

German army recruits swear war oath in front of Reichstag building

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The German army ordered 400 soldiers to march in front of the Reichstag building, home to Germany's federal parliament, last Tuesday in Berlin as part of a swearing in ceremony. In the presence of Federal Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, parliamentary President Wolfgang Schäuble and over 200 members of parliament, the recruits vowed to “serve the Federal Republic of Germany faithfully” and “bravely defend the freedom of the German people.”

Large parts of central Berlin were cordoned off by the police for the military ceremony. For the invited guests, a huge grandstand was erected on the Republic Square. Similar spectacles took place at the same time in six other cities throughout Germany.

The marching of the German armed forces in front of parliament must be taken as an alarm signal. Both Schäuble and Kramp-Karrenbauer have made clear in recent weeks that the time has come for the return of German imperialism to the world stage. Hardly a day goes by without one of them making new proposals, including the creation of a protectorate in northern Syria and the abolition of the parliamentary prerogative to approve foreign deployments of the German army (Bundeswehr).

In his keynote Adenauer lecture two weeks ago, Schäuble announced that Germany, in spite of its crimes in two world wars, is once again ready to “bear moral costs.” He repeated this statement to the Bundeswehr recruits.

“Creating peace is not free—it also has a moral price,” warned Schäuble. Germany cannot afford to “sit out of far-flung conflicts in a globally interconnected world in great turmoil.” There has not been a major war in Europe since the downfall of Hitler's Third Reich 75 years ago, Schäuble continued. “But this peace cannot be taken for granted.” He concluded: “You will face

tremendous tasks!”

The ghastly spectacle of German soldiers bellowing with Prussian gusto “I swear!” into the television cameras once again underscores the traditions being revived by the German ruling elite. The population is to be flooded with pro-war propaganda so as to revive German militarism and justify the pursuit of wars of aggression against widespread opposition in the population.

The hardliners in the bourgeois media were jubilant. For example, the *Tagesspiegel* declared “security must be visible” and stated: “AKK is on the right track.” Meanwhile, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* complained that “the Bundeswehr's attachment to society” is “threatening to be lost” and demanded an “end to this growing apart.”

From now on, the anniversary of the Bundeswehr should be celebrated in public, announced Kramp-Karrenbauer in her speech in front of the Reichstag building. She said that the reaction of state governments to her proposal to make the armed forces a more visible part of public life had been more positive than she could have imagined.

The Left Party in particular has distinguished itself as an aggressive champion of German militarism. Thuringia's Left Party minister president, Bodo Ramelow, planned two events to glorify the Bundeswehr within two weeks. The first took place on November 7, in Oberhof, where 370 tank grenadiers in the presence of Brigadier General Gunnar Brüchner and State Chancellor Benjamin-Immanuel Hoff (Left Party) swore their military oath in public.

In his speech, Hoff urged the German population “not to ignore the fact” that “wounding and death” are no longer “abstract words” for Bundeswehr soldiers. After all, the army is responsible for “deterrence and alliance

defense,” as well as “foreign military deployments.” To propagate this issue, he appealed for a broad “debate in our society” on the mission and role of the Bundeswehr.

The second swearing in ceremony in Thuringia is to take place in Sondershausen. The local Kyffhäuser barracks supplies the eastern NATO front with battle tanks, among other things. As MDR reported, Thuringia Bundeswehr units currently provide the bulk of the NATO battalion against Russia in Lithuania as part of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) mission.

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* viewed the military ceremony in front of the Reichstag building as a first step in getting the public accustomed to a military presence on the streets. In view of the NATO exercise “Defender 2020,” in the course of which 37,000 NATO troops will march in Poland and the Baltic States next year, the question is: “Will anyone in this society stir when military convoys appear on the roads once again, like in the ’80s?”

But the German war machine is not only increasing the danger of world war in the Baltic. At the beginning of the millennium, the German government announced that the “freedom of Germany” would “also be defended in the Hindu Kush.” Today the slogan is: “German interests will also be enforced militarily off China’s coast.” According to press reports, the deployment of a German warship to the South China Sea, as well as participation in US gunboat maneuvers, has been under discussion in the Ministry of Defense for several months.

In her keynote speech at the Munich Armed Forces University earlier this month, Kramp-Karrenbauer announced the expansion of German war missions and openly demanded that German soldiers be sent as a show of force against China. With its “economic and technological power” and “global interests,” Germany cannot simply “stand on the sidelines and watch.” Instead, the army must assume the “role of an agenda-setting power” and be ready to “fully exploit the whole spectrum of military means if necessary.”

The Defence Minister made this point absolutely clear on Tuesday. Following the swearing in of the new recruits, she went immediately to the German Employers Conference in Berlin, where she proposed a major corporate tax reform to the assembled industrialists.

Kramp-Karrenbauer began her speech by saying that she had just come from the Reichstag building, “where a military swearing in ceremony has taken place in public for the first time in many years.” She explained that she was mentioning this because the question of the army and “the question that concerns you” are closely connected. Security and economic stability are taken for granted in the German population, but neither one nor the other is self-evident, she continued.

In conclusion, the defence minister offered the assembled corporate executives her services, saying, “What framework do we need, do you need as businesspeople, to ensure this?” She provided the answer herself: “supply security” in the energy sector—meaning unhindered access to oil and gas—is “one of the decisive competitive factors” for the German economy.

The international working class must put an end to this madness by turning to a socialist programme. A third drive by Germany for world power and the catastrophic consequences of a world war fought with nuclear weapons must be prevented at all costs. The most urgent political task is therefore the building of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International as the leadership of a global movement against capitalism and war.



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