

Conference of interior ministers in Hamburg

German federal government and states coordinate police, intelligence agencies, and the Bundeswehr in preparation for war

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The 225th Interior Ministers' Conference, which has been meeting in Hamburg since Wednesday, marks a new stage in the construction of a German police and military state. Under the slogans of "civil defence capability" and the defence against "hybrid threats," the federal and state governments are driving forward the systematic integration of the police, intelligence agencies, judiciary, economy and Bundeswehr (armed forces).

For the first time, Federal Defence Minister Boris Pistorius is taking part in the plenary session of the Interior Ministers' Conference (IMK). According to the Hamburg Interior Authority, provision is being made for the Federal Ministry of Defence and the Bundeswehr to be permanently integrated into the structures of the IMK in future. The aim is to build up "military and civil defence capability with equal consistency and speed by 2029."

This formulation is of enormous political significance. The IMK, which traditionally sets guidelines for internal security, is being openly integrated into military war planning. Pistorius and the military leadership have repeatedly emphasized that Germany must be placed in a position by 2029 to wage a comprehensive war against the nuclear power Russia. What is being sold as the "growing together of external and internal security" in reality means the further abolition of the dividing lines between the police, intelligence agencies, military and civilian administration in order to make Germany "war-ready."

At the center of the conference are the "strengthening of civil defence capability" and the "effective defence against hybrid threats." In total, the interior ministers and senators of the states are discussing around 80 agenda items. Also on the agenda are the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, further measures for the deportation of convicted offenders, the strengthening of the security authorities, civil protection, organized crime, cyberattacks and violence at football matches.

The Hamburg Interior Authority stated openly what this is about: In addition to military defence, civil defence is to be developed as the "second equal pillar of total defence." Police, disaster control, administration, critical infrastructure and the civilian population are to be prepared for war and crisis scenarios. The term "civil protection" serves as a cover term for the comprehensive mobilization of society for war.

This development is directly connected to the federal government's war and rearmament policy. While NATO and the EU in Brussels

discuss new billions for the war in Ukraine, the rearmament of Europe and the confrontation with Russia, the Interior Ministers' Conference in Hamburg is organizing the domestic political side of the same development: an apparatus that remains functional in wartime, controls oppositional sentiment and suppresses social resistance.

This is particularly clear in the term "hybrid threat." It is deliberately boundless. It includes sabotage, espionage and cyberattacks as well as "disinformation," "influence operations" and the shaping of public opinion. In this way, the entire political and media sphere is declared a security problem. Criticism of NATO, of Germany's Ukraine policy, of support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza, of the war against Iran or of social cuts can at any time be defamed as part of a foreign influence operation.

Federal Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt concretized this course two days before the start of the IMK with the opening of the "Joint Centre for the Defence against Hybrid Threats" in Berlin. The so-called GAZ Hybrid is located at the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and is intended to identify campaigns and attacks attributed to states such as Russia or China at an early stage, bundle information and coordinate "countermeasures."

Involved are intelligence services, federal and state police authorities, cyber agencies such as the BSI, federal and state criminal police offices, the Central Customs Authority, the Federal Prosecutor's Office, business associations and, depending on the occasion, the Bundeswehr. This creates a central hub in which intelligence findings, police measures, economic interests, prosecutorial action and military security logic are brought together.

The working groups planned within GAZ Hybrid speak a clear language. Alongside a "Situation" working group, an "Operational Information Exchange" working group, an "Economy" working group and an "Analysis and Reporting" working group, there is explicitly a "Disinformation and Influence" working group. This makes clear that the issue is not only technical cyber defence or concrete acts of sabotage, but the state surveillance and suppression of political communication.

At the opening, Dobrindt declared that Germany was "not at war," but was "the daily target of hybrid warfare." This sentence sums up the new doctrine of the state. Formally, no war is declared, but the whole of society is placed under wartime conditions. The population is to be accustomed to the idea that dissenting opinions, protests and

social opposition can be prosecuted as hostile operations.

GAZ Hybrid is not an isolated project of Dobrindt's. It is of a piece with Operation Plan Germany, the new military strategy, the expansion of civil defence, the planned drone defence centre, new powers for the BND and the Verfassungsschutz and the massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr. Dobrindt has already announced that he wants to develop the German intelligence agencies into "real secret services." This means expanded online powers, offensive cyber operations and stronger "active defence."

This further undermines the separation requirement (Trennungsgebot) between police and intelligence agencies, and later also between internal security and military foreign policy, which was officially drawn after 1945. This separation requirement was a consequence of the experience of the Third Reich, in which the Gestapo, SS, police, judiciary and Wehrmacht merged into a murderous apparatus of repression and extermination. Although the ruling class integrated its old Nazi power structures in altered form into the state apparatus of the Federal Republic after 1945, this principle was at least formally codified.

Today, under the pressure of imperialist war policy, it is being completely torn down. Joint situation centers, joint databases, anti-terror structures, cyber defence centers, Verfassungsschutz-police cooperation, GAZ Hybrid and now the permanent integration of the Bundeswehr into the structures of the IMK are once again creating an integrated security apparatus. What was officially supposed to be prevented after 1945—the fusion of police, intelligence agencies, military and political executive—is being restored under the slogan of "total defence."

Particularly deceitful is the claim that this expansion of the state apparatus serves to protect the constitution or even to ward off the fascist AfD. In reality, the federal government has long since adopted the AfD's agenda: militarism, isolationism, mass deportations, law-and-order politics, nationalism, social cuts and attacks on democratic rights. Dobrindt himself embodies this course more thoroughly than any other minister. He is intensifying deportations, agitating against migrants, strengthening the police and intelligence agencies and driving forward the militarization of domestic policy.

When the domestic build-up is partly justified with the fight against the extreme right, this is doubly deceitful. First, the apparatus is not directed against the AfD, but against the working class and against any opposition from the left. Second, the ruling class itself is preparing the integration of the AfD into state responsibility. In the states, government participation or tolerance models are already being discussed. The CDU/CSU systematically adopts the policies of the AfD, while the SPD, Greens and Left Party move in the same direction and block any serious resistance to it.

A future AfD government would be handed a highly armed surveillance, intelligence and police apparatus with which it could drive forward the establishment of a right-wing dictatorship in the shortest time. Whoever today arms the intelligence agencies, police and Bundeswehr under the pretext of "protecting democracy" is creating the instruments that will tomorrow be used by the fascists.

None of the parties represented in the Bundestag oppose this course. This applies not only to the governing parties, but also to the Greens and the Left Party. Where the Greens and the Left Party sit in state governments, they offer no opposition. On the contrary, they implement Dobrindt's agenda themselves, strengthen the police and Verfassungsschutz, intensify deportations and support the foreign policy line of German imperialism.

In Thuringia, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Berlin, the Left Party has proven in government that it is prepared to strengthen the police, intelligence agencies and deportation authorities. The Greens have long been among the most aggressive advocates of NATO, rearmament and state repression. They demand more powers against alleged disinformation, still more arms deliveries to Ukraine and justify the strengthening of the security apparatus with the fight against Russia, China, antisemitism or right-wing extremism.

The reason for this lies in their social and political character. All the parties in the Bundestag stand on the basis of German capitalism. They defend German imperialism abroad and the capitalist state at home. They know that Germany's return to great-power politics, the rearmament of the Bundeswehr, the war against Russia, the support for the genocidal US-Israeli war policy in the Middle East and the massive cuts to health care, education, pensions and social spending are encountering ever greater resistance in the working class. That is why they are expanding the apparatus of repression and creating the foundations for the establishment of a dictatorship.

The Interior Ministers' Conference in Hamburg must therefore be understood as a warning. The ruling class is preparing not only for war against external enemies, but also for war against its own population. "Civil defence capability" includes the disciplining of the working class, the control of information channels, the surveillance of political opposition, the mobilization of the administration and the intimidation of every movement against war and social cuts.

This development cannot be stopped through appeals to parliament, the courts or any of the established parties. The state apparatus now being expanded is not a neutral instrument that can be tamed through elections or "democratic control." It is the apparatus of repression of the capitalist class. Under conditions of war, economic crisis and growing social inequality, it takes on ever more openly dictatorial forms.

The answer to this must be the independent intervention of the working class. Workers, youth and students must connect the struggle against rearmament, war and the police state with the struggle against social cuts, job destruction and capitalist exploitation. What is necessary is the building of rank-and-file committees in workplaces, schools, universities and neighborhoods that act independently of the parties of the Bundestag and the trade union apparatuses.

The construction of a German police and military state is inseparably bound up with the return of German militarism. As in the first half of the 20th century, crisis and war are driving capitalism toward dictatorship and barbarism. Only an international socialist program that breaks the power of the banks, corporations and arms capitalists, dissolves the Bundeswehr, abolishes the intelligence agencies and places the economy under the democratic control of the working class can stop this development.



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