

Germany: “Voluntary military service in Homeland Security”—an invitation to neo-Nazis

Peter Schwarz
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The introduction of “voluntary military service in Homeland Security” by the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) from April next year, is an invitation to neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremists to receive military training by the German government in return for payment. This is clear from the name as well as from the historical, political and international context.

The term “Homeland Security” (“Heimatschutz”), which is used in an almost obsessive way—appearing eleven times in the short advertising text on the Ministry of Defence website—is a battle cry of the extreme right. It has both current and historical resonances.

Neo-Nazi organisations involved in terrorist attacks and murders like to call themselves “homeland security.” For example, the “Thuringia Homeland Security”, which was set up with state funds by the secret service Confidential Informant (CI) Tilo Brandt, recruited Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Böhnhardt and Beate Zschäpe, who later formed the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU) that committed at least ten racist murders and several attacks.

But there was—or is—also the “Fränkischer Heimatschutz,” the “Märkischer Heimatschutz,” etc. A book published in 2014 by the Stefan Aust and Dirk Laabs is titled: *Heimatschutz: Der Staat und die Mordserie des NSU. (Homeland Security: The state and the series of murders carried out by the NSU).*

Between the two world wars, numerous right-wing paramilitary units called themselves “Heimatschutz.” For example, in Austria, homeland defence associations were formed under this name, which were modelled on Mussolini’s fascists. In 1928, they attacked the social-democratic working class district of Wiener Neustadt

during a “March on Vienna.”

Based on the Nazi ideology of blood and soil, the Heimatschutzverband (Homeland Security Association) also mixed nature conservation and the protection of historical monuments with nationalist and anti-Semitic ideas. For example, the Bavarian Homeland Security, whose honorary chairman was District President Gustav von Kahr since 1927, was a key figure in right-wing extremist activities.

During the Second World War, a local auxiliary unit within the Waffen-SS in Slovakia called itself “Heimatschutz Slowakei” (HS). Among other things, the HS guarded concentration camps and was involved in the arrest, torture and murder of numerous Jews.

With the invitation to perform “service in the Homeland Security” and to be trained in the use of weapons, the Bundeswehr is sending a clear signal to right-wing extremist youths that they no longer need to hide in order to prepare for an upcoming civil war.

In the period since the NSU trial in Munich, the assassination of Kassel district president Walter Lübcke, the attack on the synagogue in Halle, the racist mass murders in Hanau and the exposure of right-wing networks in and around the elite Bundeswehr KSK unit, right-wing terrorist networks have come into the public eye, where the response is horror, anger and indignation.

The grand coalition of the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats is reacting to this by doubling down and setting up military units under the auspices of the Bundeswehr for use against political opponents. In its public announcements, the Bundeswehr confesses with remarkable openness that this concerns armed military operations inside Germany, which are forbidden under

the constitution.

“The biggest difference to classic voluntary military service,” the Bundeswehr website states, is “the close-to-home scheduling of reservist service after basic and specialist training and service in Homeland Security instead of deployment abroad.”

This is not a kind of civilian service in uniform. Volunteers are to be fully trained militarily. Part of the total seven-month basic and special training is “also firearms training,” the Bundeswehr emphasizes. “Physical fitness and dexterity over an obstacle course” are also required. Those engaged in “voluntary military service for the protection of the homeland” will also carry out “these military challenges.”

In the last five months of their one-year service, volunteers will do reserve service. Afterwards, they will have the opportunity to “grow into the Territorial Reserve,” which has been systematically built up over the past eight years.

A pilot project for this is the “Landesregiment Bayern” (“Bavarian State Regiment”), which is supported by the Bundeswehr and the reservist association. According to the Bundeswehr, the first regiment of its kind in Germany serves both national defence and homeland security. Among other things, it supports the police “in emergencies.” It contributes to the quick and easy integration of “a modern and efficient reserve” into “the existing active [military] structures.”

In other words, it is intended to ensure smooth cooperation between reservists geared to domestic operations and the fighting force. It is obvious that this is not, as the government likes to portray it, about providing assistance in the event of natural disasters, fighting bark beetles, conducting coronavirus tests, etc.

Rather, the model is the Department of Homeland Security in the USA. This agency, which was founded after the attacks of September 11, 2001, has grown into a gigantic apparatus with 240,000 employees and an annual budget of \$62 billion. It monitors, spies on and terrorizes the entire population of the United States.

In recent days, President Trump has sent highly trained Homeland Security combat units into American cities to fight against demonstrations. In scenes reminiscent of South American military dictatorships, unidentified soldiers arrest peaceful protesters and transport them to unknown locations in vehicles

without license plates. In this way, Trump is preparing to establish a dictatorship in the face of an escalating social and political crisis.

Something similar is happening in Germany. The ruling class is preparing for fierce class struggles. The coronavirus pandemic has massively intensified the global crisis of the capitalist system. Millions are threatened with losing their jobs and their incomes, while others are forced back to work at the risk of their lives.

Ninety years ago, the ruling classes in Germany reacted to a similar crisis with the Nazi dictatorship and a war of annihilation. Today, they are moving in the same direction. They are systematically rearming and preparing for new war missions and the violent suppression of social and political opposition. But unlike the 1930s, they do not have a fascist mass movement. The mood in the population tends towards the left. The development of right-wing and fascist forces is mainly driven by the state.

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as the secret service is called, serves as a control centre for right-wing terrorism. In the Bundeswehr and the police, there are right-wing extremist networks that are being covered up and trivialised from above. Even the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), whose ranks include numerous representatives of the police, the Bundeswehr and the secret services, is systematically courted and promoted by the state and the establishment parties.

The parties of the grand coalition—CDU, CSU and SPD—bear the main responsibility for this policy. But the opposition parties—the Left Party, the Greens, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and of course the AfD—support it. The struggle against fascism and militarism requires the construction of an independent movement of the working class that fights for the overthrow of capitalism and an international socialist programme.



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