

Germany: Green-conservative coalition in Baden-Württemberg backs domestic army operations

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In the German state of Baden-Württemberg, the first state government led by a coalition of the Greens and conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has agreed to a joint exercise involving the German army (Bundeswehr) and police in February 2017. Five months after coming to power, the coalition under the leadership of Winfried Kretschmann is proving itself to be a spearhead for militarism, austerity and attacks on refugees.

Minister President Kretschmann (Greens) has long welcomed the domestic deployment of the Bundeswehr. While federal interior minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU) chose World Peace Day and the anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War, September 1, to announce the joint exercises between the police and Bundeswehr, Kretschmann justified it by stating, “Since there is the possibility [of support for the police from the Bundeswehr] as a last resort, it is necessary to test such support.”

The transformation of the Greens from pacifists into militarists occurred almost 20 years ago. Prior to the Social Democrat/Green coalition in 1998, the Greens voted in favour of NATO’s intervention in the war against Yugoslavia. Now they are playing a key role in normalising the deployment of military forces domestically.

But the traumatic experiences with war, fascism and police terror are very much alive among the population. No government has dared since 1945 to deploy the military domestically against the population. Even the founding of the Bundeswehr in 1955 was imposed by the Adenauer government in the face of mass popular opposition. The population was promised at the time that the army would never be deployed domestically. Although Germany’s Basic Law was weakened in 1968 with the adoption of emergency powers and in 2012 the Constitutional Court agreed to domestic army deployments, the opposition in the population to the militarisation of society remains widespread.

This is why Kretschmann downplayed de Maizière’s plans

for joint exercises between the police and army as merely preparation for administrative and emergency assistance. It was covered by section 35 of the Basic Law, where it is stated, “All federal and state authorities provide mutual legal and administrative assistance.”

The parliamentary group chair of the Greens in the Baden-Württemberg state parliament in Stuttgart, Andreas Schwarz, at first raised prominently in the media “concerns” over the domestic deployment of the Bundeswehr. He accused state interior minister Strobl (CDU) of causing the population to feel insecure without reason by calling into question the police’s capabilities.

Schwarz subsequently asserted that he had been reassured in talks with Strobl that in the February operations, no armed soldiers will be publicly deployed. Those in positions of responsibility in the police and army were merely discussing in a so-called operational exercise communication routes and the police’s potential material requirements. On this basis, Schwarz gave his assent to the deployment at a meeting of the coalition on September 12.

In reality, it is clear that with the planned exercise, the federal and state governments are preparing for civil war-type scenarios. It was conceivable, declared de Maizière, “that we will have complicated and difficult terror situations lasting for days.”

The planned measures are in line with the domestic build-up of the state apparatus adopted in neighbouring France, where an open-ended state of emergency is in place. The operation of armed soldiers on the streets of Paris is now a daily occurrence. The suppression of workers’ strikes and demonstrations in France proves that these measures are less directed against the threat of Islamist terror than they are against the working population.

The agreement of the Greens in the Baden-Württemberg coalition government to joint exercises by the police and Bundeswehr makes clear that this party is also prepared to enforce the ruling elite’s plans for dictatorship and war at

the federal level. Although the question of whether the Stuttgart model (Green-CDU) or Berlin model (SPD—Left Party-Greens) will materialise remains undecided, it is clear that all parties back the domestic and external build-up of the state apparatus.

In Stuttgart, Kretschmann collaborates closely with his interior minister and Deputy Minister President Thomas Strobl (CDU), who will be directly responsible for the civil war games. He uses this connection to demonstrate to the CDU leadership and federal finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble how seamlessly a Green/CDU coalition works.

Schäuble is not only Strobl's mentor within the party, but also his father-in-law and considers a CDU/Green coalition at the federal level as a possibility and well worth striving for. In mid-September, Schäuble sent his Berlin spokesman, Martin Jäger, to Stuttgart as a super state secretary for security policy and crisis management. To award Jäger an appropriate salary, the Green/CDU coalition altered the provisions of its state remuneration law.

Jäger was previously employed in the foreign ministry under the CDU government of Helmut Kohl, as well as the SPD/Green government under Gerhard Schröder and the CDU/SPD government of Angela Merkel and Frank-Walter Steinmeier. When he became chief spokesman in Schäuble's finance ministry in 2014, he had already been chief lobbyist for Daimler AG and ambassador for the Merkel government in Kabul, Afghanistan. Lobbypedia reports that Jäger was also chairman of the fundraising association for the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP, German Institute for International and Security Affairs), a government-aligned think tank under whose auspices the foreign and security policy shift was carried out. (See "How the revival of German militarism was prepared").

Jäger is therefore well connected in the intertwined worlds of the economic and political elites. As a state official, he embodies a system in which all political parties are interchangeable and the politicians know each other. In Stuttgart, this super secretary of state will be responsible for the state police presidium, protecting the population and crisis management, while overseeing the state intelligence agency and managing residency and asylum rights.

The increasing militarisation of society is clearly seen in refugee policy.

Kretschmann's previous coalition with the SPD already deployed soldiers last year to conduct the administration for refugees. His "turbo-asylum" project (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), is currently being trialled on refugees who have fled war, persecution and desperation by soldiers from the German-French brigade at the Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg. Over the course of 24-48 hours, the refugees proceed through the "processing stages," where Bundeswehr soldiers

work hand-in-glove with representatives of the Federal Agency for Migrants and Refugees (BAMF) to complete all of the steps—from registration to health checks, passport control and filing of asylum applications. This sees basic constitutional principles increasingly subordinated to the military-style methods of a police state.

In 2014, Kretschmann ensured that the number of deportations would increase when, with Baden-Württemberg's vote in the Bundesrat, the upper house of parliament, he secured the designation of the Balkan states of Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as "safe countries of origin." He subsequently declared his support for restricting the right to asylum for refugees from Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. His party ally Boris Palmer, mayor of Tübingen, stated in August that it was necessary to even deport refugees prepared to commit violence to Syria. "There are also parts of Syria that are not at war," according to Palmer.

The Kretschmann government is also prepared to ruthlessly enforce the austerity measures on the population required to pay for the military build-up. A drastic austerity programme is aimed at saving €1.8 billion annually. The "politics of hand-outs" would be ended, Kretschmann announced in the summer. At the presentation of the first key points for the 2017 budget, Green finance minister Edith Sitzmann revealed austerity measures of €800 million, including cuts across ministries, municipalities and state services. This means job cuts, wage reductions and the closure of public services at the municipal level.

In the face of the deepening global economic crisis and rapid development towards war, the Greens are showing their true face as a representative of a well-off section of the upper-middle class. There was nothing progressive about this party when it was founded in Karlsruhe in 1980. It brought together the petty-bourgeois anti-nuclear and environmentalist movements, along with diverse Maoist tendencies of the 1970s; later the East German citizens movement Alliance 90 joined. All of these tendencies shared a common contempt and hostility towards the working class.

Kretschmann was once a member of the Maoist Communist League of West Germany (KBW) and embodies the rightward evolution of these ex-Maoists.

Several weeks ago, weekly magazine *Die Zeit* praised Kretschmann, saying he was "simply the better conservative and his party the better CDU."



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