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SECURITY INFORMATION

REACTION OF THE WEST GERMAN PRESS

TO HESSE MINISTER-PRESIDENT ZINN'S REVELATIONS

ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF A GUERILLA MOVEMENT WITHIN THE BDJ

Hesse Minister-President Zinn's sensational revelations of the existence of a guerilla movement within the Association of German Youth (BDJ) created a stir in the West German press and produced a flood of editorial comment. While the majority of all papers condemned the BDJ's activities as "illegal and in contrast with democratic principles," the tenor of commentaries published ranged from all sorts of excuses by the pro-Government press through severe criticism by independent papers to strong reprimands by the Social Democratic and the expected vituperation by the Communist press.

The Pro-Government Press: The pro-Government papers, which immediately after Zinn's disclosures were not at all disinclined to join in the hue and cry raised over the "partisans," exercised more restraint when it turned out that the Bonn Government was getting involved in the investigation. They then attempted to label the Hess Minister-President's statements as being intended to be a good introduction for the SPD's election campaign.

This view was most strongly expressed by FRANKFURTER NEUE PRESSE, DIE WELT, Hamburg, and RHEINISCHER MERKUR, Koblenz, which openly charged the SPD with using the existence of such a guerilla group as a case against the establishment of German military contingents. RHEINISCHER MERKUR, generally considered the mouthpiece of the Federal Government, went so far as to excuse the alleged participation of U. S. authorities in the organization of the partisan movement by arguing that "something has, after all, to be done to tackle the so urgently necessary defense question." A similar view was voiced by DER TAGESSPIEGEL, Berlin, which regarded the happenings in Hesse as "merely a result of the fact that the establishment of German troops has been so much delayed by irresponsible persons." "Small wonder, then," DER TAGESSPIEGEL added, "that the preparations for setting up German units are being made in a different form."

The Independent Press: Although not exaggerating the importance of the BDJ's activities, West Germany's independent newspapers considered Zinn's revelations alarming. A rather moderate opinion was voiced by CHRIST UND WELT, Stuttgart, which wrote that the maintenance of guerilla groups by official U. S. authorities proves that there is no talking yet of the sovereignty of the Federal Republic. Other independent papers like SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, Munich, DEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, Stuttgart, and DAS GANZE DEUTSCHLAND, Stuttgart, deplored that the "political idealism of the German youth is being abused in a manner that may well be called criminal." (DEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, Stuttgart)

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SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

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DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
 DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: 30,0
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTHORITY: 10-2
DATE: _____ REVIEWER: 056364

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A good portion of the independent press considered Zinn's disclosures a welcome opportunity for lashing out at American policies in Germany. This section of the press was spearheaded by influential papers such as FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE and SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, Munich, which have recently been opposing American efforts to speed Germany's integration into the West European Defense Community. FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE, in an editorial published the day after Minister-President Zinn's revelations before the Hess Landtag, remarked sarcastically that the "German public is particularly anxious to learn what role American officers and officials are playing in this game." SUEDEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG urged that the BDJ's activities be investigated "even if such an investigation should expose American or German official authorities," and added that the United States should not think that "a genuine good will to help defend the West could be promoted by a policy which is both amateurish and irresponsible."

WIESBADENER KURIER bluntly accused American authorities in Germany of trying to gain complete control over the investigation, and suggested that those Americans involved in the actions of the BDJ be given "a change of climate." Alluding to the Kemritz affair, WIESBADENER KURIER expressed strong doubts that the Americans would actively assist German authorities in clearing up the case. GENERAL-ANZEIGER, Bonn, found that "in their fight against Communism the Americans choose their allies rather indiscriminately. We have little faith in the assurances of U. S. authorities that they were not aware of the BDJ's political activities."

The SPD Press: The view of the SPD press is best reflected in an editorial published by TELEGRAPH, Berlin: "The fact that members of an occupation power set up an armed secret organization without informing the German Government is an act that cannot be condemned sharply enough. It ill befits members of an occupation power to behave in such a way, particularly since one of the Allies' primary intentions was to help Germany find a democratic order. If the Soviets eschew democratic principles, there is no reason that the Western Powers should tolerate the violation of these principles. It is to be hoped that the U. S. authorities will give unhesitating assistance in the investigation of this matter. The fact that some of the arrested BDJ members were released after referring to their American sponsors shows that German sovereignty is still very limited."

Analogous opinions were advanced by other SPD papers like WESTDEUTSCHE NEUE PRESSE, Cologne, and WESTFAELISCHE RUNDSCHAU, Dortmund, both of which pointed to the fact that the Weimar Republic failed last but not least through its leniency toward subversive organizations and groups. The pro-SPD FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU demanded that Chancellor Adenauer disassociate himself from the BDJ as clearly as U. S. High Commissioner Donnelly did, and requested that the Federal Government should not treat the case as if it were just an election maneuver of the SPD.

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The Communist Press: The expected vitriolic reaction to Zinn's disclosures was found in the Communist press. FREIES VOLK, Duesseldorf, the central organ of the KPD, immediately linked its vehement attacks on the BDJ with its anti-rearmament campaign. "The revelations about this American-sponsored fascist murder organization clearly demonstrate what the West German people will be in for if Ridgway's plans concerning the ratification of the general war treaty are realized." FREIES VOLK concluded its editorial, as it concludes all its editorials, by calling upon the West German population to overthrow the Adenauer Government.

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