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Germany's Spying Scandal—Why It Should Alarm You

The media went into a frenzy when America was caught spying on Germany. Why then do they ignore revelations that Berlin is spying on America?

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- [31-07-2017](#)

In 2013, America was caught spying on Germany. Former National Security Administration contractor Edward Snowden revealed that the United States had been spying on the country from more than 150 sites and had even tapped German Chancellor Angela Merkel's phone.

The world was outraged.

"While the U.S. media did not cover the scandal in great detail, it created a huge splash in the German media," wrote *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry. "This whipped the German public up into a frenzy, which politicians exploited" (*Trumpet*, October 2014).

"Spying on friends is not acceptable," Ms. Merkel said at the time. Her government declared that its foreign intelligence network, the BND, has never spied on the United States.

Which is why a June 22 *Spiegel* report should be deeply embarrassing to her.

"Documents that *Spiegel* has been able to review show that the BND, until a few years ago, actually had considerable interest in the United States as a target of espionage."

Between 1998 and 2006, Germany spied repeatedly on the United States. *Spiegel* has no information on activities outside this period, but there is nothing to indicate it stopped after 2006.

The BND monitored the telephones, faxes and e-mails of the Marine Corps, the Defense Intelligence Agency, defense companies like Lockheed Martin, foreign embassies and institutions on U.S. soil, and even the White House itself.

"The truth is that the Germans were snooping far more extensively than they ever wanted to admit," wrote *Spiegel*.

This is the latest in a series of revelations about the spy agency. In 2014, *Spiegel* revealed that the BND had tapped the phones of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. A year later, a leak within the BND showed that Germany had been spying extensively on its European allies.

Yet in stark contrast to the wall-to-wall coverage of America's spying scandals, these revelations received little attention. Almost no major U.S. media company gave them any coverage.

In a way, the story is not surprising. You would have to be pretty naive to believe the German government's insistence that it had never spied on the U.S. But just the hypocrisy Germany has demonstrated over the last few years should at least make it newsworthy.

When you understand the disturbing history of Germany's intelligence agency, however, this story gets a lot darker. What exactly is this organization that just got caught spying on the United States?

A Nazi Organization

The story of the founding of the BND sounds like a fanciful spy novel—so outlandish it would be unbelievable if not for the fact that it has been thoroughly documented.

After World War II, America was desperate for intelligence on the Soviet Union. So they resurrected a Nazi spy agency.

They found the perfect partner for this effort in Maj. Gen. Reinhard Gehlen.

Gehlen commanded the Wehrmacht's Foreign Armies East military-intelligence unit from 1942 to 1945, a highly capable intelligence network in Eastern Europe and Russia. From this vantage point, Gehlen knew the war would end badly for Germany. So he prepared. He had his intelligence files printed on microfilm and stored in watertight containers, and he hid them in the Alps.

Gehlen made sure he surrendered to the Americans, and then swapped his treasure trove of intel in exchange for freedom for himself and his staff.

Then, America paid Gehlen to essentially resurrect his old organization, using many of his old command staff, toward the end of 1946.

"The Pentagon-Gehlen agreement in practice guaranteed the continuation of the all-important Abwehr division of the German General Staff," wrote T. H. Tetens in *The New Germany and the Old Nazis*. "Hundreds of German Army and SS officers were quietly released from internment camps and joined Gehlen's headquarters in the Spessart Mountains in central Germany."

Gehlen wasn't picky. Ex-Gestapo, ex-SS, war criminals, Nazis who had participated directly in the Holocaust—all were welcome. According to one estimate, 10 percent had worked for SS head Heinrich Himmler. The Americans, so worried about the Soviet threat, allowed this network to flourish.

Ten years later, Gehlen's spy agency was formally transferred to official West German control and became the BND. Gehlen remained the spymaster.

Unsurprisingly for an organization full of Nazis, the BND devoted resources to helping Nazis on the run. In 2011, documents leaked to *Bild* found that the organization had helped cover for the infamous Adolf Eichmann, one of the chief organizers of the Holocaust. It also recruited Klaus Barbie, the "Butcher of Lyon," as an agent in 1960, despite the fact that his war crimes were so extensive and so proven that he had been sentenced to death.

Gehlen was also aware of other organizations run by ex-Nazis. For example, in May 2014, papers released by the BND show that a group of ex-Nazis put together a secret army capable of fielding 40,000 men. The documents show that their leader—Albert Schnez, a colonel in Hitler's army—had meetings with Gehlen, who was assigned by German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to "look after and to monitor the group."

These are just some of the most high-profile examples. Germany's foreign intelligence agency was founded by Nazis, run by Nazis and helped cover for Nazis for the first couple of decades of its history.

But the full extent of the BND's Nazi history is lost forever. The BND destroyed the files on around 250 of its early officials. These included the files on those who had held "significant intelligence positions in the SS, the SD (the intelligence agency of the SS and the Nazi Party) or the Gestapo," according to an independent commission of historians. Some had been investigated for war crimes.

"There have already been several curious incidents involving the BND archives in the past," *Spiegel* wrote when the scandal was uncovered (Nov. 30, 2011). It detailed how it had asked for access to BND files relating to a former SS commander, only to find that those too had been destroyed.

When did this cover-up take place? The late 1940s? The '50s perhaps?

It happened in 2007.

Yes, as recently as 10 years ago, the BND was actively covering up its Nazi past.

Breaking Up Yugoslavia

The Cold War kept the BND busy. But as Soviet power began to wane, the group started to work harder on expanding German power.

The breakup of Yugoslavia was a seminal moment for Germany. Initially Britain, France and the U.S. all opposed it. But

Germany saw a brief window of opportunity to eliminate what could easily become a powerful Russian ally right in the heart of Europe. At the same time, it could clear its own path toward the Mediterranean.

This was the first time the newly reunified Germany really flexed its muscles. And right in the middle of this effort was the BND.

German Nazis weren't the only ones the BND protected. It also protected its wartime allies, the Croatian Ustashi.

The Ustashi massacred hundreds of thousands of Serbs and thousands of Jews. Their methods were often gruesome: Smashing heads with sledgehammers, removing organs one by one, and tearing a victim's limbs off were among their methods of execution. Famed Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal said, "Even the Germans were appalled by the crimes committed [in Croatia]."

The BND worked closely with ex-Ustashi members, and used them to support the Croatian independence movement from the 1960s onward. They supported Croatian attacks against Yugoslavian government personnel. By the 1980s, the BND almost completely controlled the Croatian intelligence services, according to Yugoslavian intelligence chief Antun Duhaček, himself a Croat.

This cooperation with Croats continued even after war broke out.

The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation reached a similar conclusion in its report on the role that intelligence services played in the conflict. It wrote, "The BND is said to have also cooperated closely with Croatian intelligence services, such as the Bureau for National Security (Ured za Nacionalnu Sigurnost), the intelligence service of the Croatian Army (OSHV), the intelligence service of the General Staff of the Croatian Army and the Security Information Service."

The institute wrote, "The Germans made equipment available" to some of these groups "and arranged training and education." It added that it is "noteworthy" that these same Croatian organizations worked against the United Nations mission in the region.

"nato intelligence flowed to the Croats via the [BND], much to the displeasure of nato members," it wrote. Despite this, America continued to cooperate closely with the BND. The Americans were "adopting an increasingly unfriendly attitude towards the British," who "still had a balanced view of the conflict," according to the Dutch study. Instead they relied on Germany.

Germany worked with other anti-Serbian forces, including Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The IRGC had deployed to the region in support of Bosnian Muslim forces. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that BND had sold the IRGC advanced German spy technology. German officials denied the story, but confirmed that German intelligence staff had met with then Iranian spy chief Ali Fallahian.

But the BND made much larger contributions to Croats and Bosnians than this.

According to investigative reporting by Germany's state-owned TV channel, ARD, the BND infiltrated the EU's monitoring missions and used them to smuggle in weapons and money.

"In one instance, Christoph von Bezold, head of the German EU monitors in Zagreb, Croatia, was allegedly actually a BND agent and on March 27, 1994, he shipped munitions across enemy lines to the Bosnian Muslim-controlled pocket of Bihać, Bosnia, in boxes supposedly containing powdered milk," wrote Britain's *Daily Telegraph*. "Apparently this was just one of many such shipments using EU monitors as cover" (April 20, 1997).

"In addition, Germany appears to be Croatia's largest arms supplier during the war, although this is in violation of German law prohibiting the shipments of arms to an active war zone and a violation of the UN arms embargo on Yugoslavia as well," it wrote. "Most of the Croatia military hardware comes from East German supplies rendered obsolete in Germany after East and West Germany merged. Germany even smuggled former East German MiG-21 fighters to Croatia."

The reporter on one German documentary said the evidence they had uncovered gave "a very good reason indeed" for the criminal prosecution of the leaders of the BND.

Cyrus R. Vance, the United Nations special mediator on the crisis, called the conflict "Genscher's war" because of the role that then German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher played in starting it. It was a war begun by Germany, and which the BND had prepared for and played a major role in fighting.

Ulrich Schiller, a veteran journalist for Germany's ARD TV news, as well as *Die Zeit*, concluded that Yugoslavia was destroyed by "the spirit of the old Nazi-infested Gehlen apparatus, the spirit of old German arms brotherhood with the Ustashi fascists."

The Modern BND

The fallout of those revelations earned some angry words and secret closed-door sessions in the German Parliament. But nothing much changed. Instead, the BND has gone on to become involved in a litany of scandals.

The BND spied on German journalists from 1992 to 2005; this news emerged in 2006. The BND followed journalists, paid their colleagues to spy on them, dove through their bins, and more in order to discover the sources of leaks to the press. A German parliamentary report concluded, “These measures were predominantly illegal.”

In the 1994 Plutonium Affair, the BND engineered the smuggling of plutonium on a Lufthansa flight to Munich. Agents ignored all security procedures and had a dangerous radioactive element used in nuclear bombs transported on a commercial flight because they wanted a dramatic headline in time for Bavarian and national elections. Having arranged the transport, the BND easily intercepted the plutonium in Munich, thus creating a splash in the media.

This was very convenient for Germany’s two right-wing Christian Union parties, which were campaigning on a “tough on crime” platform, emphasizing the risk posed by international nuclear trafficking. Sure enough, they won the election. One of their first acts was to expand the BND’s power by giving it a role in fighting organized crime for the first time in its history. The incident also helped Germany to convince Russia to work more closely with it on nuclear trafficking.

Once the truth came out, *Spiegel* accused the BND of “abetting serious crime, endangering human lives, lying to the public, and dangerously gambling with foreign policy” (March 1995).

In 1999, the BND began spying on foreign journalists. It surveilled at least 50 journalists, tapping their phones and intercepting their e-mails. This included journalists from the BBC, the *New York Times* and Reuters.

Reports have also been trickling in of murky connections between the BND and neo-Nazis. It is yet another unbelievable story, but here it is, in the words of Israel’s Ynetnews: “It’s April 6, 2006, at 5 o’clock in the afternoon. Halit Yozgat, a 21-year-old German citizen of Turkish descent, is sitting behind the counter in the small Internet café he recently opened in Kassel, Germany. He is waiting for his father to come and relieve him from work when two shots pierce his head, killing him instantly.

“A few seconds later, Andreas Temme, an undercover agent for the German Federal Intelligence Service, the BND, gets up from one of the computer stations positioned only several meters from where Yozgat is now lying dead. He places a few coins on the counter as payment for his time there and leaves. Next to the coins are three drops of blood.

“Later, Temme will testify that he did not hear the shots—fired by an unknown assailant with a Česká manufactured pistol with a silencer—and he did not see Yozgat’s body, either, which was sprawled behind the counter near the entrance” (April 24).

Yozgat was the ninth in a series of immigrants, mostly Turkish, gunned down in broad daylight. The police had blamed the shootings on Turkish gangs. Instead, it was the work of the National Socialist Underground (NSU), a neo-Nazi group.

The presence of a BND member—who somehow didn’t hear shots fired or notice a body sprawled on the floor—at the scene of one of the crimes isn’t the only thing that links these killings to the intelligence services. Yavuz Narin, a lawyer of Turkish decent, spent years exposing the connections between the NSU and the BND. Ynetnews wrote, “Narin has many more examples of either direct or indirect involvement by security agencies in the NSU’s activities.” He told Ynetnews, “The government, security agencies, the Interior Ministry and, unfortunately, even the chancellor’s office, are trying to prevent a full investigation on the matter.”

“The worrying question that arises is whether the German security agencies merely failed at doing their job, or did they actually turn a blind eye and intentionally enabled the NSU’s activities,” Ynetnews continued. “And if so, could neo-Nazis have infiltrated Germany’s spy agencies and actively encouraged the crimes? The authorities’ insistence on covering up information and stonewalling investigation on the matter only raise further suspicions.

“The involvement of security services with the NSU continues to rile up the German public, and is still under a heavy clout of secrecy.”

The BND also proved crucial in the NSA’s spying within Germany and Europe that provoked so much outrage when it was revealed in 2013. The two organizations worked together to spy on German targets and other European countries. The cooperation was so close that some experts believe the BND probably knew that the Americans were tapping Ms. Merkel’s phone.

But the BND also spied on allies of its own accord, not just on behalf of the NSA. Across the world, government departments, international organizations and even charities have become targets of BND surveillance. The spying on the White House is merely the latest in a series of revelations.

Somehow the BND has been caught doing all this without provoking anywhere near the outrage that greeted the NSA. But really the world should be even more concerned.

Why You Should Be Concerned

“From the very start of World War ii,” German leaders “have considered the possibility of losing this second round, as they did the first—and they have carefully, methodically planned in such eventuality, the third round,” wrote *Plain Truth* editor in chief Herbert W. Armstrong in 1945.

“The Nazis have now gone underground,” he wrote.

The BND is a clear example proving him right. There are many more.

The latest revelation shows that an organization that is the successor to the Wehrmacht's Foreign Armies East military-intelligence unit is spying on the United States.

Mr. Armstrong wrote this while Gehlen was secretly negotiating with the Pentagon and the CIA. How could he know what was happening in Germany? He had no secret sources leaking information to him.

Mr. Armstrong's forecasts were based on the Bible. Revelation 17 describes a European power that rises repeatedly, before being defeated and going underground. It is called “the beast that was, and is not, and yet is”—because of the way it disappears and lies dormant. When the beast—this European power—arises for the last time, it ascends “out of the bottomless pit.”

This is how Mr. Armstrong knew that Nazi leaders would go underground, hide and continue to work behind the scenes. And this is why you should be concerned about this organization that is spying on Americans, as well as the people of just about every nation. It is part of this power that your Bible says will rise up one last time.

Rather than being overlooked, the latest BND spying scandal should be of huge concern to everyone.

But the good news is that Revelation 17 also promises that this is the last resurrection of the beast power. A dangerous power is rising, but this is the last time it will ever threaten the peace of the world. ■

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