57:29 [Presented by / Holocaust Living History Workshop / Deborah Hertz Director, The Jewish Studies Program, UC San Diego / Susanne Hillman Program Coordinator, The Holocaust Living History Workshop / UC San Diego Library / Erik T. Mitchell The Audrey Geisel University Librarian / Nikki Kolupailo Director of Communications and Engagement]
- 57:36 [UC San Diego / The Library Channel / uctv.tv/library]
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