

Fascist death squads preparing to carry out mass murder in Germany

By Jordan Shilton
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Fascist death squads are actively preparing to carry out mass murder of political opponents in Germany on “Day X,” according to a front page *New York Times* article published Sunday. Headlined “Body bags and enemy lists: How far-right police officers and ex-soldiers prepare for ‘Day X,’” the article documents a vast conspiracy to hoard large quantities of munitions and weaponry, establish safe houses, identify political opponents and procure the necessary materials to secretly dispose of dead bodies.

The main focus of the piece is the far-right Northern Cross (Nordkreuz) group, which developed under the leadership of a former soldier and current police officer, Marko Gross, in the northeastern German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Nordkreuz emerged out of a larger far-right chat group established by German special forces (KSK) soldier Andre Schmidt, who is nicknamed “Hannibal.” Motivated by hatred of immigrants and opposition to the current social order, Gross, who is a member of the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), and other members drew on fascistic networks in the police and military to obtain over 50,000 rounds of ammunition, 30 body bags and dozens of weapons, including an Uzi submachine gun. They drew up death lists of opponents, which included private information accessed through police computers. Plans also existed to purchase more body bags and quicklime, which can be used to conceal the smell of decomposing bodies.

The *Times* report on these chilling details, which recall nothing so much as the fascist death squads that operated in Latin American military dictatorships during the 1970s and 1980s to exterminate thousands of left-wing activists and workers, is the second in less than a month on the fascist infiltration of the German state apparatus. In a wide-ranging July 3 piece, the newspaper documented the far-right infiltration of the police and military, the effective takeover of the KSK by fascists, and the plans of far-right forces to launch a violent uprising on “Day X.” Recalling political conditions during the Weimar Republic following the First World War, the *Times*’ article detailed how a nominally democratic state confronts far-right conspiracies on all sides, above all from within. (See: Massive neo-Nazi penetration of German military and police)

The latest article shows how the chat network established by “Hannibal” served as a springboard for plots to exterminate political opponents and prepare for civil war-like conditions. Gross and about 30 colleagues joined the group in late 2015 at the height of the European refugee crisis. “In their eyes, Germany faced a potential invasion from terrorists, a possible breakdown of its welfare system, maybe even unrest,” wrote the *Times*. By January 2016, Gross established a parallel group and called it Nordkreuz.

Later in 2016, Gross and other Nordkreuz members travelled to an arms fair in Nuremberg where they met “Hannibal” face to face. “They began hoarding enough supplies to survive for 100 days, including food, gasoline, toiletries, walkie-talkies, medicine and ammunition,” the *Times* adds. “Mr. Gross collected 600 euros from each member of the group to pay for it. In all, he amassed more than 55,000 rounds of ammunition...

Members of the group learned how to rappel down the tower of a disused fire station. Two pickup points were designated as Day X meeting spots. Two fully functioning operating theaters were built as makeshift field hospitals, in a basement and a mobile home.”

Gross improbably claimed that he could not remember how he accessed the ammunition and weapons. But he acknowledged having a network of up to 2,000 like-minded individuals in the German military and other state agencies. The weapons found in Gross’ home were traced to a dozen police and military depots across Germany.

Gross left no doubt about the purpose of these sinister preparations. “The scenario was that something bad would happen,” he told the *Times*. “We asked ourselves, what did we want to prepare for? And we decided that if we were going to do this, we would go all the way.”

In police testimony from 2017 seen by the *Times*, Horst Schelski, a former air force officer and Nordkreuz member, described how the group intended to put its preparations into practice. “People were to be gathered and murdered,” he commented. Schelski reported on a meeting with Jan Henrik H., a Nordkreuz member now under investigation for terrorism offences. According to Schelski, H. kept a thick binder in his garage with the names, addresses and photos of local politicians and activists. Some of the information was in the form of “hand-written notes with information obtained from a police computer.” H. also asked Schelski for advice on how to transport captives past checkpoints that may be set up during a crisis.

No less astounding than the revelations exposing a death squad in waiting is the fact that the police and judicial authorities have left their structures virtually intact. Gross is the only member to date to have been charged at all. He was merely convicted of being in possession of illegal weapons and handed a 21-month suspended sentence. In the ongoing terrorism investigation against the other two Nordkreuz members, Gross is a witness. Gross boasted to the *Times* that Nordkreuz’s safe house remains ready for use. “The network is still there,” he declared.

As disturbing as the Nordkreuz revelations are, they merely represent the tip of the iceberg. New information comes to light on virtually a daily basis of new far-right networks within the police, military or intelligence services. Over recent weeks, a growing number of left-wing artists, politicians, activists and journalists have received death threats signed “NSU 2.0,” a reference to the neo-Nazi terrorist organisation National Socialist Underground that committed ten murders over the course of a decade. Private information on several recipients of these letters, including the lawyer Seda Ba?ay-Y?ld?z, who represented NSU victims at trial, were obtained from police computers in the state of Hesse. The police officer whose computer was used to obtain Ba?ay-Y?ld?z’s information was part of a far-right chat group consisting of dozens of police officers in Hesse. The state’s police chief resigned over the ensuing scandal.

This demonstrates that far-right networks are not merely widespread in Germany, but have increasingly extended their control over the very state

institutions nominally tasked with investigating right-wing extremist criminal activity. As Dirk Friedriszik, a state politician in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, told the *Times*, “It isn’t just the KSK. The real worry is these cells are everywhere. In the army, in the police, in reservist units.”

The resurgence of fascist forces within Germany’s state apparatus exposes the fraud of the post-war propaganda portraying the Federal Republic as a bastion of democracy at the centre of an ever-closer united Europe. The reality is that the same objective contradictions of capitalism that encouraged the German bourgeoisie to throw its lot in with Hitlerite fascism in the 1930s are propelling its descendants to cultivate far-right shock troops. German imperialism requires such forces to prosecute its interests more aggressively around the world under conditions in which the rivalries between the major powers for markets, raw materials and geostrategic influence are intensifying. At the same time, the ruling elite confronts growing social inequality and mounting popular opposition at home, which will only be accelerated by the ruling class’ homicidal back-to-work drive amid a raging pandemic.

The revival of German militarism was prepared in a political conspiracy behind the backs of the population during late 2013 and into 2014 involving all political parties, journalists and academia. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2014, then Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier declared that Germany was too large to “comment on world affairs from the sidelines” and declared the era of German military restraint to be over. That same month, professor Jörg Baberowski told *Der Spiegel*, “Hitler was not a psychopath, he wasn’t vicious. He did not want to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

At an emergency party congress held in September 2014, the German Trotskyists of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) identified the close connection between the revival of German great power ambitions and the resurgence of far-right and pro-Nazi views. “History is returning with a vengeance,” declared the resolution. “Almost 70 years after the crimes of the Nazis and its defeat in World War II, the German ruling class is once again adopting the imperialist great power politics of the Kaiser’s Empire and Hitler.”

Acting on the basis of this analysis, the SGP initiated a struggle against militarism and war, and the rise of the far-right, including an exposure of the efforts of Baberowski and other academics to rewrite German history to trivialise the crimes of the Nazis.

Baberowski’s rewriting of history was embraced by a supportive media and political establishment, which saw it as an essential component of its ideological struggle to break widespread popular opposition to the revival of German militarism. Baberowski even received generous support from international academic institutions, with a \$300,000 research grant given to him by Princeton University to study dictatorships as an “alternative political order” to democracy.

The *Times*’ revelations make clear that at the very point where Baberowski was being defended against all criticism, fascists and other far-right activists were infiltrating the police, army and security forces, and making concrete preparations to establish death squads to eliminate political opponents. At the same time, the German army was being deployed to an ever growing number of foreign imperialist interventions, above all in Africa and the Middle East.

Underscoring that the main source of support for the fascists was provided by the conspiracy within the political establishment and state apparatus, the ruling class launched a vicious persecution of those political forces waging a struggle against militarism and warning of the fascist threat. In 2018, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany’s domestic intelligence agency, included the SGP as a “left-wing extremist” organisation in its annual report and declared it an “object of surveillance.” The agency justified this flagrant attack on

democratic rights by stating that “the struggle for a democratic, egalitarian, socialist society” and “agitation against alleged ‘imperialism’ and ‘militarism’” are anti-constitutional, i.e., illegal. The intelligence agency was headed at the time by Hans-Georg Maassen, who after being forced out of his job after declaring his support for a fascist rampage through the city of Chemnitz emerged as an open supporter of the AfD.

The political establishment also encouraged the growth of the AfD during this period and integrated it fully into the structures of the state. This reached a high point earlier this year when the Christian Democrats and Free Democrats relied on AfD votes in the state of Thuringia to elect FDP politician Thomas Kemmerich as Minister President. Kemmerich thus became the first Minister President in postwar Germany to have been elected with the support of a fascist party. (See: Sound the alarm! Political conspiracy and the resurgence of fascism in Germany)

The coronavirus pandemic has further accelerated the adoption of far-right and fascist policies by the ruling elite. As the grand coalition unleashed its criminal back-to-work drive, which is endangering the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers, Federal Parliament President Wolfgang Schäuble advanced the fascist thesis that Germany’s Basic Law does not protect the right to life. Triggering a discussion on “worthless lives” on the 75th anniversary of Hitler’s suicide in the Führer bunker, Schäuble declared, “If there is one absolute value in our Basic Law, then it is the dignity of the person... But that does not exclude us from having to die.”

To help impose its deeply unpopular policies of reopening businesses and schools, the authorities facilitated far-right coronavirus demonstrations that included right-wing extremist and explicitly pro-Nazi forces. At a demonstration of about 20,000 in Berlin last weekend organised primarily by far-right forces with ties to the police, intelligence agencies and the AfD, participants waved the flag of the German Reich and other anti-constitutional insignia as the police looked on. These orchestrated protests are then presented as a legitimate expression of the popular opinion of “concerned citizens” that politicians must respond to.

The symbiosis between German foreign policy and neo-fascist forces is also becoming increasingly difficult to conceal. At a recent event in Budapest, where German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer celebrated with her Hungarian counterpart the delivery of around 50 German-manufactured “Leopard 2” tanks to the authoritarian Orbán regime, the tanks’ arrival was accompanied by the song “Tank March” by the fascist band Kárpátia. According to *Der Spiegel*, Kárpátia’s music “glorifies the authoritarian, anti-Semitic Horthy period of the interwar years, and the struggle of the Hungarian soldiers allied with Hitler in the Soviet Union.” *Der Spiegel* continues, “In its lyrics, the band calls for an ethnically pure Greater Hungary from western Ukraine to the Croatian Adriatic coast.”

The German ruling elite’s embrace of the far right is part of an international process driven by the deepening global crisis of capitalism. In the United States, the Trump administration, which sought to launch a military coup in response to mass protests over police brutality in June, has dispatched federal agents clad in military gear from the fascist Immigration and Customs Enforcement to intimidate peaceful protesters and detain them without probable cause. (See: Stop Trump’s coup d’etat! Mobilize the working class against authoritarianism and dictatorship)

The resurgence of right-wing extremism in Germany, which is now taking on the most disturbing forms as shown by the activities of terror cells and death squads, does not enjoy mass support. On the contrary, it is the product of a political conspiracy from above involving the major parties, the media, leading academics and journalists. As SGP deputy national secretary Christoph Vandreier explained in his book *Why are They Back?: Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany*, which documents the SGP’s struggle against the rise of the far right, “While the ruling elite based its conspiracy in 1933

on an existing fascist movement, today it is the opposite. The AfD's rise is the product of a similar conspiracy. It cannot be understood without investigating the roles of the government, state apparatus, political parties, the media, and the ideologists at the universities, which have paved the way for the AfD."

The only party that consistently fights against the growth of the AfD and the return of fascism and militarism in Germany is the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei. Its warnings have been confirmed. The urgent task now posed is to build the SGP as a mass party of the German and international working class to provide the mounting opposition among working people to militarism, war and the rise of the far right with a conscious political leadership guided by a socialist and internationalist programme.

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