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Political Failure and Social Tasks. A Glance at Right-Wing Extremism in Germany

Lecture at Bergen University College, October 15, 2012

In the following I want to give a picture of present right-wing extremism in Germany and of the debate concerning the subject. I also want to show some strategies against and what Social Work does respectively can do about it. But dealing with such a complex matter on such narrow space must inescapably lead to an incomplete result. So what I can offer you is just a glance at the subject.

Organized Irresponsibility: The NSU Affair

When looking at German newspapers, whether national or regional ones, you will find about two articles on the subject “right-wing extremism/racism” per day. There is hardly any day with no reporting or commentary on the complex of the extreme right at all. On the one hand this fact is worrying because it expresses how much present right-wing extremism burdens German society. On the other hand it is reassuring that –as far as media are concerned – there is a certain basic sensitivity towards the subject. At least right-wing extremism, racist violence and their consequences are not being ignored.

Since almost a year mass media attention is focused on the scandal about the terror organization “*Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund*” (National Socialist Underground, NSU). This scandal is not confined to that small organization and its murderous activities, but it expands on the question how it could happen that their deeds have been misinterpreted for more than a decade instead of having been solved. So this is not just one scandal but a real series of scandals which question the conduct of police, criminal investigation, *Verfassungsschutzämtern* (offices responsible for defending the constitution), ministries and public authorities on the whole scale extending to the Federal Armed Forces.

On November 4, 2011 two right-wing extremists named Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt shot themselves in Eisenach (Thuringia). Both had been looked for by the police for years. Only a few hours later their companion Beate Zschäpe burnt down their common flat in the Saxonian city of Zwickau. On November 8 she gave herself up to the police. During the following days it became clear that under a period of thirteen years this trio had been robbing banks serially, planting bombs and killed at least ten people. Nine of these had been men from Turkey and Greece who lived in Germany – family fathers, owners of restaurants and

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delis who had been “executed” on purpose by gunshots only because of their foreign origin. The gang had portrayed itself and its deeds on a DVD-video as the “German Tour” of the NSU by using the cartoon character of the Pink Panther. The latter, as is widely known, keeps playing comparatively harmless tricks on an incompetent police inspector. And this is exactly how it appears what is – by and by - becoming known about the working methods of the investigating authorities – while the end of revealing the series of mistakes is not in sight².

So the scandal lies not only in the fact that there has been a right-wing extremist terror group in Germany which has kept murdering for more than a decade but rather that this terrorism has not been understood for such a long time.

Soon it became clear that the investigating authorities had failed. They had noticed that there was a connection between the murders in various Lands (*Bundesländer*), but the police had investigated in a lot of directions, amongst other things in the direction of organized crime, which implied suspecting the victims and their families themselves. Plus, the coordination between the various authorities and Lands did not work well. Criticism focused on the *Verfassungsschutzämter* which sometimes used to run their contact persons (*Verbindungsleute, V-Leute*) in the neo-Nazi-scene in a way that should protect them from enquiries of other authorities. This evoked the well-founded suspicion that the protection of such contacts was estimated higher than the public interest of solving a series of terrorist murders³. Politicians endeavored for damage limitation. On a commemoration for the victims of NSU in February 2012 Federal Chancellor Merkel apologized to the relatives. Five commissions and parliamentary fact-finding committees have been established concerning right-wing terrorism. They are trying to enlighten the background of the mistakes to-date⁴.

Since then a number of scandals or rather facets of the same scandal have become known. This June it became known that in November 2011 files concerning *V-Leute* had been destroyed in the Federal Office for the *Verfassungsschutz*. Commentaries named it a “confetti battle” („*Aktion Konfetti*“) in the “Federal Office for Jeopardizing the Constitution”⁵. On July 2, 2012 the head of the Federal Office, Heinz Fromm asked to be retired⁶. The day after the

² Cf. eg. Staud 2012, p. 15; Fuchs, Christian; Goetz, John: Beate, die braune Witwe. In: Die Zeit No. 23 (2012-05-31), p. 15ff.; Botsch 2012, p. 138f.

³ Cf. Botsch 2012, loc.cit.

⁴ Cf. Staud 2012, loc.cit.

⁵ Höll, Susanne; Schultz, Tanjev: „Aktion Konfetti“. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) (2012-06-29), p. 5; commentary höll: „Bundesamt für Verfassungsgefährdung“. In: SZ (2012-06-29), p. 4.

⁶ Cf. Verfassungsschutz-Präsident Fromm räumt seinen Posten. In: Sächsische Zeitung (SächsZ) (2012-07-03), p. 1.

president of the Thuringian Land *Verfassungsschutz* also resigned because of the mistakes⁷. At the same time, in the Saxonian neighbor Land, the CDU State Minister of the Interior pointed out that his Saxonian *Verfassungsschutz* had not made any mistakes. He had to learn his lesson soon. The week after previously unknown bugging protocols concerning the NSU murder series turned up – and Saxony's Chief of the *Verfassungsschutz* had to resign as well⁸.

The list of (assumed or real) failures is long, and it's becoming ever longer. It extends from ignoring own intelligence, non-continuing to pursue tracks and careless dealing with files to bugging protocols that have disappeared and files that have been destroyed. Meanwhile it has become known that a series of V-men of the *Verfassungsschutz* in fact had contact to the NSU and its surroundings. But this closeness to the authorities did not put the investigators on the right track. A set of ministries and authorities have been discredited or have at least a lot of explanation to do. Apart from the Bureaus of the *Verfassungsschutz* these are the Federal Intelligence Service, the Military Counter-Espionage Service (MAD), the ministries of the interior of the Federation, of Thuringia, Saxony, Hessen and Berlin and – at last – the *Bundeswehr*.

Even if finally some of the accusations should prove exaggerated: There is a pattern of state and political failure against right-wing extremism. I would call it Organized Irresponsibility, which could be seen as the other side of the subsidiarity principle, which is loved so much by the Conservatives in Germany: Lack of coordination and cooperation, everyone is concerned only with problems conceived as their own, everyone protects his own *V-Leute* and contacts. In Saxony the government used to speak of the "Thuringian terrorist trio", while the Thuringians called the NSU "Neo-Nazis from Zwickau". So the responsibility is – first – shuffled off to others and – second – decentralized. But as Nazis want to get rid of Democracy as a whole, there also needs to be a response of Democracy as a whole, which has to be centrally coordinated. So now it is necessary to lay the organizational and societal fundamentals to give this response.

In between Mass Phenomenon and Extremist Niche

Right-Wing Extremism is not or at least not mainly a question of organization. It is a conception of the world that usually is connected with exaggerated nationalism, part of which is a pro-Nazi conception of history. The extreme right support imperialism and big-power poli-

⁷ Cf. Präsident vom Verfassungsschutz Thüringen geht. In: SächsZ (2012-07-04), p. 4.

⁸ Cf. Saft, Gunnar: Sachsen warnt vor Neonazis und verteidigt seine Verfassungsschützer. In: SächsZ (2012-07-06), p. 1; Sachsens Verfassungsschutz-Chef tritt zurück. In: SächsZ (2012-07-12), p. 1.

tics. They are hostile towards other states or people⁹. Right-wing extremism is often connected to different forms of group-related misanthropy (*Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit*, Wilhelm Heitmeyer). Amongst these are prosperity chauvinist ideas, xenophobia, racism and anti-semitism. Behind this lies a political scheme which negates the universal human rights of freedom and equality, which is authoritarian and directed against pluralism, democracy and the sovereignty of the people. The extreme right have oriented their conception of the world along a concept of friend and foe. They prefer to simply divide the world and humans in good and evil, black and white, German and non-German and so on.

A widespread prejudice has it that especially socially marginalized East German youth are standing in for right-wing extremist concepts and orientations. But in fact these ideas are widely spread in the society as a whole. According to a study of the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2009 64 per cent of the youth shared the opinion that there are rather too many foreigners living in Germany¹⁰. But such ideas are at least as widely spread among older people. Xenophobic opinions are supported throughout by a little more than 25 per cent in Western Germany and by nearly a third of the East Germans¹¹. At least being predisposed for right-wing extremist ideas is a mass phenomenon in Germany – as it is in other countries.

People become extreme right when they lack self-consciousness and strength. Right-wing extremists often conceive themselves as losers and victims. They search for a simple conception of the world with authoritarian principles; they are alleged to *Führership* and to relations of subjection. It is the search for stability in an alienated world that motivates many of them. This explains why right-wing extremism gets the comparatively most wide-spread support in East German small towns that seem to be “uncoupled” from the West and its dynamic economy¹².

Openly active right-wing extremists can be found especially among trainees, skilled workers and pupils. They sum up to about three fourth of violent right-wing extremists; another fourth of the delinquents are unemployed¹³. Studies on right-wing extremist violence have revealed that many of the delinquents are males leading “ordinary” lives and that many delinquents belong to the lower middle-class. Violent right-wing extremists are socially rather integrated, but they usually only have a low level of education. They keep organizing in

⁹ There are lots of definitions and approaches – and they are much discussed. Cf. eg. Kulick/Staudt (ed.) 2009, p. 14-16; Frech/Posselt 2011, p. 230-231.

¹⁰ Cf. Deutschlands Jugend driftet nach rechts. In: Rheinische Post (2009-03-17).

¹¹ Cf. Decker/Weißmann/Kiess/Brähler 2010, p. 23.

¹² Cf. *ibid*, p. 117-118; Decker/Weißmann/Kiess/Brähler, *loc.cit*.

¹³ Cf. Gamper/Willems 2006, p. 448-450.

cliques, in groups, often in small towns. On the whole about 100,000 young people between 14 and 25 years take part in such more or less loosely organized cliques. This is about one per cent of the age-group. Only about 5,000 of them are formal members in right-wing extremist parties like the NPD, right-wing extremist youth organizations or comradeships¹⁴.

Compared to all other youth cultures in Germany right-wing-extremist youth culture is a marginal fringe group. Only less than three per cent of all interviewees in a study express their sympathy for the right-wing cultural scene; in the list of the most rejected cultural scenes right-wing extremism is leading clearly with over 80 per cent¹⁵. The fact that neo-Nazi fellowships consist of males by more than 80 per cent may contribute to this devastating result – only about a sixth of the scene are females. “Fight for manliness“ plays an important role for right-wing identity. Nazis obviously compensate for the fact that physical power has become widely useless with regard to social acknowledgement and advancement. So this is why they need to demonstrate their power, militant outfit and show off aggressiveness. The movement is often confined to the pre-political sphere. It works with simple, rather unreflected prejudices as disapproving of anything unfamiliar, especially of “foreigners”. As their media they produce fanzines, listen to music and also tend to be active on the Internet. Right-wing extremists often meet in public, for example on station courts, at gas stations and in pubs. Their preferred preoccupations also appear to be rather simple: drinking beer, smoking and listening to *Rechtsrock*, right-wing rock music¹⁶.

Before the NSU affair researchers had been convinced that right-wing extremist violence usually takes place in the public or at least in the semi-public, because they aim at being conceived, at being visible. Right-wing extremists would want to be recognized by the majority for shoving around inferiors and outcasts which does not only include foreigners but Germans as well, eg. handicapped people, unemployed or alcoholics. They want to produce themselves as the ones who fight for law and order. “The neo-Nazi’s dream profession is not being a revolutionary but being a police officer or a soldier.”¹⁷ This fact also seems to be an important motivation for those many *V-Leute* in the extreme right scene. Thus a leading functionary of the “Thuringian Homeland Defence” (*Thüringer Heimatschutz*) who had been recruited as a *V-Mann* by the Land Bureau for *Verfassungsschutz* is still a convinced right-wing extremist. Relating to his activity for the authorities he spoke of a “win-win-situation”¹⁸. I would understand this as follows: The authorities get (selected) information

¹⁴ Cf. Farin 2011, p. 114f.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid*, p. 118.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid*, p. 115-116.

¹⁷ *Ebd.*, p. 113.

¹⁸ Cf. Schultz, Tanjev: *V-Mann an der langen Leine*. In: *SZ* (2012-10-09), p. 5.

and the Nazi gets paid for that. So he can finance his right-wing activities – which also include recruiting the persons on who he can spy. This is not a one-way street. On the other hand there are increasing reports in the press that some police authorities also have close relationships to the extreme right. For example in Baden-Württemberg police had close connections to the “Ku-Klux-Klan” and the Land *Verfassungsschutz* is suspected to have warned the Klan against being bugged¹⁹.

That the NSU did not publicly confess their terrorist murders is not astonishing. As their Pink-Panther-video shows the murderers only wanted to show off in the neo-Nazi scene itself. In the end there was fund raising, collecting money for the “underground” in *Rechtsrock* concerts. The scene must have known the facts, because there was a song called “*Döner-Killer*” from the neo-Nazi-rock band „*Gigi und die braunen Stadtmusikanten*”, which contained the following verse: „The kebab sticks in the throat, cause he likes to visit the kebab booth spontaneously, cause nine are not enough.”²⁰ But the terrorists must have been aware of the fact that they could not hope for the understanding of a wide spread public for their deeds. There are historical role models for that: Just take a look at the infamous Posen speech of Heinrich Himmler in 1943. He told his SS-men that murdering the European Jews was “a glorious chapter of our history, unwritten and never to be written”²¹.

Those murders committed on purpose and in cold blood by neo-Nazi-terrorists are still absolutely exceptional – in spite of all doubts concerning the investigating authorities. Most acts of right-wing extremist violence are committed in public by small groups whose violence nearly always results from an “ad hoc situation”, “spontaneously but not by chance”²². The number of right-wing extremist acts of violence as recorded by the police authorities in Germany ranges about 1,000 a year. The unreported should be much more. Thus in Germany between 1990 and 2010 at least 138 people died as a consequence of right-wing extremist violence. But only 47 of these had been officially recognized as victims of right-wing violence by the Federal Government²³.

Right-wing extremist violence committed in public is only the top of an iceberg. The causes lie deeper and right-wing opinions are much more widely held among the population than just in a certain, clearly visible scene easy to be recognized by its symbols and cultural behavior.

¹⁹ Cf. *Seltame Zufälle*. In: SZ (2012-10-16), p. 5.

²⁰ Cit. Busch 2012.

²¹ Cit. Burleigh 2000, p. 766.

²² Farin 2011, p. 112.

²³ Cf. Gamper/Willems 2006, p. 455; Kleffner 2011, p. 26.

Large sections of the populations support chauvinism and xenophobia as „mechanisms to produce self-revaluation and devaluation of others“. It is not only marginalized outcast lower classes who are affected by such opinions but also a section of the middle class who feel endangered by social decline. As precarity in Germany increases and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, the fear of decline increases as well – a little more in East Germany than in the West. There is a correlation between socio-economic situation and susceptibility to extreme right ideas²⁴. On the other hand group-related misanthropy in Germany has slightly decreased over the past years. But there is no reason to sound the all-clear. Because what will happen if social marginalization and precarity would increase²⁵? Just take a glance at the rise of right-wing organizations and violence in countries like Greece. The slight decrease of right-wing opinions might also be connected to the fact that public interest in politics is generally declining²⁶. So if people do not expect the solution of their problems by politics in general, why should they expect them being solved by the extreme right?

The consequence of what I have been pointing out is a complex problem against which measures have to be taken in a complex way, at a set of levels. First there is the level of *Verfassungsschutz*, police and the judiciary (repressive measures, repression). Then there is the level of politics (fighting the social origins of right-wing extremism). And third, highly important, there is the level of civilian society, of the public, of non-government organizations and also Social Work (education, youth programs, prevention)²⁷. Political measures are not sufficient. Different levels of approach should be combined.

Blind Spots in Politics

One of the reasons for the relatively strong position of right-wing extremists in rural or small-town areas in East Germany is the weakness of democratic politics and institutions. When political parties, associations and civilian institutions do not work anymore because nobody takes part in them, the Browns will have the space to spread their ideas. Of course there are specific East German origins of right-wing extremism and xenophobia. They result from the superficial nature of officially prescribed GDR-antifascism as well as the nature of the communist system (being cut off from the outer world, authoritarian pedagogical patterns, structures and way of living). Nevertheless, East German people do not generally tend

²⁴ Cf. Decker/Weißmann/Kiess/Brähler 2010, p. 145ff., cit. p. 141.

²⁵ Cf. Heitmeyer 2010, p. 39-41.

²⁶ Eg. in the young generation, cf. Albert/Hurrelmann/Quenzel 2010, p. 50f.

²⁷ Cf. eg. Meyer 1998, p. 48.

to be more right-wing oriented than people in the West²⁸. Unfortunately there is a comparative lack of development of democratic culture and voluntary activities²⁹.

To make democratic political activity more attractive for larger sections of the population is an important task for decision-makers. This includes parties and parliaments as well as non-government organizations, municipalities and government. A famous politician originating from Saxony³⁰ has defined politics as „to sort out matters that concern everybody“. The more people look after this, the lesser the room to move for the enemies of democracy.

Besides that all political forces must fight the extreme right with determination. This has been lacking especially as far as the Conservatives of the CDU are concerned, a party that has been governing Saxony without a break since 1990. When other political camps were already warning about it³¹, the commendable Prime Minister Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. Kurt Biedenkopf kept declaring that his Saxons were „totally immune (...) against right-wing radical temptations“³². At the *Landtag* election following this statement Biedenkopf was proved wrong in an impressive way. Since 2004 there is an NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany) parliamentary group in the *Landtag*. The CDU is not a right-wing extremist party at all. They are democrats who do not want to have a problem with right-wing extremism. They do not want to have anything to do with it. That is why they ignored the problem as long as it seemed possible. Conservatives prefer to fight the left. So if right-wing extremism has to be faced they always want to treat it as equivalent to left-wing extremism. Conservatives prefer an unclear terminology of “extremism” which ignores the fact that the danger from the right is far more menacing as well as group-related misanthropy can only be found on the right wing of the political specter. After CDU/FDP took over Federal Government in 2009 they established so-called “*Extremismusklauseln*” (clauses on extremism). This means that initiatives against right-wing extremism that want to get public funding for their activities – and they need the money – have to sign a statement in advance. This contains a declaration of allegiance to the Constitution as well as a declaration that the recipient of funds will prevent the support of “extremist” structures and that they will take care for their partners to commit themselves to the Constitution as well. In Germany it is also still a pattern of Conservative politics to capitalize on anti-European or xenophobic sentiments in order to get supporters and voters. Nevertheless: Meanwhile Saxony’s Prime Minister Stanislaw Tillich (CDU)

²⁸ Cf. Decker/Weißmann/Kiess/Brähler 2010, p. 23f.

²⁹ Cf. Meyer 2011, esp. p. 152-154.

³⁰ Of course I’m speaking of Herbert Wehner (Dresden 1906 – Bonn 1990). Cf. Meyer 2006.

³¹ Cf. eg. Meyer 1998.

³² Cit. Kulick/Staudt 2009, p. 143.

has joined the camp of those who want to ban the NPD. And recently he has openly declared that his Land has “a problem with right-wing extremism”. But is that enough?

As a result of the NSU affair the *V-Leute* system of the *Verfassungsschutzämter* has to be questioned fundamentally. The fact-finding committees have calculated the number of *V-Leute* in the former Nazi network „Thuringian Homeland Defence“ to the amount of 40 – which is rather much in comparison to a membership total of 140³³. This reminds one of the 2003 fiasco when then Federal Minister of the Interior Otto Schily (SPD) failed to get the NPD banned by the Federal Constitutional Court. To be exact it turned out that lots of *V-men* had been active in the party for decades – some of them had taken leading posts in the NPD. Finally the court stated that the right-wing extremist party was characterized by a “lack of independence from the state”³⁴.

Presently banning the NPD is reconsidered and most politicians support the idea. The prospects of such a trial are doubtful – because there are still many *V-Leute* in the party. On the other hand there are hints concerning contacts of terrorist NSU into the NPD – and increasing evidence for an aggressive position of the party towards democracy³⁵. The NPD has only two parliamentary groups in German *Landtage* and opinion polls say that its support is declining. But the party serves as an organized and financial backbone for less clearly structured comradeships and the “independent” right-wing scene as well. The NPD can support the latter with public money from “*Wahlkampfkostenerstattung*” (refunding of election campaign costs), parliamentary group funds and MP-bureaus in the constituencies. Thus the party privilege of the Federal Republic which was established in order to strengthen pluralism does in fact evoke counterproductive results. It cannot be accepted that a democracy should be forced to feed its enemies. That is why the NPD ban should be supported. But it would be a dangerous illusion to believe that the ban would solve the problem of right-wing extremism.

To perceive the complexity of things is due to the state and to politicians. During the red-green government from 1998 to 2005 a set of – often EU funded – projects have been established. On the whole the succeeding governments continued these projects – although in part with different priorities and by broadening their focus towards left-wing extremism. There were also shortages and elements of bureaucratic obstruction.

At our place in Saxony many things keep going wrong. As the Saxonian Free State keeps saving money by shortening expenses on Social Work such as youth clubs, street working, socio-pedagogical institutions and projects, the persons responsible should not be astonished at

³³ Cf. „Thüringer Heimatschutz“ – 40 von 140 wohl *V-Leute*. In: Die Welt (2012-09-04).

³⁴ Cf. Botsch 2012, p. 124f.; cit. *ibid*, p. 125.

³⁵ Cf. Schultz, Tanjev; Szymanski, Mike: Belege der Widerlichkeit. In: SZ (2012-09-22/23), p. 2.

the fact that this creates room for right-wing surrogate projects and structures. These may result in troubleshooter action of the state with constructs like the Federal program “Cohesion by Participation” or the program “Democracy – Saxony Open to the World” which has been established on behalf of the temporary co-governing Saxonian SPD. Usually these programs finance temporary projects with insufficient resources so that they can work against right-wing extremism punctually. After all: They are necessary and useful. But when the public sponsorship ends they tend to break down and the old desert of too meager a civilian society spreads again. Political decision-makers should endeavor to create long-lasting structures that can labor on social détente and democratic political education by using a secured institutional framework.

Tasks for Social Work

There is a way to fight right-wing extremism effectively. Social Workers can help in a number of ways. For example they can strengthen other, non-right youth cultures. For example there is a multi-cultural complexity in international musical culture which is certainly aesthetically much more interesting than that dumb Teutonian *Rechtsrock*.

Other starting points are family, school and youth work. On the local political level Social Work can help persons responsible to become aware of problems with right-wing extremism. This task extends to large parts of civilian society like media or the local economy – in spite of all the problems.

The super-regional context has to be dealt with as well: uncertainty in view of the crisis and the tendency to blame minorities or foreigners („the Greek“) for it. Social Work can give incentives to public discourse directed to strengthen democratic culture. It should see to it that family, school and professional training structures support democratic attitudes and include national minorities as well as foreigners. Thus Social Work influences the basic conditions for fighting the extreme right.

Target group oriented political education is another important task of Social Work. While working with the so-called “ordinary youth” it is about fostering democracy skills and tolerance. Another target group consists of right-wing oriented youth with only loose ties to organized extremists. They should not be left in the offside but be covered by school or outer school youth work. Adventure pedagogical projects might be helpful. They make pro-social experiences possible. Another issue is specific educational work to develop democratic attitudes³⁶.

This is a wide range. The list could be extended.

³⁶ Cf. Borstel/Wagner 2006, p. 475-477.

In spite of all difficulties, in spite of unreasonable demands by politics and bureaucracy which may result in a lack of professionalism: There is a broad scene of Social Work, of Community Work against right-wing extremism in Germany and in Saxony. We have the “*Kulturbüro Sachsen*” (Cultural Office of Saxony) which advises initiatives, municipalities, the church etc. We have the “*Regionale Arbeitsstellen*” (regional places of work) which advise victims of violence. We have another association, the “Network for Democracy and Courage” which is sending young people into schools in order to run project days. There are youth cafés and socio-cultural centers with appropriate offers.

The Social Work Faculty of the Hochschule Mittweida has established a project called “*Bildungsarbeit*” (Educational Work). It deals with developing special projects of historical political educational work. Prof. Matthias Pfüller has started it and I am continuing the project in co-operation with him.

This project focuses on war and immediate post-war history on the regional level. Because this side of the major memorial places like “Buchenwald” or “Auschwitz”, national socialist mass murder, crimes of war and their consequences like bombardment, taking flight and expulsion have been extensive, omnipresent events in Germany. The number of families being directly or indirectly affected is estimated up to at least 30 per cent of the population.

The traumatic consequences of a fate like this were hardly mentioned at all throughout the GDR history and even afterwards. This fact helps right-wing extremists to work by using falsifications and glossing over facts.

So the project is dealing with cross-generation biographic work, the acquisition of appropriate background knowledge and the qualification for preventive work against right-wing extremism and populism. The project contains elements of youth work and education. There are narrative cafés especially for the old, exhibitions on local events, thematically focused guided tours, biographical work in general as well as political-historical adult education and memorial work.

The project *Bildungsarbeit* has networked into the region and into Social Work by a large number of co-operations. Partners and participants include history workshops, socio-cultural centers in Saxony and abroad, institutes of political youth and adult education as well as memorials and their associations.

Students take part in seminars and educational trips through Saxony (eg. On the Tracks of the Death Marches) and into Poland and the Czech Republic. These are carried out by the *Herbert-Wehner-Bildungswerk*³⁷ and refunded by the Federal Central for Political Education (*Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*, bpb³⁸). Students take part in this as “participating

³⁷ See <http://www.wehnerwerk.de>.

³⁸ See <http://www.bpb.de>.

observers” and thus cooperation is set into action and the project seminar conveys to practical experience. By the way mutual understanding across inner-European borders is supported³⁹.

This is but one example for a project that plays a role in fighting right-wing extremism on the level of community and Social Work. There are many other which are also useful and important.

When all is said and done different stages and levels should not be played against each other. Right-wing extremism is a complex problem – and the important task to fight it has to be solved in a complex way as well. Organized Irresponsibility concerning the extreme right has to be turned into a multi-level responsible effort to strengthen democracy by all parts of the society.

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³⁹ A series of reports on the seminars can be found on the “Web Archive of the Social Work Faculty”: <https://www.sa.hs-mittweida.de/webs/sa-arc.html>.

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