Radical Groups' Social Pressure Towards Defectors: The Case of Right-Wing Extremist Groups

by Daniel Koehler

Abstract

Research on deradicalization and disengagement from terrorist groups has produced insights into factors motivating to turn to violent milieus as well as reasons for turning away from them. Less exploration has focused on the group dynamics involved when individuals leave the group. In particular, the social pressure component, including the use of retaliatory violence, has not been adequately addressed. Testing Levine and Moreland's theoretic model of group reaction to disloyalty, this article illustrates how extremist groups determine the type of social pressure, using five problem-centred interviews with former German neo-Nazis, as well as 12 cases of violent social pressure on defectors in Germany and the United States. The main argument of this article is that a group's internal negotiation process regarding the pressure is typically segmented into two phases: one emotionally-based, immediately after the defection and a second, more rational and strategic response phase later on. Important factors determining the group's reaction are: the in-group status of the defector, group specific ideology, in-group future prospects and strategies, group structure, prevention of further defection, in-group behavioural learning processes, the defection process itself, and pressure on the group from the government.

Keywords: *Germany; right-wing extremism; deradicalization; defection; disloyalty; social pressure*

Introduction

In November 2011, German police discovered that a right-wing extremist terrorist cell which called itself the "National Socialist Underground (NSU)," had killed at least 10 people, was responsible for two bombings, and had committed more than a dozen bank robberies over a period of more than 14 years.[1] The trial against the only surviving member of the cell, Beate Zschäpe, and several alleged supporters started in May 2013 and included witness statements of former right-wing activists. In one statement, a defendant told the court that during his time in the movement "deviant" behaviour, such as eating non-German food, was heavily punished. In his case he had to do push ups while being whipped[2]. This severe form of social pressure only scratches the surface of what might happen to group members who consider leaving the group and its ideology behind. In fact, numerous cases of murdering defectors are publicly known.

Although violent reactions and social pressure by right-wing groups towards potential and successful defectors are well-known within deradicalization research, no systematic study about the mechanisms and factors determining the types of social pressure inflicted by these groups exists at present. Most of the literature on this issue focuses on the micro-social level and has established a number of important individual motivations for joining and leaving such groups. A significant gap, however, can be found at the meso-social level, as it is almost unknown which mechanisms and determining factors lead to specific forms of social pressure which aim to either prevent individual defection or retaliate against those former group members who have left the group. The present study therefore addresses the question: what are the mechanisms and determining factors for social pressure to be directed at potential and successful defectors within extreme right-wing groups? In addition, this article looks at the types of pressure typically used and the benefit envisioned by the group.

Methods and Sources

This article is based on five problem-centred interviews[3] with former members from the German right-wing extremist scene. These interviews focused on two biographical phases–active time and post-defection–asking about the respondents' experiences with social pressure when the group was confronted with defections during their active involvement, and how the group they belonged to reacted after the departure of those interviewed. The interviews applied a semi-structured questionnaire. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and qualitatively analysed, using MAXQDA software in several parallel coding and re-coding phases. The interviews were conducted with the full consent of the respondents, within a safe environment (e.g. the researcher's office or a place of choice selected by the interviewee), and in full accordance with the APA ethical standards. Quotes have been translated into English by the author. The sample consisted of four male and one female interviewees. The respondents age ranged from 23 to 37 years (average being 32.6), reflecting the fact that all of the former extremists had relatively long careers in the German neo-Nazi movement and left after occupying high ranking positions. In order to protect the interviewees' identities all have been given alias names when quoted.

In addition, twelve cases of publicly known violent retaliations executed by extreme right-wing groups in Germany and the United States were analyzed, using information that was in the public domain (press reports, court documents, and published interviews with perpetrators or victims). A list of these cases is provided in the Annex. These two countries (USA and GFR)) were chosen because they provide a high number of well-documented incidents.

Literature Review

Deradicalization Research

Research about deradicalization and disengagement processes from radical social movements and terrorist groups has produced very important insights into individual motivations to join and leave these milieus. So called 'push' and 'pull' factors have been identified, which together determine individual decisions to leave extremist groups. 'Push' factors include, but are not limited to, sanctions by the government, loss of faith in the group's cause, disillusionment, lack of faith, burnout, decline in personal status, as well as conflicts within the group or discontent with the group's strategy[4]. 'Pull' factors typically consist of individual efforts to return to a "normal" life, changes in family situations, new goals for future developments, getting older, and finding new friends or develop intimate relationships[5]. Leaving a radical or terrorist group is not a irreversible but a highly complex process. It involves many risks for the potential defector, including inhibiting factors such as positive aspects of life within the group, lack of future perspectives outside the group, losing protection against enemies as well as potential judicial sanctions[6]. Group sanctions are among the strongest reasons for some defectors to abstain from leaving, although some groups appear not to react with violence against defectors. Tore Bjørgo[7] has noted that, should former members leave middle- or upper cadre levels in the group's hierarchy and should they provide information to extreme left-wing groups, police or media, group reactions my include disappointment, observation, death threats, physical attacks, harassment, verbal threats and expression of contempt, but only rarely killings. This has also been reported by Horgan[8] and Aho regarding contact with the media [9].

In other cases, reports about special arrangements between defectors and the group have surfaced, e.g. the practice of 'separation contracts' by al-Qaeda, as described by John Horgan[10], vacation breaks for IRA members[11] or severe death threats for potential defectors in case of the Ulster Defence Forces (UDA)

[12]. Other groups have relied on blackmailing potential and successful defectors, either by making public information about crimes committed by the defector in the past or by threatening to disclose signed vows of loyalty to the ideology from the defectors[13].

Although the literature on deradicalization and disengagement does not provide much in terms of evidence to substantiate such observations, scholars have identified at least two categories of group reactions which are strongly dependent on the defector's former status, time spent within the group and his/her post-defection behaviour regarding groups hostile to the former one [14]: (i) a 'quiet' exit without any sanction or pressure and, (ii) some form of verbal and/or physical aggression. If radical groups resort to violence, it is usually very severe. Cases of defectors being crucified by their former group, arson attacks against their homes, home invasions, and targeted robberies have been described in interview studies with former extremists [15]. As a very common first reaction, the complete social and physical banishment of the defector was described[16].

In addition, studies of deradicalization programs in a prison context have shown that sometimes a competition between radical groups over the membership of potential defectors can lead to more positive forms of social pressure (i.e. incentives) to prevent members from leaving, for example in Israeli prisons[17].

Terrorism Studies

In other related academic fields, such as terrorism studies or social psychology, potential violent reactions of groups confronted with defections are generally known, but rarely qualified or analysed as such. Researching the community context of terrorism for example, Bates[18] briefly touches on the issue by stating that terrorists groups, which are "normative coercive,"[19] rely on "sustaining loyalty" as a "significant priority" and develop "elaborate strategies to preserve morale and membership" including "more formal controls"[20]. When confronted with individual defection, these groups might even use deadly violence as the highest level of social pressure:

> Terror or enforcing squads are used to retaliate against defectors. (...) While a great loss of status seldom results from a single act, serious or persistent deviations may lead to loss of status, one's reputation as a trusted member, or even one's life within the terrorist movement.[21].

Social Psychology

Examining other areas of social psychology that discuss social processes on the meso-social level, typically either *internal* group dynamics[22] or group formation related topics[23] are extensively discussed and analysed. However, the specific mechanisms behind the application of social pressure on the defector, including processes of decision making and factors determining the potential options and behaviour when confronted with individual defection and disloyalty, have not received any attention from social psychologists or related academic fields. The only known exception is the model by Levine and Moreland[24], which lays out a theoretical framework of potential group reactions when confronted with individual disloyalty (in non-radical contexts). This present article attempts to empirically test Levine and Moreland's theoretical concept in the area of radical social movements (i.e. the extreme right) using the interviews and case studies to validate and further develop their model.

On the one hand, Levine and Moreland collect known possible group reactions in cases of disloyalty: "the punishments associated with disloyalty are often quite negative, including public condemnation, imprisonment, and death"[25]. According to Levine and Moreland the reasons for these negative sanctions are rooted within the competition between groups and the subsequent loss or gain of advantage through

defectors[26]. In general, the authors distinguish four types of defectors: "reliable defector (current and future orientation toward the group positive), unreliable defector (current positive, future likely negative), unreliable spies (current negative, future positive), reliable spies (current negative, future negative)"[27]. This typology reflects the previously explained role of defectors' behaviour against the former group (e.g. giving information to police, to left-wing groups, or to the media) in the field of right-wing extremism. Levine and Moreland name the defector's status within the group, his/her motivation to leave, time spent in the group, knowledge about the group, personal relationships within the group, and the group's general character (groups under high "pressure" are likely to react more harshly when confronted with disloyalty) as the most important factors determining the specific course of action undertaken by the group[28].

Accordingly, Levine and Moreland's model predicts that groups facing strong competition will react harshly and negatively towards those defectors whom they perceive to create a disadvantage for the group as well as positively attempting to win back those who have not totally broken with the group's collective identity or narrative. This is supported by literature on organizational turnover, which might have serious negative impacts on organizations in terms of operational costs and demoralization of organizational membership[29]. Thus, sanctions against defection or positive rewards to avoid it can be expected.

Summary

In summation, the literature on deradicalization and disengagement processes has not addressed the question of how radical groups form defection-inhibiting social pressure. Nevertheless, this literature suggests several types of social pressure (i.e. violence, threats, blackmailing, condemnation and slander) They are typically determined (most importantly) by the length of time spent in the group and the behaviour towards it after the defection (i.e. information given to the police, media, anti-racists). However, these claims have yet to be validated by empirical studies focusing on this aspect.

Findings

Types of Defectors

One of the first observations in the literature refers to the fact that groups appear to differentiate between various types of defectors, based on their expected future behaviour regarding the group. Levine and Moreland's model predicts negative group sanctions for at least two types: current negative/future positive and current positive/future negative. Translated to the radical social movements, this classification would relate to the question of individual motivation to defect, i.e. the degree to which the group's ideology is questioned or whether more personal reasons affected the decision. In addition the future behaviour towards the group was stated by Levine and Moreland as critical. This was strongly supported by most of the interviewees. Interviewee 'John' instantly could identify three types of defectors requiring different reactions from the group. He differentiated between defectors who merely 'retire' without questioning the group's ideology (type A, called "dropouts"), persons who leave the group *and* ideology behind but do not speak out against the former group (type B "renegades"), and those who leave behind both the group and its ideology and become publically active against the former group (type C "traitors"). Two points were central for this group-internal classification: the remaining degree of adherence to the ideology and the level of counter-activism against the former group.

Future Behaviour towards Group

The element of 'betrayal' in the form of passing on information towards police, anti-fascists or the press was seen as one the most important criteria to assign the above mentioned categories, which also directly supports Levine and Moreland's model. The main logic behind this process was the fear of incriminating knowledge ending up with enemies of the group. In one case a very brutal reaction followed after a short period of shock within the group:

> *"This was indeed a very extreme group reaction, because he did conspire with the political enemy. How it would have been, if he wouldn't have been seen there I can't say of course. But back then I found this very hard. Because he was a very close friend and one never expected that he would defect to the political enemy. It was like being paralysed with shock in the first moment; no one from the group did expect that he would do something like that." (Transcript "Ted")*

'Ted' continued to describe how he and the group felt deeply betrayed by this defector, a feeling mostly fuelled by panic and fear of concrete information possibly revealed by the defector. 'Ted' himself left the movement quietly, which resulted in an almost complete absence of any reaction by the group, except for a few half-hearted attempts to contact him. 'Ted' explained this lack of backlash with the fact that the group did not know that he gave information to outsiders. It is especially noteworthy that 'Ted' describes that his former group regularly accepted also other defections, without much disturbance or reaction at all. This however was only the case with 'type A' defectors. Others were declared open targets.

Several of the case studies support this dynamic of right-wing groups resorting to violence *after* the defector had committed an 'act of treason'. In 1984, for example, eight German right-wing extremists held 'court' and sentenced a former leading member of their 'combat group' to severe punishment due to treason. The group raided the victim's home at night, read an indictment to him, and severely assaulted him. The victim was also water boarded and threatened with an weapon pointing at his head which turned out to be unloaded. After another round of beatings, the person was left in a forest to die, but luckily survived.[30] Another case happened on February 3rd, 1987. It led to the murder of the 17 year old German Gerd-Roger Bornemann by his former comrades after he had made witness statements to the police.[31] In yet another case, in March 1996 the 26 year old former German neo-Nazi Martin Kemming was shot and killed by a former comrade[32].

Sometimes even the attempt to leave the group is seen as sufficient to use violence. James A. Aho [33] reported that in 1988 two persons in his sample were physically attacked and massively threatened once their decision to leave the right-wing milieu became known. In several other cases, the act of defection itself was the only reason for the violent reaction, indicating that, as postulated by Levine and Moreland, the group's general character by itself plays a very important role. One female defector who left a skinhead group did not recall any differentiation regarding type of defectors, as her former group routinely employing violence in reaction to defection. When asked how she saw defectors during her active time 'Maria' replied: "They were traitors, they were subhuman people, and they were free to be shot." In this case the act of defection was automatically equated with treason. From this it would appear that some groups simply could not muster the necessary reflective and intellectual skills to distinguish between different types of defectors and different forms of social pressure.

Forms of Social Pressure

Previous studies as well as Levine and Moreland's model suggest that groups use a variety of forms of social pressure ranging from public condemnation, monetary fines, verbal abuse, ostracism all the way to torture to death.[34] In regard to right-wing groups, it was suggested that if the groups react at all, it would typical result in threats, verbal abuse, blackmailing, slander but rarely lead to lethal violence.[35] However, the interview sample and the case studies (see Annex) suggest that (severe) forms of violence are much more common than suggested by the Levine and Moreland's model as well as other authors. One risk is that groups might not take the time or have the skills to differentiate between various types of defectors. It could also be that the group was simply not willing to take the risk, and as a consequence almost all interviewees reported immediate resort to violence. 'Maria's' group deployed a very specific method to deal with defections. In this case, the group generally came together and formed something the interviewee called "Skinhead Control Commandos", a small group of selected executors for the punishment, which consisted of arson attacks and heavy beatings. Like a task force, this 'commando' met prior to the attack and planned the form of retaliation: "Well we sat together and then it started: We drive there. What do we do, what do we take with us? A baseball bat, Molotov cocktails, brass knuckles, self-made things and so forth." (Transcript "Maria")

This form of direct retaliatory violence was, however, an exception rather than the rule. Typically the groups tried to find an appropriate strategy to deal with the situation; rarely did it resorted to long-lasting strategic violence. One example of this would be the case of the former high ranking German neo-Nazi leader Ingo Hasselbach. He received a fully functional mail-bomb in 1993, only good luck prevented it from exploding [36].

Group Reaction Differentiation According to Defector Type

Interviewee "John" described how his group deployed different form of reactions depending on the defector type, thereby confirming Levine and Moreland's claim of group reaction differentiation according to defector types. 'Type A' defections usually caused great disappointment and feelings of betrayal because friendship, according to John, could never be understood alone without the political cause. However, other than distancing and the expression of disappointment, the group did not attempt to do anything else. 'Type B' defectors were usually seen as blinded through other social forces (e.g. family) or interests. Sometimes the group first responded positively by trying to win the former member back.

'Type C' defectors received the harshest group treatment. Verbal intimidation, physical violence and arson attacks on the defector's home were variations of response. In this case, it was important for the group to add specific information about the punishment's origin:

> "The other option would have been, and that was planned (…) to visit him at his residence and afflict physical violence upon him. This was to be done in specific combined with a clear message, so not only physical violence, which indeed has a symbolic value, but we wanted to give a name to the whole thing. He had to know where this is coming from. Also for the outside, for others who might decide to leave, we wanted to set an example." (Transcript "John")

In all cases, the group was very careful to make in advance a detailed 'cost-benefit' analysis, so as to balance the potential negative reactions and expected beneficial effects. Another interviewee reported that his former group systematically kept defectors under surveillance and interrogated them as soon as a specific 'hostile' behaviour was noted. In several cases, group members attempted to break in the defectors' homes, drag the persons out and punish them, because they had "spoken with the political enemy".

"Peter", another interviewee who left a well-structured neo-Nazi organization, described how his former group planned "campaigns" against defectors, and how he actively participated in two of those campaigns against former members while he was an active neo-Nazi. He threatened them via phone calls and helped to create something he called "scenarios of intimidation". He also took part in several group meetings that discussed revenge operations against defectors. One operation against a defector, who allegedly had provided information to the police, even targeted the defector's mother – suggesting that she be murdered. Peter described how leading group members spurred others against the defectors, prodding lower ranking members of the group to execute the punishment more or less on their own.

Stirring up other members of the right-wing movement beyond those in one's own group to act against the defector was reported in all cases and included tactics ranging from ostracism to slander campaigns. In such cases, names, addresses and slanderous allegations were typically published online. All former extremists interviewed reported online campaigns against them. Typically these campaigns aimed to "prove" that the former member was corrupt, a paedophile, mentally unstable, a drug addict, police informant, weak and worthless.

Another tactic is to turn up at any public place the defector might be found and make a 'show of force'. Frequent phone calls, letters, and specifically targeted propaganda (i.e. stickers and flyers left only in the mailbox of the defector) aimed to create 'scenarios of intimidation', which, at times could have fatal consequences. In 1980, for example, a former US-American neo-Nazi died of a heart attack after a series of death threats and bomb and arson attacks on his home[37]. In 'Maria's' case, such intimidation campaigns came in waves–the result of a revived interest triggered by certain events that brought her back into the group's memory.

How Groups Arrive at a Strategy

In all cases of the sample, the former groups had some sort of mechanism to determine the course of action and selected the form of social pressure to be applied – something going beyond the options contained in the Levine and Moreland's model. This ranged from very formal meetings, called 'courts', where highly strategic discussions took place in an attempt to assess the cost-benefit ratio of any damage control tactic. Many groups feared that violent retaliation could create "blowback" for the group and tried to develop long-term forms of social pressure, e.g. in the form of online defamation campaigns. As stated by one interviewee, the actual situation of the group and its level of information regarding the case under consideration were most important factors influencing the selected course of action. Seeking revenge for treason and for the disclosure of group secrets, were described by all respondents as main drivers behind exercising pressure on defectors. Many interviewees described a first phase of emotional shock caused by the defection, followed by a subsequent phase of more rational planning. 'John' described how every defection from the movement caused a general éclat. News about recent defections travels fast and often result in pressure from other extremist groups to offer an explanation how this could be allowed to happen in the first place. Defections appear to be highly embarrassing for each group, and influences their standing negatively within the larger movement, promoting the notion that they are suffering from internal divisions and lack of resolution.

This supports Levine and Moreland's theory the inter-group competition is the main reason for social pressure in the event of disloyalty. It is seen as a potential threat within the right-wing movement when defections could lead to the collapse of smaller groups. Rarely, however, are defections seen as a form of purification. All interviewees reported that defections had the long-term effect of treating newcomers with

a higher degree of suspicion which led to more aggressive demands that they quick integrate into the group and obey its collective norms.

Discussion of Findings and Future Directions for Research

Looking at these findings, previous research as well as Levine and Moreland's model, many of the suggested forms of social pressure have been confirmed by the interviews and by case studies. Verbal threats, ostracism campaigns and (albeit to a higher degree than postulated in the literature) violence were the most common forms of social pressure. As suspected by Levine and Moreland, (internal) group competition is one major driving force behind some of these actions. In addition, there is the fear of incriminating information being passed on to the group's enemies. Although right-wing groups appear to distinguish between various types of defections, the differentiation is not as detailed and complex as Levine and Moreland assumed. In general, such groups distinguish mainly on the basis of an assessment whether or not the defector abandons the group's ideology or not, and whether his or her future behaviour might involve cooperating with the group's enemies. Several groups did not want to take any risk and resorted directly to the use of violence as punishment, seeing the defection as equal to betraying the group's ideology, which, in this author's view, is a noteworthy and important finding since the role of commitment to the ideology as a factor determining the group reaction has not been mentioned at all in previous research. So far only doubts about the group's ideology have been identified as cause for individual disengagement.[38] Several major factors determining violent forms of social pressure suggested in the existing literature and by Levine and Moreland have, on the other hand, been strongly confirmed – in particular the importance of the length of time spent in the group, the status of the defector, his or her possession of incriminating information, and the role of motivation behind the decision to leave the group. In addition, positive attempts to win back defectors—one of our findings— have only rarely been reported in the existing literature..

Group Decision Making Processes

As for the processes and mechanisms behind the group's decision to employ certain forms of social pressure, this study has produced some unique and novel insights. First, group reaction to defection influenced as much by group-related factors as by defector-related factors–something not foreseen by Levine and Moreland. Relevant factors are the group-specific ideology (especially in regard to the status of treason etc.), group affinity to violence, in-group future prospects, group structure and hierarchy (especially in regard to decision-making and strategic reflection about possible consequences), the danger of further defections, pressure on the group by the government, relative status of the group within the larger movement as well as the overall movement's political position, and, finally the role of in-group behavioural learning processes. Furthermore, when confronted with defections, right-wing groups typically were found to go through two distinct phases of decision-making–something not mentioned by Levine and Moreland. At first, emotions (Phase I) dominate the group's decision-making process. (Mis-)Guided by feelings of personal betrayal, shock, anger, and fear about secrets to be disclosed to the authorities or the public, violence in all its forms is considered as a gut reaction. If the defector amplifies these emotions through behaviour perceived as threat by the group, the group is most likely to respond with direct physical violence or at least with strong physical intimidation. After a certain period of 'cooling down' and getting accustomed to the fact that a defection has taken place, generally more mature strategic reflection and planning comes into play (Phase II). In this phase, the group calculates the costs and benefits of any retaliatory action, taking into account possible blowback against the group. Typically the methods chosen in this phase are large-scale defamation and ostracism campaigns, public outings, 'scenes of intimidation', and direct anonymous threats (by mail or phone)

targeting the defector or his family. Carefully planned and complex violent operations such as assassinations and bombings do occur. However these are relatively rare, and are usually applied only when the group is not prepared to take the risk of information leakage or when the defector, by his former status, becomes a liability to the group (e.g. when s/he speaks out against it publically). Phase I can be 'resumed' even after a long period of time, Typically this is the case when group members meet the defector by accident or when certain events (e.g. media articles, court verdicts, group banning) are directly connected to the defector and revive the group's initial emotional reaction.

All groups had more or less sophisticated decision-making processes, based on the group's hierarchy and intellectual level. This is also a finding that goes beyond Levine and Moreland's model. It turned out that even the more violent and non-intellectual skinhead type groups displayed surprising organizational skills to exercise social pressure (e.g. the 'skinhead control commandos'). This took the form of online blogs, fanzines, and chat rooms containing pictures, addresses and family information of defectors. Followed by targeted propaganda distribution (e.g. leaflets with the defector's name written on it), this all serves to create 'scenes of intimidation' based on the psychological fear of becoming a target of retaliation.

While these findings are limited due to the small sample of cases analysed, nevertheless new light is shed on some meso-social dynamics of social pressure against defectors from extremist right-wing groups. While many of the factors and mechanisms suggested by Levine and Moreland's original model have been strongly supported, it has also been shown that group-related mechanisms regarding applying social pressure on defectors are much more complex which points to the need for more research. As an important future direction for research, the reaction of other extremist movements vis-à-vis defectors (e.g. defectors from jihadist groups) should be explored in order to better determine the role of specific ideologies in the selection of forms of punishment meted out against who have lost faith in extremist groups.

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Annex: Brief Case Descriptions

1. 1980: a former US-American neo-Nazi died of a heart attack after repeated bomb and arson attacks on his home and death threats.[39]

2. 1984 eight German right-wing extremists "held court" and sentenced a former leading member of their "combat group" to severe punishment due to treason. The group broke into the victim's home at night, read the indictment to him, and severely beat him. The victim was water boarded and "shot" with an unloaded weapon put to his head. After another round of beating up the person was brought to a forest to die but he luckily survived.[40]

3. 1987: the 17 year old German Gerd-Roger Bornemann was killed by his former comrades after he had given witness statements to the police.[41]

4. 1987: a former Ku Klux Klan leader was crucified by other Klansmen in Sacramento.[42]

5. 1988: in California "a disenchanted female member of the Chicago Area Skinheads (CASH), had her home broken into, her face maced, her body beaten limp, and a swastika painted on the wall with her own blood".[43]

6. 1988: Aho [44] reports of two persons in his sample who were physically attacked and massively threatened once their decision to leave the right-wing environment became known.

7. 1993: the former high ranking German neo-Nazi leader Ingo Hasselbach received a fully functional mail-bomb which did not explode due to unforeseen circumstances.[45]

8. 1995: the former German neo-Nazi skinhead Sven Silbermann and his brother Michael were found dead in Dresden. Sven Silbermann was outed as 'traitor' shortly before, and his brother had possible links to a right-wing terrorist group.[46]

9. 1996: the 26 year old former German neo-Nazi Martin Kemming was shot and killed by a former comrade.[47] Kemming had left the right-wing movement and acted as a court witness against the person who would later kill him.

10. 2011: a youth court sentenced five German neo-Nazis to serve several years in prison due to their massive violent assault on a defector, whom they lured into a trap and severely beat him.[48]

11. 2011: a former German neo-Nazi (together with his girlfriend) met a former comrade by accident at a train station in Berlin. After he was recognized another 10 neo-Nazis were called into the train station and tried to attack the defector with his girlfriend, who sought protection with the train station personnel. The 11 right-wing activists split up and controlled the entry and exit doors of the train station until police arrived.[49]

12. 2014: five German neo-Nazis attacked a person and his girlfriend in Berlin and severely injured them. Although the person might not be seen as a full defector (as he still expressed sympathy for national socialist ideology online) he was the target of a long-lasting online defamation campaign, in which he was accused as 'traitor' who gave witness statements in court against former comrades.[50]

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