

German government steps up its army recruitment campaign in schools

Tino Jacobson
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A central component of Germany's return to an aggressive foreign and great power policy is the militarisation of society as a whole. Against the backdrop of the Ukraine war and the recently announced tripling of the German military budget, the militarisation of society is taking new, unprecedented forms.

On March 7, Germany's Education Minister Bettina Stark-Watzinger (Free Democratic Party) demanded the increased presence of Bundeswehr (German army) officers in schools.

She justified her demand as follows: "It is important that the Russian attack on Ukraine and the consequences for Germany and Europe are addressed in school lessons in an appropriate way, bearing in mind the age of pupils. Especially in times of social media and disinformation, there has to be an appropriate response that addresses the concerns and fears of the pupils."

The aim of the campaign is clear. It is not about the "concerns and fears of schoolchildren," but rather indoctrinating young people with official propaganda and obtaining their consent for militarism and war. For years, the Bundeswehr has been pumping millions into advertising and recruitment campaigns, in addition to sending its officers into schools—so far without success. The vast majority of young people want nothing to do with war and militarism.

Stark-Watzinger's plans have met with angry opposition in social media. "The Bundeswehr has absolutely no business in schools. If someone comes, I will keep my children at home that day," Sonja comments. John Klapper thinks that "promoting the trade in murder has no place in schools." And RicoTV writes: "Do they hate children that much? First the children are to be contaminated in schools and then you

allow them to be press-ganged into the armed forces. You are really becoming the second (far-right) AfD."

Other comments on the Education Minister's statement denounce the one-sided reporting and unrelenting war propaganda on the part of the official media and politicians.

"Why don't you tell the children that we have been starving children in Yemen for years!!!!," writes elfox. Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Arab region, has been bombed by Saudi Arabia—with the active or tacit support of the imperialist powers—for years. This criminal war will result in leaving 1.3 million pregnant mothers and 2.2 million children severely malnourished by the end of this year. Already, 17.4 million people in Yemen are suffering from hunger.

With regard to the war in Ukraine, a user by the name of Vita15 raises the question of "how it could come to this" and "what role NATO, the US and Europe have played and are playing here."

In fact, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is not an "unprovoked war of aggression," as official propaganda maintains, but rather a reactionary and nationalist response by the Putin regime to the systematic offensive by NATO powers. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy, NATO has systematically encircled Russia and in 2014 orchestrated a right-wing coup in Ukraine to bring a pro-Western regime to power.

Now the imperialist powers are using the Russian invasion to bring about regime change in Russia itself and advance their own plans for rearmament and war. The Special Fund of the German Armed Forces (Sondervermögen Bundeswehr) of 100 billion euros launched by the German government is the biggest program for the rearmament of the German military since the days of Adolf Hitler. The deployment of

Bundeswehr youth officers to schools is being intensified as part of this program.

The last annual report on youth officers published by the Bundeswehr in 2020 noted with satisfaction: “The diverse efforts to improve staffing among full-time youth officers bore fruit.” For example, “of the 94 posts for full-time youth officers nationwide, an average of 77 posts had been filled,” corresponding to a staffing level of 82 percent. Since 2010, the amount spent on recruiting youth officers has risen from 12 million to 33.6 million euros.

The report leaves no doubt that it is about recruiting youth for wartime missions. The youth officers had “the task of talking to pupils and students and other interested parties at schools and educational institutions about the role and tasks of the Bundeswehr.” Youth officers “with deployment experience are particularly in demand.” After all, “they can describe their personal experiences, classify and assess the conflict” and “make sense of the conflict.”

Officially, youth officers in schools and universities are not allowed to recruit directly for the Bundeswehr, but this is precisely what is increasingly taking place. In 2021, 1,239 minors were recruited for the Bundeswehr, according to the annual report by Eva Högl (SPD), the Bundestag’s Commissioner for the Armed Forces. This is 91 more (or about 8 percent) than the previous year, when 1,148 minors were recruited.

The German Teachers’ Association (DL) supports the use of youth officers in schools. It is “part of the educational mandate of schools to inform about the work of the Bundeswehr—and to do so through first-hand experts. In this respect, the deployment of youth officers should be a matter of course,” explained DL President Heinz-Peter Meidinger. He dismissed widespread criticism with the provocative remark: “I firmly reject such demonisation of the Bundeswehr.”

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) strongly condemns the militarisation of schools—especially given Germany’s history. In the 20th century, Germany twice tried to impose its political and economic interests on Europe and the world with military force. The terrible consequences are well known. In the Second World War alone, Germany was responsible for the industrial murder of 6 million Jews and the killing of 27 million victims in the

Soviet Union through the Nazi campaign of mass extermination.

In both world wars, pro-war propaganda in schools played a huge role. Pupils were indoctrinated and instrumentalised in the fight for the “German Fatherland.” Millions were used as cannon fodder to advance the imperialist interests of the rich and big business. This cannot be allowed to happen a third time.

What is needed is not army youth officers, but teachers! Higher investment in education instead of billions for the military are necessary! The coronavirus pandemic has increased the burden on teachers and pupils enormously.

According to calculations by the renowned education researcher Klaus Klemm, the shortage of teachers in the next few years will be much greater than the figure predicted by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK). According to Klemm, there will be a shortage of 45,000 teachers by 2025, i.e., more than double the total cited by the KMK. For the German ruling class, however, the priority is preparing for war.

To prevent another catastrophe, the young generation must turn to a socialist perspective and build an anti-war movement of the international working class.



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