

Right-wing German Army officer Franco A. to be charged for terrorism

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Following an announcement last week, German ex-Army officer Franco A. is to appear in court on the charge of preparing an act of sedition. The information was contained in a recently published ruling by the German Constitutional Court dating from August 22.

The Frankfurt/Main Court of Appeals previously rejected a charge on this issue. However, the details now made public strongly suggest that the 30-year-old ex-Army officer is a neo-Nazi terrorist.

A. was arrested at Vienna's airport in February 2017 as he sought to recover a weapon he had previously hidden in a toilet. Subsequent investigations revealed that he planned attacks with two accomplices, Maximilian T., and Matthias F., on high-ranking politicians and other public personalities. All three accused were found to possess large quantities of arms and ammunition.

Franco A. also registered as a Syrian refugee in Bavaria, with the apparent intention of blaming future attacks on refugees so as to stoke right-wing and xenophobic sentiment in Germany.

Alongside politicians, the death list included the name of Anetta Kahane, the head of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, a target of hatred for the far-right. Nonetheless, Franco A. was released from prison in November 2017 on grounds of insufficient suspicion that he had committed a crime.

Just over six months later, in June 2018, the Frankfurt Court of Appeals dismissed the charge against Franco A. of preparing an act of sedition. The court claimed that although the preparations for the crime were far advanced, Franco A. had not carried them out, even though he allegedly had several opportunities to do so.

On this basis, the court reached the conclusion that there was a lack of suspicion that he had committed a crime. Additional charges, including violations of the firearms law and fraud, were to be dealt with in a trial at the Darmstadt District Court.

In response to this decision, the federal state prosecutor's office appealed to the Constitutional Court, which has now ruled in favour of the appeal. The Court of Appeals must now hear the state prosecutor's terrorism case.

The Constitutional Court gave little credibility to Franco A.'s defence. A. claimed that his statements and actions had been misinterpreted and misunderstood by the authorities. He was, in

fact, always concerned about "peace, but never violence."

In a lengthy three-part article in April 2019, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* followed this line in an attempt to rehabilitate Franco A. "The Berlin office of the NZZ has possession of hundreds of pages of files, audio recordings, and mobile phone videos related to the Franco A. case," wrote the author, Benedict Neff. Neff added that he had repeatedly met with Franco A., his partner, and family members.

Neff could hardly contain his enthusiasm. "One notices that this is a soldier's home," he enthused, "due to its cleanliness. The apartment is spotlessly clean." Franco A. is "still very fit, but his hair is bound in a short ponytail with strands falling over his brow. Nobody would consider him to be an officer any more. Rather, he looks more like an artist or a philosophy student. His beard remains."

Franco A.'s partner, who was also interviewed in detail by the NZZ, was introduced as Sophia T., a member of the Left Party. She is the sister of A.'s accomplice, Maximilian T., who served alongside A. as a soldier in Illkirch, France, was briefly arrested, and now works as a personal adviser to Alternative for Germany (AfD) parliamentary deputy Jan Nolte.

The father of Sophia and Maximilian, Thomas Tischer, is a well-known neo-Nazi, who was active in the right-wing extremist Reichsbürger movement and the fascist National Democratic Party (NPD). The author Tobias Ginsburg, who conducted undercover research on the Reichsbürger movement, cited him as saying, "The world can be saved only with radical measures—by biologically exterminating billions and obliterating the Middle East with nuclear weapons."

While the NZZ portrayed Franco A. as "misunderstood," the Constitutional Court's published ruling underscores his right-wing extremist, neo-Nazi outlook.

The defendant has a particular aversion to Jewish people, noted the ruling. "Zionism is conducting a systematic race war by sending millions of migrants to Germany, which will lead to a mixing of the races and the extermination of the German race," states the ruling in summing up A.'s views. "He compared immigration to genocide and the social welfare state to automatised genocide," continued the ruling. "Zionism is the root of all evil and the United States serves as a power to impose devilish interests."

The ruling cited statements and writings, including, “My beliefs are my Germanness, that Israel governs the United States, and that Hitler stands above everyone else.”

Franco A. owned books such as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the 1940 work *The Wehrmacht—the Liberation Struggle of the Great German People*. CDs with Nazi songs were also found in his possession.

According to Franco A.’s outlook, a terrorist is “a freedom fighter for the establishment of a just world,” wrote the Constitutional Court. “In an audio recording from February 2016, A. described his political opponents as ‘swines’ who he and his fellow believers would kill if they got in their way.” Franco A. stated in the recording, “I know you want to murder me, so I’ll murder you first.” Anyone not prepared to do this “may as well give up the struggle from the start.”

To contribute to “the retention of the German nation,” Franco A. planned to “use the fictive identity of a Syrian refugee” to launch attacks on “refugee-friendly” people, including current foreign minister Heiko Maas, Green Party politician Claudia Roth, and Anetta Kahane.

The planned attack on the head of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation was far advanced. It was already known that Franco A. carried out surveillance on a parking garage belonging to the organisation in Berlin and noted down car registration plates.

The Constitutional Court has connected this information with other events. In April 2016, he purchased a mounting bar for his long-sight Heckler & Koch G3 gun. Four days after carrying out surveillance on the garage, he performed firing practice with the gun, “suggesting that he was seeking to achieve improved accuracy with the weapon.” It is likely that soon afterwards, probably on July 28, the defendant acquired the pistol in Paris that he later concealed at the Vienna airport.

The claim that Franco A. merely wanted to meet Kahane for a discussion was deemed by the court to lack credibility.

All of this information paints a clear picture of the activities of Franco A. and his accomplices. It is all the more remarkable that the Frankfurt/Main Court of Appeals came to the conclusion in 2018 that it could not sufficiently justify suspicion of the commission of a seditious crime.

This underscores what the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote following the dropping of charges in June 2018: “All of the evidence in the case suggests that Franco A. and his accomplices are merely a small portion of a much broader neo-Nazi network within the Army and the German state.”

We now know that Franco A. had contact with a large number of right-wing extremists, including figures with ties to the terrorist organisation National Socialist Underground. The extent of the right-wing extremist network in the state apparatus is also becoming ever clearer.

A prominent role in this is played by the state authorities in Hesse, not merely due to the Court of Appeals decision in the Franco A. case. When Halit Yozgat was murdered by the NSU in Kassel in 2006, Andreas Temme, an employee of the Hesse

state intelligence agency, was at the crime scene. The state government led by Volker Bouffier (Christian Democrats, CDU) ensured that relevant files were suppressed for decades. Moreover, evidence shows that death threats sent to a lawyer representing NSU victims, which were signed “NSU 2.0,” were sent by people with connections to the Frankfurt police.

The AfD, which trivialises the Nazis’ crimes, glorifies the Wehrmacht and rails against refugees and protesting students, enjoys close ties to this right-wing network within the state. Fifteen percent of the AfD’s deputies in the federal parliament and 10 percent in state parliaments are former career soldiers, and 8 percent are former or fired police officers.

History is returning with full force. The political and corporate elites, as they did during the Weimar Republic, are once again turning to authoritarian and fascist forms of rule. The return of Germany to imperialist policies and militarism can be carried through only by suppressing all opposition and encouraging, building up and supporting the most right-wing forces.

While state agencies focus on covering up, financing and organising the right-wing extremist and terrorist activities of soldiers, police officers and intelligence service agents, protests against the AfD are criminalised and declared to be anti-constitutional. For example, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is described by the Secret Service in its Verfassungsschutz Report as left-wing extremist and anti-constitutional because it firmly opposes nationalism, militarism and the AfD, while advocating a socialist society.



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