

Analysis of the file for putting three anarchists under surveillance



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Original text in German

Observationen gegen Anarchist*innen

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de.indymedia.org/node/168564

French translation

Analyse du dossier de “mise sous surveillance” de trois anarchistes

sansnom.noblogs.org/archives/10408

Translation and layout

No Trace Project

notrace.how/resources/#analysis-three-anarchists

Note of the French translation: In Germany, the State has to officially notify the people concerned that they have been “placed under surveillance” (i.e., in German, “put under observation” with wiretaps, tails, surveillance cameras in front of homes...) when no immediate follow-up has been given to the latter, at least if the investigators wish to be able to use the evidence collected in subsequent legal proceedings. This is what has just happened to three anarchists from Hamburg.

In November 2021, three anarchists from Hamburg were notified that they had been put under surveillance by the Hamburg State Security Services of the Regional Criminal Police Office for two different periods of time. These measures are a continuation of the so-called “park bench” procedure. It is also likely that the authorities consider these people as “threats”.

Apart from the two time periods—a few months in the winter of 2020/2021 and two weeks at the end of the summer of 2021—the notification also contained the file references and information about these measures. According to this paper, it involved “long-term surveillance” and “data processing by technical means”, and only “outside the home”.

Access to the documents in the file was then requested—this request was answered by police officer Rönck. She is already known for the so-called park bench proceedings as a member of the State Security Department of the Hamburg Regional Criminal Police Office, where, according to a heading, she is in charge of “Operational Threat Management”.

The measures were risk prevention measures in the sense of the Police Data Processing Act (PolDVG). The police theoretically (and therefore legally) have to inform the people concerned within one year after the end of these measures—unless a court allows the postponement of the notification after 12 months or the measures have led to an investigation procedure. Or when the police simply want to sweep the information under the rug—in this case they do not inform, and the information cannot (theoretically) be used officially. But you can't expect them to respect their own laws, which wouldn't be reassuring either.

We cannot trust the information contained in such notifications any more than we can trust the information we find in the court documents we have access to—especially since this is information that the cops ultimately give voluntarily and therefore only that which they are willing to give. It

must be assumed that neither the time and means nor the extent of the data collected (surveillance reports, etc.) are actually complete or correct. In one of the files we have, for example, there was not a single page of surveillance records—so it would be rather naive to assume that the cops simply dropped a judicially authorized measure. In our opinion, one should proceed in an equally cautious way with the documents obtained in this way.

We think that one could seriously question whether this kind of police work should really be read in its entirety. What do we expect from reading the results of such disgusting intrusions into our lives? What place do we want to give to information that the cops have assembled for us? What do we look at, what do we voluntarily leave out, in order to deny these things their intended “audience”?

Obviously, information can be gleaned from most of the files about how the authorities are proceeding against us and thus probably against others, and this knowledge is important to convey. At the same time, of course, they only pass on what they want to pass on. How then to deal with this big gap, because it can be very disgusting to read such texts about one's own life, which is their view of our life, and what it can do to us, but at the same time it is important to pass on the information that can be derived precisely from these collections?

In any case, these are moments stolen against the will of the individuals and interpreted by cops, and which in reality only exist between the people who have lived and shared them together.

In what follows, we want to try to give access to the information we have. Not only because we believe that this information can be useful—but also to experiment with a collective way of dealing with the turmoil of such attacks and intrusions.

Time and again we see in the files that the cops and intelligence services are essentially concerned with screening and cataloguing our relationships and endeavoring to construct potential threats from them.

The information about this can be seen as an attempt to intimidate us and eventually criminalize our relationships—it is another reason for us

to maintain and intensify dangerous friendships, and to spit in the face of domination.

The documents we have before us consist on the one hand of applications for “processing of surveillance data” (§20 PolDVG) and “processing of data through covert use of technical means” (§21 PolDVG) by officers of the Regional Criminal Police Office on behalf of Rönck, Stacke, Carstensen and Malick, and on the other hand of court orders issued by Judge Röckel, Judges Notmann and Hagge of the District Court. In this case the court authorized all measures requested by the cops without exception. Following a reform of the PolDVG in 2019, longer-term surveillance now requires a prior court order—which is obviously not an obstacle for the cops, the reasons given for the measures are quite obscure but more than sufficient for the court.

As the main reasons for the surveillance, specific dates, events and occasions stand out and crystallize, for which the cops seem to expect criminal acts from people like us. If in the 'park bench' case it was the anniversary of the G20 summit, in the papers we have in front of us it is occasions like the beginning of trials, evictions, the automobile industry summit in Munich (IAA), the fire in the cell of the French anarchist Boris—even December 13 is mentioned as a day with “irritating effect”.

Further on, they compile a whole mass of appendices referred to in the requests—in particular, previously known contents of investigation files from past proceedings, indictments, court decisions, but also intelligence findings based, for example, on the analysis of storage devices seized in the course of police investigations.

On the whole, as is common in such files, many things are redacted. Especially parts that do not refer to the people concerned or allusions to third parties. Naturally under the pretext of “data protection”—cynically after having intruded into the lives of all concerned without their knowledge and having snooped behind their backs.

As we have said, a large part of the work is tracing travel and relationships. In our case, it became clear that a so-called “sighting search” has been going on for some years now via the Schengen Information System (SIS II) and that other information, for example about events in other European countries, was also passed on to the German cops. In practice, such an

sighting search via SIS II often leads to cops abroad having to fill out an information sheet containing things like the purpose and duration of the trip, noting the accompanying people and the vehicles used, a procedure that affects many people and that we hear about regularly.

What is surprising is that we are quite sure that plane tickets we had booked were visible by the Federal Criminal Police Office, but they are not in the file. We don't know if this data doesn't automatically reach the regional criminal police office, if they didn't ask for them or if they simply didn't arrive in the files, we think that any of these are possible.

The surveillance reports then occupy a much smaller part of the file material. These are partly surveillance reports and partly video files. It is clear from the latter that cameras were installed in front of the homes of the persons concerned in order to be able to trace their comings and goings. In this case, it is clearly not a question of “live surveillance” with the aim of preventing crimes, but of scrutinizing daily life and surroundings. The cameras were most likely placed in vehicles; the angle of one of the photos suggests, for example, that the rear view camera of a parked vehicle was possibly converted to monitor the entrance area. The number of documented tailings in the city is unusually small and is limited to completely banal incidents. It must be assumed that there are gaps. Probably some of the surveillance was carried out by bicycle, but we could not glean more precise information from the report about the number of cops and vehicles etc. involved, only that pictures were taken on the way and probably with a high resolution camera.

The information we are given and especially the information we are not given is obviously open to a huge margin of interpretation. We strongly advise to handle all this with great caution. Speculations, suppositions, abrupt theses do more harm than good. The cops and other authorities watch us live and struggle—they observe us and collect data wherever they can, or where we let them. This is nothing new. The classification as a “threat” is not a legal category but a bottomless drawer for investigative services. The actions that are taken seem to remain the same. Neither in the requests nor in the files does this concept come up once.

We also propose to develop a capacity for action against such attacks and intrusions—we would much rather deal with this kind of measures

offensively and collectively than with the alternative of dealing with all this mess ourselves. It is important that we inform each other about insights into the procedures of the investigative services—even if this information is incomplete and to be taken with caution. It's important that we don't understand and confront repression as an individual problem—it's not just an attack on particular people characterized by certain fanciful conceptions of cops, but on all those who cultivate rebellious relationships and projects. And it's important that repression doesn't make us lose our heads, that we develop a conscious and clear way to do something about it. We don't want to be defined by the repression against us—this also means that we don't want to be forced into the role of supposed experts. And one way to do this is precisely that other comrades in struggle who are facing repression also share their experiences and processes, and that we develop a collective way of dealing with this kind of thing.

Just as we will not be intimidated, we also do not want to become numb and hardened in the face of repression. Let's continue to share, listen to each other and be there for each other. We think it is important to have a clear position: we consider the surveillance of our lives and those of our comrades, friends, family, neighbors... as attacks! It is clear to us that this is a consequence of the prevailing conditions and our struggles against them. And yet they remain continuous transgressions and intrusions into our lives that scare us and should make us reflect on our ideas and decisions. Their aim is to put a stop to social and revolutionary struggles. They will not succeed!

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No Trace Project / No trace, no case. A collection of tools to help anarchists and other rebels **understand** the capabilities of their enemies, **undermine** surveillance efforts, and ultimately **act** without getting caught.

Depending on your context, possession of certain documents may be criminalized or attract unwanted attention. Be careful about what zines you print and where you store them.