

German interior minister advocates auxiliary police force

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In an interview with the Düsseldorf-based *Rheinische Post*, German interior minister Thomas de Maiziere (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) called for the creation of a “neighbourhood watch police.”

The interview with the *Rheinische Post*, which is closely aligned with the CDU, was a deliberate move aimed at preparing the population for increased repression under conditions of mounting social and political opposition.

In the face of a rising number of burglaries, the interior minister called for the creation of “a so-called neighbourhood watch made up of forces who have brief training and limited authority, but wear uniforms and carry weapons.” In particularly badly affected districts, they could be used as security guards.

The recent increase in break-ins merely served as a pretext for de Maiziere. The interior minister was forced to admit that “in the 90s, burglary figures [were] even higher.” Criminologists note that the chance of being the victim of a burglary in Germany is less than 1 percent. Nonetheless, de Maiziere declared that “more prosecutions and more police on the ground” were required.

There is no evidence to support de Maiziere’s claim that “foreign gangs” are responsible for the increased break-ins. André Schulz, head of the federal association of law enforcement officers (BKA), claimed that the conclusion that gangs could be the source of the wave of break-ins was based on “experience with criminality”. There was an increasing number of crimes which could be attributed to gangs. However, Schulz had to admit that he had no empirical evidence for this. Only 15 percent of break-ins are believed to have been investigated. And according to the criminology research institute of Lower Saxony, only 3 percent of perpetrators are convicted.

Along with a “neighbourhood watch,” the interior minister advocated an expanded use of surveillance cameras. There existed the possibility of “installing public cameras at road crossings in residential areas declared to be criminal hot spots,” as well as in train stations.

De Maiziere praised the state of Saxony as offering a model for his neighbourhood watch. “Saxony has already introduced a neighbourhood watch—that is a model for the future.”

By the end of the year, Saxony’s governing coalition of the CDU and Social Democrats intends to have trained the first 250 auxiliary police; 47 have already been hired. The police recruited them from applicants who failed tests to join the regular police force.

After three months of training, they receive a baton, pepper spray and a service weapon—a Heckler Koch P7M8. The auxiliary police can ask for identification, issue expulsion orders, confiscate objects and take individuals into custody. They will be deployed mainly in monitoring refugee camps.

Similar initiatives exist in Berlin, Hesse and Saxony-Anhalt. In Berlin, contractors of the “Central property protection” guard consular and government buildings. Hesse introduced an auxiliary police force as early as 2000 and it now includes 650 members. Hesse deploys them at refugee camps and even to assist with the deportation of asylum seekers.

The *Rheinische Post* also served as a platform for the interior minister on refugee policy. It referred to the fact that the authorities in North Rhein-Westphalia allegedly “in recent months only sent 20 of the 1,300 rejected asylum seekers back to their home country.” This was “a farce.”

De Maiziere responded that it was a problem that “Morocco and Algeria turn away fully occupied

chartered planes.” The federal government would have to talk to these countries about what they were doing. “But we also have to complete our homework together and carry out what we agreed in the asylum packages I and II,” he added. Implementation deficits existed there. It was important not to announce deportations, the “deportation custody,” the detention of rejected asylum seekers, could be “used more strictly.”

De Maiziere indirectly accused doctors of providing refugees with false diagnoses to protect them from threatened deportations. “There are still too many medical notes issued by doctors where there are no real health barriers to deportation,” he claimed. “It cannot be that 70 percent of men under 40 are declared sick and incapable of being transported for deportation.”

However, the experience of the refugee assistance organisation ProAsyl is that “more than 60 percent of refugees urgently need psychological care because of traumatic experiences.”

But de Maiziere is not interested in any of this. He insisted that the legal restrictions introduced by the asylum package II in early 2016 finally be enforced. According to this, medical notes issued by doctors are in practice to be ignored unless they describe an immediately life-threatening condition.

In addition, he demanded the “decisive use” of other legal instruments. “There needs to be welfare cuts if asylum seekers do not cooperate with personal identification or don’t leave if they are rejected,” he said.

De Maiziere is pursuing a systematic plan to strengthen the state. “I have already had some ideas as to how we could optimise the security structures at the federal and state levels,” he said in his RP interview. But he currently did not have the time or the parliamentary majority to implement them.

De Maiziere speaks of a “neighbourhood watch,” but everyone knows what he means. Even the *Rheinische Post* titled the interview with him “Tackling burglars with auxiliary police (Hilfspolizei).” The interior minister avoided using the term “Hilfspolizei” for a very good reason.

The creation of the last “Hilfspolizei” in Germany was ordered by Hermann Göring on 27 February, 1933. The second in command to Hitler in the Nazi state was at the time interior minister and thus chief officer of the entire Prussian police. His Hilfspolizei was recruited

overwhelmingly from members of the SA, SS and other right-wing, paramilitary groups. Among other things, the Hilfspolizei was used to target the Nazis’ political opponents, who were the first to be thrown into concentration camps and murdered. Shortly afterwards, Göring initiated the creation of the state secret police (Gestapo).

The propagating of the idea of an official auxiliary police by the interior minister and the concurrent agitation against foreigners, “criminal gangs” and refugees is no coincidence. This unwholesome melange is aimed at mobilising right-wing forces to be deployed against the population as a whole in the event of future class struggles—like those currently taking place in France.

The auxiliary police will attract many right-wing and xenophobic forces today. The low barriers for the selection of applicants will make their hiring possible. In 2002, the voluntary police service in Berlin had to be halted after it became public that one in five participants was a convicted criminal or member of a right-wing extremist group. The heavily-armed unit was established during the Cold War and was supposed to support the police during political unrest, among other things.

Like the private security firms, which continue to shoot up like mushrooms, the auxiliary police will lead to the emergence of additional armed groups which will be difficult to control. As in the 1930s, the ruling elite in Germany is responding to growing social tensions with the increased arming of the state.



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