

*[Please note that all the footnotes in this document have been added by the editor – none of them appeared in the original document, which was translated by Arm the Spirit]*

## **The Treason of Klaus Steinmetz**

**Letter From Birgit Hogefeld, RAF Prisoner  
July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1993**

This interview was translated by Arm the Spirit; it also appears on the Arm the Spirit website at: <http://www.etext.org/Politics/Arm.The.Spirit/Guerrilla/Europe/Red.Army.Fraction/steinmetz.spy>

The reality is by now widely known: Klaus Steinmetz is a police informant, and he brought the secret service on our track, thus making the action of killer-troops in Bad Kleinen possible<sup>1</sup>. Without his services as an informant, Wolfgang would still be alive today, and we would still be free.

Along with the decision of the RAF, the prisoners, and sectors of the revolutionary resistance movement at the end of the 1980s to make political openings to all progressive elements in the society came a danger which we were all well aware of. I can remember several discussions in all sorts of groups, during which we talked about the fact that building up a newer and broader movement to fight for changes in the inhumane living conditions, both here and across the globe, would, at the same time, offer new possibilities for the insertion of informants and other spies, and, of course, you can't, on the one hand, say that you want to be open to various people and groups in order to look and see how we together can build a "counter-power from below", and then, on the other hand, treat people whom you are meeting for the first time with mistrust. Nevertheless, the end result of these discussions was always the same, namely that it should be possible, through the closeness, intensity, and exactness of a relationship among those who find themselves in this struggle, to get to know other people, despite all of their complexities and contradictions, and to thereby get some understanding of whether they can be afforded absolute trust.

But over these last few weeks, despite the bitter experience of Klaus Steinmetz, who caused Wolfgang's murder and my arrest, I still believe that trust between people is possible: It exists everywhere where people desire a common life.

---

<sup>1</sup> RAF members Birgit Hogefeld and Wolfgang Grams had been lured to Bad Kleinen by a police informant – Klaus Steinmetz – one June 27th 1993. While Steinmetz and the two RAF members sat talking at the train station, 54 officers deployed around the building to close in as the three departed. Grams managed to get away, but was quickly captured. According to two witnesses the cops held Grams on the ground and shot him to death at point-blank range. Said Joanna Baron, a sales clerk at a station food stand: "Two policemen walked up to Grams, who was lying motionless. One bent over and shot him several times from close up. Then the second officer shot at Grams, but more at his stomach and legs. He shot several times." The subsequent medical examination supported eyewitness accounts : it showed that the shot that caused the fatal wound to Grams head was fired from close range.

What went wrong with our ties to Klaus Steinmetz while we were in illegality?  
Where do the uncertainties and mistakes lie which led to such a poor estimation of him?

The feeling was, after the contact with Klaus Steinmetz had taken place, that comrades (to whom I still feel close ties to today) would "put their hands in the fire" for him, and they felt sure that he could be trusted.

I, of course, have several questions which I would like to ask these comrades, but most of them are rather self-evident.

I met with Klaus Steinmetz on Thursday (June 24) in Bad Kleinen, afterwards we traveled together to Wismar to find some place to spend the night. The media reported that I had often spoken to Klaus Steinmetz on the telephone on the days prior to this, and even called him at home, in order to talk about Weiterstadt<sup>2</sup> - that is complete nonsense. We had met with Klaus Steinmetz in April and had arranged the meeting in Bad Kleinen at that time. On Thursday, the mood between us was rather tense from the start. Klaus Steinmetz was apparently in the ex-GDR<sup>3</sup> for the first time, and he kept objecting to everything. He measured everything according to West German standards, and even the luggage carriers at the train station were too careless for his liking. He was rather arrogant to most of the people we dealt with. I asked him why he was being like that, glaring at everything in the way that he was, and why he wasn't at all interested in what was going on here or what the people were like. He then, of course, said that everything did interest him. I then began telling him how, for example, in 1990/91, I had wandered around pretty much aimlessly with another person through the ex-GDR, because at that time it was still quite possible to have a conversation with various types of people. I found it very exciting and interesting at the time, because most people were still relatively isolated, so they talked a lot about their situation and wanted to hear about life in the West. Today, you don't come across such openness very often, usually only with rather elderly people. But my conversation with Klaus Steinmetz didn't go much further, because I stopped it when I noticed that he was generally indifferent to what I was saying and thinking.

During previous meetings with him, we always were left with the feeling that he sought to avoid content discussions, and that he was happy when external situations made political conversations impossible. On Friday, I told him about our impression of him, and made mention of a common discussion we had had about the mistakes of the KPD<sup>4</sup> during the 1920s, during which we had taken rather opposing positions - he seemed not to remember anything. I was totally confused. That Friday, every discussion was initiated by me, and he often told me that other comrades were hindering the discussions which he felt were most important. But he had never started such a discussion with me, nor had he taken up any of my thoughts.

---

<sup>2</sup> In March 1993 the RAF bombed the new high-tech prison in Weiterstadt; this action was meant to prevent this prison from coming on line.

<sup>3</sup> German Democratic Republic: East Germany.

<sup>4</sup> KPD: German Communist Party.

After a day and a half, I had a very distant feeling about Klaus Steinmetz, and there was another reason for this.

That Thursday, Kurdish comrades had carried out occupations in several European countries in order to call for a halt to the escalating war against their people<sup>5</sup>. Klaus Steinmetz's reaction to these events was exactly those of the right-wing newspapers and the commentators on Bayern radio: pointless kamikaze actions, they are alienating all their sympathetic followers, now they will be banned and deported - I was totally furious, because his whole attitude was distant and lacked any trace of solidarity. Also, he had once again proven to me that he had absolutely no understanding of the political situation in which we all today are moving and must launch initiatives in. He had no understanding of the fact that the Kurdish comrades had few alternatives other than such occupations in order to gain broad publicity to exert political pressure against the genocide they are facing. I thought it was good and correct that they had decided upon these occupations instead of a military escalation, and they all gave a lot for this: their freedom.

On Friday evening, I decided that I couldn't go on with Klaus Steinmetz in this manner, I kept starting discussions with him and continually got the feeling that they did not interest or concern him. The result of this was that we hardly spoke to each other for all of Saturday.

Now, of course, I have a question for those comrades, especially those in Wiesbaden who knew him for a long time, namely whether they had had completely different experiences with Klaus Steinmetz than those I have sketched out here.

I'm sure that the meeting with us in Bad Kleinen was also not a normal experience for him, for surely he knew throughout that whole time that he was serving up Wolfgang and me to a bunch of murderers, so, what was that like for him? On what did you all<sup>6</sup> base your trust, when you wrote of him in your information sheet of July 7 that people need to be careful about making a so-called denunciation?

Is his whole personal history even true? His parents' farm in Pfalz? His father's suicide? When did his service as an informant begin - did it start during his time in Kaiserslautern? Did the threat of prison time for burglary pressure him into becoming an informant - and did this lead to the change in his sentence? Or did he just want the money?

I think that you all definitely need to openly assess and publicize the mistakes which led to Klaus Steinmetz, so that other police informants who are able to get themselves

---

<sup>5</sup> On June 24/93, Kurdish militants in several European countries carried out co-ordinated actions against Turkish interests including attacks on banks, travel agencies and other businesses as well as occupations and hostage-takings at consulates and embassies. In Germany alone there were actions in 16 different cities including Bremen, Berlin, Hanover, Frankfurt and Köln.

<sup>6</sup> The Wiesbaden Committee.

into the movement - and I assume there are more - can never again cause such painful experiences.

After that Sunday in Bad Kleinen, when the thought first came to me that Klaus Steinmetz had betrayed us, I could think of nothing about him which might rule out treason - that, of course, is different for other people that I know, and especially for those that I know better. Against the notion that Klaus Steinmetz had betrayed us, the first thing I reflected on was that there seemed to me to be no reason why the police, from a tactical point of view, would have chosen that time and place to make their move - but I must have overestimated them. It must have been that the BKA, the BAW, etc.<sup>7</sup> had noticed with great disappointment that I came to Thursday's meeting alone, something not at all the norm. So I guess that Klaus Steinmetz informed them on Thursday or Friday that Wolfgang would be coming on Sunday; if my arrest had been planned for an earlier time (Friday or Saturday), then they must have pushed back the date because of this.

The series of events on Sunday before Wolfgang's murder and my arrest was as follows: The three of us were in the bar at the train station (Wolfgang and myself and Klaus Steinmetz), and the three of us all left this bar at 3:15pm and walked beside one another and went down the steps into the underpass tunnel. I was on the left; I can't remember who was in the middle and who was on the right. When we came into the underpass tunnel and turned to the right, the cops jumped on me right away - I have said this before. Klaus Steinmetz was also "arrested" at about the same time (just seconds later) a few meters further on. He was lying in the same position I was, flat on the ground, behind him was guy holding a pistol, aimed at Klaus Steinmetz. I saw him, about 15 meters ahead of me, for the whole time up until a black hood was placed over my head.

I think it was bold of the state security agencies to construct this lie in order to get him back into his old position as an informant.

I was horrified by the reaction of the people in the Wiesbaden Committee with regards to his letter. You all must not have noticed that you were in the process of repeating the same mistakes which had allowed a police informant to betray us in the first place. How, after all that had happened, could you all have questioned whether Klaus Steinmetz was a friend and comrade or a spy and a tool of murderers, by asking him to "concretely explain how he had managed to escape from the scene"? (That's what I read in the newspaper.) And if he had been able to "explain" it all, and I hadn't told you anything to the contrary - what then?

It was a big event, and the media repeated it often: "The first police informant to infiltrate the commando structure of the RAF", "Informant was involved in the Weiterstadt attack", and so on - the security apparatus knows that these are lies. By stating that Klaus Steinmetz was involved in the attack on the prison, the state, once again, was doing nothing other than preparing to criminalize comrades who live above

---

<sup>7</sup> The BKA and BAW are German state security agencies.

ground. For years, communiqués have been issued which have stated how the RAF is organized and which have refuted these criminalizing lies. But the BAW keeps trying.

I lived in the underground for quite some time, and I can say that someone like Klaus Steinmetz, with whom I had met, could never be inserted into those living structures. There's no point in idealizing those relationships which I grew to know and lived with during that time - some relationships were very close and intense, with other comrades I did not experience such closeness and warmth - it's incredibly diverse, how I met many people in their living conditions. But still, there are always moments when you know everything about everyone, and by that I mean the foundations of their lives, dreams, fears, and hopes.

From this comes a particular unity between all those in this special living condition, namely that everyone has made the decision to protect everyone else no matter what the circumstances may be, even if you have to pay with your own life. In relation to this, there exists an unbounded, two-sided trust; you place your life into the hands of other comrades without worrying for a second, and you are sure that everything is built up securely there. It always meant a lot to me to know and feel this.

Now, briefly, my own biography: Those things which really shook me years ago and affected me and influenced the path of my life were the report by a Vietnamese prisoner about torture in the Poulo Condor prison, and also the final notes of the dying Siegfried Hausner. (Siegfried was seriously wounded and taken to Stammheim, he wanted to speak to a lawyer, and they must have kept pressing him to write down the names and addresses of lawyers. He wrote these several times, each time his handwriting became more shaky - blurred - Siegfried must have died shortly thereafter.)

I was glad that Wolfgang never regained consciousness after being shot in the head, that way they were not able to torment him anymore.

Irmgard Moeller has been in jail for 22 years; Ali Jansen isn't being released, despite having a serious case of asthma; the new wave of trials against comrades will cement people into prisons for the rest of their lives; I myself am in total isolation.

I have always seen in this state's inhumane and brutal treatment of political prisoners the particular sharpness of its general degradation and contempt directed against people here, thus I was able early on to grasp and comprehend the character of this system and its unending desire to destroy all that stands in opposition to it.

The death of Holger Meins (I was 17 years old at the time) had a profound effect on my life and helped decide its direction, just like Wolfgang's death today and the circumstances of his death will play a role later in life for some young people.

"With many voices, we wage the same hard and merciless struggle, one with victims, and this struggle has not ended. The destruction of Nazism and its roots is our solution. The building of a new world of peace and freedom is our goal."

That's the beginning of an oath written by people in the concentration camp at Buchenwald - I have always seen my life and our struggle in light of this tradition.

**Birgit Hogefeld, printed in taz, 22.7.93**  
*Angehörigen Info #124*