

Germany's children to be schooled for war once again

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The war mania of Germany's coalition government has not spared schools. Education Minister Bettina Stark-Watzinger (Liberal Democrat, FDP) is planning to systematically school the younger generation for war. She is determined to implement the “new era”—i.e., the militarisation of society as a whole—and in the education sector as well.

Stark-Watzinger told the Funke media group newspapers that it was necessary to prepare society for crises. “Civil defence,” which ranged “from a pandemic to natural disasters to war,” belonged “in schools,” she said. The so-called new era in German politics had “changed a lot,” and the aim must be to “strengthen our resilience” and “make young people strong for the future.”

The education minister makes no secret of the fact that this is not really about natural disasters or pandemics, which the government has long since given up combating. “The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the associated turning point” must “naturally be a topic in lessons.”

This also included normalising the presence of the military in schools. A “relaxed relationship with the Bundeswehr” (Armed Forces) was necessary. To this end, “young officers should come into schools” to explain to pupils “what the Bundeswehr does for our security.” As a reservist, she even was prepared “in principle” to take up arms herself.

Politicians, the media and educational organisations have reacted to this militaristic agitation with a mixture of open enthusiasm and attempts to play down the significance of Stark-Watzinger's comments. The warmongering and spiteful tirade published by Alan Posener in *Die Zeit* under the title “Bundeswehr into schools? Yes, please!” It was supposedly “not a sign of militarism if you can spell ‘howitzer’ or calculate how

long the Ukrainian army can hold out if it needs a million artillery shells next year, but the European Union only produces 300,000.”

The German Teachers' Association does not think the government's plans go far enough. A “declaration of intent” from the education minister was not enough, said association president Stefan Düll. Now “the Ukraine war and the pan-European, even global threat situation must be taught in politics lessons.” The war was creating a “new awareness of military threats, which must also be taught in schools.” In an interview with the tabloid *Bild*, he took a stand against an “atmosphere of peace, joy and pancakes.”

Russia's “war of aggression against Ukraine” had “mercilessly demonstrated ... that military conflicts also directly affect our society and therefore the lives of pupils,” said the chairman of the Bavarian Association of Secondary School Teachers, Ulrich Babl, to broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk. However, spreading panic unnecessarily and “giving pupils gas masks and making them do exercises” was nonsense.

Such comments are no less dangerous than openly calling for lessons in war. Instead of trivialising the dangers, it is necessary to issue a clear warning about what is really going on: the government's plans pose an enormous threat to the population.

Since Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrat SPD) announced his “new era” following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which NATO had deliberately provoked with its aggressive expansion to the east, and thus put long-held armament plans into practice, the ruling class has been advancing on its pro-war course at breathtaking speed. Not a day goes by without calls for more weapons for the slaughter in Eastern Europe and new plans for more direct involvement in the war.

Last week, Economics Minister and Vice-Chancellor

Robert Habeck (Greens) called for Germany to prepare for a “land war” in Europe. A few weeks ago, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) called for a return to compulsory military service based on the Scandinavian model in order to make Germany “fit for war.” If the Scandinavian model were extrapolated to the German population, millions would be forced to go to war.

In January, Pistorius declared that he expected a war against Russia in “a period of five to eight years.” Who would fight in this war?—the generation attending school today.

After helping to systematically expend Ukrainian youth on the front line, and supporting the slaughter in Gaza, the government coalition—comprising the SPD, FDP and Greens—is now turning its attention to youth in Germany. They are to serve as cannon fodder in the race to redivide the world, to fight and die—from Ukraine to the Hindu Kush and Southeast Asia to the “land war” in Europe. The foundations for this madness are to be laid through militaristic education at school.

The murky traditions of this militaristic initiative are well known, not least to pupils themselves in Germany. In history lessons, they still learn how militarism and the fight against opponents of war contaminated the entire society of the German Reich (Empire). The education of blind obedience to the Kaiser and the military pervades the accounts of pupils at the time. Today’s schoolchildren also learn how even the youngest members of the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls were deprived of their youth for Hitler’s plans of conquest and annihilation.

The return of German militarism is not limited to schools. Back in 2013, in its strategy paper “New Power, New Responsibility,” the government-affiliated German Institute for International and Security Affairs announced: “German foreign policy will continue to utilise the entire range of foreign policy instruments, from diplomacy to development and cultural policy to the use of military force.” The aim was to establish “a ‘landscape of thought’ that not only enables and cultivates political creativity, but is also capable of developing political options quickly and in an operationalisable form.”

Shortly afterwards, Humboldt Professor Jörg Baberowski declared that Hitler was “not vicious.” His colleague Herfried Münkler described the idea that

Germany bore the main responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War as a “legend.” Last month, Stark-Watzinger already called for the ban on military research at universities (the so-called “civilian clause”) to be removed. In this way, universities are to be put back at the service of foreign and war policy.

These circles want the terrible disasters of the last century to be forgotten. But the working class will not allow young people to be consumed in war again. For this it needs a party that has learnt from history and formulates a perspective to stop the warmongers.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is standing in the European elections to build a mass movement of workers and young people against war, against the expending of schoolchildren as cannon fodder at the front and in favour of a socialist society. The cause of the wars of plunder and conquest—the capitalist system—must be eliminated. This is what the SGP and its sister parties are fighting for worldwide.



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