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**The 70th Anniversary of Germany's Liberation from Nazi Rule,
as seen by the surviving deserter from the Wehrmacht, Nazi Germany's armed
forces, Ludwig Baumann**

On 8 May 2015 70 years have passed since the liberation of Germany from Nazi rule. As the last (known) surviving German deserter from this criminal war of aggression and as chair of the Federal Association of Victims of the Military Justice for this day I declare.*

In the hands of the Nazi military justice, war resisters and deserters in the Second World War were victims of the bloodiest legal persecution in German history – more than 30,000 men were sentenced to death and 23,000 were executed. More than 100,000 others died in concentration camps, penal camps and penal battalions. Despite this, many former military judges continued their careers after the war as if nothing had happened. Some were even promoted to the Supreme Court or reached high political offices as ministers of government – in one case, Hans Filbinger, a former Nazi judge served as prime minister of Baden-Württemberg, one of Germany's federal states. Not until 16 November 1995 did the Supreme Court rule that the Nazi military justice had been a "blood justice" and that the judges involved, due to perversion of justice, should have been charged with serious crime. - However, not one of the military judges was ever punished in the Federal Republic.

After the war the deserters and war resisters were seen as cowards, criminals and traitors; they were exposed to threats and insults. With a criminal record they had no chance of a secure future. Many were exposed to humiliating treatment that lasted until the end of their lives.

In October 1990 the last victims finally founded the *Federal Association of Victims of the Military Justice*. Ever since we have been lobbying the *Bundestag* (the parliament) to rehabilitate and dignify the victims.

However, the conservative CDU/CSU government refused to repeal our sentences because, it was said, if they did so, the other men who had served in the German war-time armed forces would be put in the wrong and such a step would undermine the morale of the present armed forces. In 1998 there was a change: a new government came to power and this new red-green coalition promised a blanket repeal of our sentences. However, at this time NATO was involved in a war against Yugoslavia - in contravention of international law and without a UN mandate. Foreign Secretary Fischer and Defence Secretary Scharping pretended they were trying to prevent a new Auschwitz. What a shameless mockery of Auschwitz's victims. Since then we have lost red-green as allies.

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* Translated by Lars G. Petersson (London)

A repeal of the sentences would now not happen before 2002 for desertion and 2009 for war treason – this still against the resistance of the *Bundeswehr*, the armed forces. The fact is: betrayal of war is a contribution to peace and a fairer world: In his speech to the European Parliament, Pope Francis accused our rich Western countries of having forced upon humanity a world economy in which every day, due to our abundance, almost 30,000 people starve to death. And this crime against humanity is defended by the military.

During the Vietnam War the US killed more than three million Vietnamese people; hundreds of thousands were cruelly murdered with napalm. What had the Vietnamese people done to them?

Twelve years ago Iraq was attacked and almost completely destroyed, an attack supported by the false claim that the country had weapons of mass destruction. Again, hundreds of thousands dead and murdered. Looting and torture – crimes committed by our countries.

And how is it possible that Colonel Klein, who in Afghanistan ordered a deadly air raid on more than 140 civilians (most of them women and children), has been promoted to the rank of general instead of being punished? What a signal this is when it comes to future German war crimes.

We, the population of this rich country, a country threatened by nobody but with a baggage of a recent attack and extermination war with more than 50 million dead people, are called upon to refer to non-violent actions; we are called upon to commit ourselves to justice, life and peace.

Bremen, April 2015

Ludwig Baumann
Deserter from the Wehrmacht