

German army calls for domestic deployments

By Peter Schwarz
1 April 2016

The terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels have led to ever-louder calls for the German army to be deployed domestically.

Based on the experiences of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime, Germany's Basic Law stipulates a strict division between the police and the armed forces. The first is responsible for internal, the latter for external security. Since the passage of emergency powers in May 1968, this basic principle has been continuously undermined. Nonetheless, a large-scale deployment of heavily armed soldiers on the streets of Germany, along the lines of operations currently being carried out in France and other countries, remains legally prohibited.

Not only right-wing politicians, but also the German army (Bundeswehr) itself is agitating for a constitutional amendment permitting the domestic deployment of the armed forces in cases of "threats from terrorism." What this means can currently be seen in France. Just as the "war against terror" has served as the justification for one regime-change war after another, the "threat of terrorism" provides a blank check for the establishment of a police state.

On February 22, an interview appeared on the Bundeswehr's official website with constitutional lawyer and former defence minister Rupert Scholz. In it, the 78-year-old CDU (Christian Democratic Union) politician demands a change to the Basic Law so as to enable the Bundeswehr to deploy domestically to combat terrorism.

Scholz refers explicitly to France. "On the issue of combatting terrorism, the police are overwhelmed in many potential danger situations," he states. "For this reason, the military is for example in France deployed to combat terrorism. In my opinion, we must create a similar option in Germany, under conditions of a growing terrorist threat."

The Basic Law is, according to Scholz, "today in

many parts superseded." Wars are "increasingly asymmetric." Military conflicts occur "also within a country's borders" and are accompanied "normally with terrorist attacks."

The very publication by the Bundeswehr of such an interview on its website is itself a constitutional breach, since the armed forces are obliged to be strictly neutral and leave political decisions to elected deputies and government representatives.

On this basis, the Soldiers' Law prohibits members of the Bundeswehr from acting "in favour or against a particular political tendency," from wearing uniforms at political events and from influencing subordinates "for or against a political opinion." Such provisions evidently do not apply to the Bundeswehr's official website!

It was not accidental that Rupert Scholz was interviewed by the Bundeswehr website. He has for a long time been a leading agitator for domestic deployments. As he declares himself in the interview, he had "campaigning for such a constitutional reform in the 1990s together with then interior minister Wolfgang Schäuble."

In 2006, he called in *Tagesspiegel* for the "atomic arming" of the Bundeswehr so as to "be able to respond to a nuclear threat by a terrorist state proportionately, meaning in an emergency situation with our own nuclear weapons."

The CDU politician taught constitutional law at different universities, and was also active in Berlin state politics and in the federal parliament (Bundestag), before Chancellor Helmut Kohl appointed him defence minister in 1988. His time in office lasted only a year and was overshadowed by a series of scandals. Scholz refused to implement a ban on low-flying military aircraft after crashes in Ramstein and Remschied had killed and injured many civilians. Strong opposition also emerged to the lengthening of military service to

18 months.

Scholz is by no means alone in his support for the domestic deployment of the military. It is backed by many CDU/CSU and Social Democratic Party (SPD) politicians, while Green and Left Party politicians have distanced themselves from the proposal in a half-hearted manner, with formulations which could make their agreement possible at any time.

Green politician Agnieszka Brugger opposed Scholz's demand with the lame justification that it "was merely a symbolic policy and stimulated panic." In any case, the Bundeswehr was overburdened and Scholz was, with his demand, "unfairly questioning the abilities of the police."

Christina Buchholz from the Left Party declared that it could "not be accepted that soldiers" compensate for "the lack of personnel" in the public service, by which she obviously meant the police.

The attacks by terrorist Islamists serve merely as the pretext for the militarisation of domestic policy. The real target is resistance and opposition from the working class. The ruling elites have seized on every opportunity for decades to do away with the legal hurdles preventing the deployment of the military against their own population.

In May 1968, the grand coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD adopted the emergency laws during the high point of the student protests in Germany and the general strike in France, where 10 million workers downed tools, occupied factories and drove the De Gaulle regime and French capitalism to the brink of collapse.

Since then, the German government has been permitted according to the new article 87A of the Basic Law to deploy the army "to combat an imminent threat to the existence or the free democratic order of the Federal Republic or a state" and "to combat organised and military armed insurgents."

Such a situation has not yet taken place. But the Bundeswehr has repeatedly been deployed to support the police—and not only to deal with natural disasters, but also in 2007 against G8 demonstrators in Heiligendamm. Every opportunity has been taken to further weaken the provisions of the Basic Law, including actions of the RAF terrorists of the 1970s, the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., and now the refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels.

At the same time, the Federal Border Guard, which

was previously only responsible for controlling the country's borders, has been expanded into a federal police force, unifying military and police capabilities. Its role stretches from patrolling the external borders, to deployments against demonstrators, intelligence agency work and criminal prosecutions.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>