

Children must become “fit for war”

War propaganda and militarism on children’s TV in Germany

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“Even children must become ‘fit for war’”—could have been the appropriate title for the *Logo!* broadcast about conscription earlier this year. *Logo!* is the news programme produced by state broadcasters ARD/ZDF for children. Since 1997, *Logo!* has been broadcast on the children’s channel KiKa and transmitted daily since 2010. The no.front segment recently debated the question “Should there be compulsory military service again?” *The segment can be watched here in German.*

“In the pro-and-con debate format *logo! no.front*, moderated by Maral Bazargani and Sherif Rizkallah, young people discuss a current news item or a topic relevant to the target group,” is how the broadcaster describes the segment. Three children face off with opposing positions. The aim is supposed to be to find common ground or even reach a compromise.

But moderator Rizkallah apparently understood “no front” differently—he confronted and attacked almost continuously the three children on the anti-war side.

Rizkallah set the tone right from the start and did not even attempt to present a balanced picture. Russia’s attack had shown that wars were once again possible in Europe, and “we must prepare for that,” he declared, entirely in the service of the government’s “new era” in foreign and defence policy.

Any mention of past illegal or aggressive deployments of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces)—in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan or Syria—was absent from the entire broadcast, as was any reference to Germany’s murderous history of two world wars.

Instead, he wielded questionable statistics suggesting that a majority supported conscription. According to *Logo!’s* own survey, 61 percent of students had said they would be willing to fight for their country in an emergency.

By contrast, the results of the “Youth Trend Study 2025” published in June with 5,000 participants between 15 and 30 years of age painted a very different picture: 81 percent of

this age group were not willing to die “for their country,” 69 percent also did not want to defend it with weapons. Polls among the general population—by the Bundeswehr Centre of Military History and Social Sciences (ZMSBw) in 2024, or the opinion research institute Forsa in 2025—also showed that 52 and 59 percent respectively also rejected defending Germany militarily.

The entire *Logo!* broadcast followed a clear line: children were to be made enthusiastic about Germany being made “fit for war,” as the defence minister put it. Rizkallah never questioned the positions of the three children who spoke in favour of conscription but attacked the three who argued vaguely against it.

Supported by a short clip portraying the need for tens of thousands of soldiers and the supposedly inadequate financing of the Bundeswehr as objective facts, Rizkallah launched his attack right at the beginning with the question: “If, now, an incredible number of people were to think like you—who would do it then?”

As already indicated: there are *in fact* an incredible number who think this way. To further discredit these positions, he even asked one child from the opposing side whether it was not “absurd” and an “egoistic decision” to live safely here but say: “I don’t want to do anything for it.” To the moderator’s likely great disappointment, the child defended the stance as being completely comprehensible.

As the discussion continued, Rizkallah then tried to build bridges and persuade the contra side—saying, one could also serve as a doctor, engineer or cook. He also sought to sweeten the current arrangements, since military service relies on volunteers.

The moderator’s rhetorical tricks were reminiscent of the repulsive methods with which conscientious objectors were confronted in the past. With a focus on emotional appeals, the causes of war, rearmament and Bundeswehr deployments were completely left out. In the end, Rizkallah staged an apparent compromise: everyone would agree that

one should give something back to one's country—whether militarily or otherwise.

This single broadcast did not come out of nowhere. On the *Logo!* website, under the keyword “Bundeswehr,” there are 33 entries—from the trivialisation of the Afghanistan deployment to a sentimental video about “Papa as a soldier” to an explanation of the new Veterans’ Day. But not a word about the Nazi past of the Bundeswehr, right-wing extremist networks or abuse in the forces.

The *Logo!* example shows a profound upheaval in post-war German society. Despite the continuity of old Nazis in business, politics and the civil service, German imperialism was forced to eat humble pie after the end of World War II in 1945. Subsequently, broad sections of the population were shaped by a pacifist approach to education and scepticism about war.

As recently as a few years ago, parents from the Green milieu expressed outrage if children played “shooting” games or took on warlike roles.

This is not the place for a comprehensive discussion of the pedagogical background. The fact is: while opposition to war remains deeply rooted in the working class, a pacifist upbringing became a political problem for the ruling class at the latest with the declared “new era” and the return of German militarism from 2013 onwards.

An example is a column by Jan Fleischhauer in news weekly *Der Spiegel* (2016), in which he mocked researchers who criticised *Logo!* for “militarisation in the nursery.” Referring to the Cologne New Year’s Eve incidents and citing the far-right “violence researcher” Jörg Baberowski, he concluded that “a bit of militarisation in the nursery” might “possibly be quite useful in the course of globalisation.”

The repulsive *Logo!* broadcast fits into this general shift to the right. Since the war in Ukraine, politicians and the media have been increasingly dropping their mask. The end of pacifist education goes hand in hand with the bankruptcy of pacifist politics. The Greens—once a self-declared pacifist party—are today the most militant mouthpiece of German militarism.

Today all parties in the Bundestag (parliament) agree that Germany must also defend its interests by military means. Chancellor Merz recently declared that Germany must once again be “the strongest army in Europe.”

Military strategists have long been aware that the low level of support among the population is a weak point. “Operationsplan Deutschland,” therefore identified the “mindset of the population” as one of the greatest challenges.

Everyone has seen the aggressive Bundeswehr recruitment posters. But its presence at city festivals, trade fairs, in

schools and on social media has also increased massively—especially on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. Target group: young people who are still malleable.

The Bundeswehr has been present for years at the Gamescom fair in Cologne. On bundeswehr.de, it explains why “precisely the gaming community is so interesting” for the Bundeswehr. Gamers have “trained hand-eye coordination, technical understanding and the ability to quickly master complex systems”—ideal prerequisites for cyber operations or electronic warfare.

The Bundeswehr markets itself as a “versatile, highly specialised employer” offering young people “exciting perspectives”—and exploits precisely those social ills that the ruling politicians themselves have created.

In doing so, it follows the model of the U.S. Army: using social devastation and poverty to recruit people voluntarily as cannon fodder.

Since the suspension of conscription—which is now to be reactivated—the Bundeswehr has recruited thousands of minors every year. In 2024, with a sad record: 2,203 under-18s were recruited. Germany is thereby violating UN resolutions such as the Paris Principles and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which outlaw child soldiers.

Since the beginning of the Ukraine war, the militarisation of society has increased enormously—even more so in Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Russia. Shooting lessons in schools, nationalist hero cults and forced recruitment have long since become the norm there.

The KiKa editorial team—and with it the German elites—are apparently determined to reconnect here too with the militarist traditions of the Kaiser’s Empire and the Nazi era—starting with the youngest.



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