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German army to acquire new tank battalion

On December 6, the German defence minister, Ursula von der Leyen, announced the deployment of a new tank battalion. “Today is a good day for the troops of the tank division,” she declared at the Munster army training ground in Lüneburg Heath. The backdrop was warlike. The official army (Bundeswehr) video shows von der Leyen addressing her troops in front of an armada of battle tanks and soldiers.

She announced, “We will set up another new tank battalion in 2019.” It is to be stationed in Hardheim in Baden-Württemberg and involve over 500 new personnel.

The expansion of tank divisions is part of Germany’s comprehensive plans for the upgrading of its military forces. “Since the reunification (of Germany) and for the past 25 years, the Bundeswehr has only shrunk in size and repeatedly dismantled tank battalions,” the defence minister announced. “Now, for the first time in many decades the Bundeswehr is growing and a new tank battalion is being established.”

Germany’s “Panzer Force” was “the backbone of the army” and “bore the main responsibility for national and alliance defence,” von der Leyen continued. That’s “one reason why we are investing heavily. Over many, many years, if not decades, national and alliance defence has been neglected. There have been gaps and empty structures and we are filling them again.”

Seventy-five years after the crimes it committed in World War II, the German ruling class is once again constructing a powerful force of tanks for the anticipated wars and great power conflicts of the 21st century.

“In coming years, the army will receive over a hundred new tanks, another hundred will be brought up to the latest stand,” von der Leyen said. “We will get 140 Puma armoured infantry vehicles in 2018/19 ... as well as 70 Boxer infantry fighting vehicles and nearly 100 Fuchs tank transporters. Also to be delivered is “the new Leguan bridge builder tank ... and finally, finally, more than 6,000 night vision goggles.”

The rearmament of the German tank force is directed above all against Russia, which Hitler’s Wehrmacht attacked in World War II in a veritable war of extermination.

“We will set up the rapid spearhead force not only in 2019, but also in 2023,” bragged von der Leyen in Munster. NATO’s so called “spearhead” rapid reaction force or Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) is a rapid-deployment squad formed in 2015, which plays a central role in NATO’s preparations for war with Russia.

In order to ensure the “efficiency of our tank troops” and the VJTF, the government will invest “over four billion euros” in coming years in the “complete digitalisation of land-based operations,” von der Leyen declared. “The point is to bring together the many different digital sites to form a unified military overview and ensure a fast networking of all units involved. Our soldiers deserve the most modern equipment.”

The Bundeswehr site in Munster is to be massively expanded in this context and established as the army’s biggest site—the “heart of the armoured forces” (von der Leyen). Overall, “more than 300 million euros will flow into about 219 projects,” the defence ministry official website states. Among the projects is “the construction of 16 accommodation buildings at the site, an economics building with accommodation for team members, a dual-purpose building for home operations and a NCO community office.” In addition, the main shooting range and various shooting lanes on the training grounds in Munster and Bergen are to be modernised.

Another €19 million have been allocated for the German tank museum in Munster, von der Leyen proclaimed. This “heartfelt concern” was not just about “training our offspring, but also about preserving tradition.”

The garrison town of Munster bears adequate testimony to the historic traditions of the Bundeswehr. The first occupant of the camp, which was established in 1892, was the Oldenburg Infantry Regiment No. 91 under its commander Paul von Hindenburg. The name “Hindenburg Barracks” has been retained up until today, although Hindenburg was a leading figure in Germany’s first bid for world power. In World War I Hindenburg was head of the Supreme Army Command (OHL). After becoming president of Germany, it

was the same Hindenburg who appointed Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor and laid the path for World War II.

The Nazi traditions of the German military are still being observed in Munster. In 2012 the German TV program “Kontraste” reported on a commemoration ceremony at the Bundeswehr training centre in Munster, during which “the song of allegiance to the Nazi Waffen-SS” was played.

In the past year, Munster again hit the headlines regarding the neo-Nazi terror network around Bundeswehr Lieutenant Franco A. According to media reports, Franco A. and his accomplice Maximilian T. were in contact with a student at the Bundeswehr University in Munich, who was in Munster in February 2017 when a P8 pistol, two G36 assault rifles, two radios and 60 rounds of ammunition were stolen from a tank.

It has since emerged that the terror cell consisted of around 200 former and active Bundeswehr soldiers, including troops of the special forces unit (KSK) and the Military Defence Service (MAD). In a detailed article titled “The Conspiracy,” *Focus* magazine reported in November on a “dangerous shadow army,” which was preparing to murder leading politicians and violently suppress revolutionary unrest just as the notorious “Black Reichswehr” did during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933).

Many people have asked themselves why official politics and the media have largely ignored these dangerous revelations. Von der Leyen has provided an answer. Ultimately, those responsible in the ministries, the political parties and editorial offices remain silent because they are shielding and support the right-wing cliques. They need such far-right structures in the Bundeswehr to facilitate massive rearmament and suppress growing domestic opposition.

Significantly, the German Tank Museum, which is being actively supported by the defence ministry, currently features an appeal by the Army High Command dated November 28, 1918 as its “exhibit of the month.” The document is a despicable tirade against the Russian October Revolution and its leading supporters in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. It warns against the “terror regime of the Liebknecht people” and expresses solidarity with the social-democratic Ebert government, which in close cooperation with right-wing *Freikorps* mercenaries, bloodily suppressed the November Revolution in Germany 100 years ago.