

Germany's most senior military officer calls for conscription of entire age groups to prepare for war against Russia

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The initiative by General Inspector Carsten Breuer, the most senior officer of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), to fully reintroduce conscription marks a new stage in the aggressive war preparations of German imperialism. In an interview with the *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland*, the highest-ranking German officer demanded in the future to “examine entire year groups” in order “to know who is available and who we could draw upon in the event of defence.”

Behind the bureaucratic language lies an appalling programme: The ruling class wants once again to screen whole generations for their suitability as cannon fodder in future wars. Breuer speaks openly of “growth potential” and “personnel reserves” that need to be created to “reinforce our troops quickly if required.” He calls for building a reserve of 200,000 conscripts—a step that is part of a comprehensive war mobilisation.

Breuer cynically claims that the issue is “deterrence for peace.” In reality, as his entire interview shows, it is about active preparations for war. “What matters is that our soldiers are well trained and possess the capabilities that allow them to survive in combat,” the general states.

The new/old bogeyman of the German military, which committed unimaginable crimes in two world wars, is Russia. Eighty years after the end of Hitler's war of annihilation in the East, which led to the Holocaust and killed at least 27 million Soviet citizens, Breuer declares:

In my 40 years as a soldier, I have never experienced a situation as dangerous as the current threat posed by Russia. We can and must respond to this decisively. We are doing so through the targeted development of our military capabilities, in the Bundeswehr and within the alliance—and indeed with giant steps.

It is not Russia that threatens Germany and Europe, but the imperialist powers who are the aggressors. The reactionary invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime does not change the fact that NATO systematically provoked the conflict. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO advanced to Russia's borders despite all assurances, encircled the resource-rich and geopolitically central country militarily and turned Ukraine de facto into a NATO outpost. Since the Russian invasion, the imperialist powers have continually escalated the conflict and are preparing for a direct war against the nuclear-armed power. The German military leadership, in particular, seemingly cannot move fast enough.

Breuer repeatedly emphasises the element of time: “By the end of the decade we must not only have a strong active force, but just as strong a reserve—to be ready for defence and to be able to deter.” In doing so, Breuer clearly names the target which the government and NATO have long since set: Germany and Europe must be capable of waging war against Russia by 2030 at the latest.

This deadline appears verbatim in the “Defence Readiness 2030 Roadmap” adopted at the most recent EU summit, which provides for building a comprehensive war economy in Europe. As the WSWs warned in its commentary on the summit, this “roadmap” means nothing less than the mobilisation of the entire continent for a great war against Russia.

Breuer's demand for conscription and a general muster is part of putting this escalation strategy into practice. He states that the Bundeswehr must “meet NATO capability targets,” which require “a significantly larger size of the armed forces.”

Those NATO targets are, in reality, war aims. Already at the NATO summit in Vilnius in 2023, the alliance states declared that one must provide “the full spectrum of forces, capabilities, plans, resources and infrastructure”—“also for high-intensity, multi-domain warfighting against nuclear-

armed, peer competitors.” In other words, for a direct war with nuclear-armed Russia.

At this year’s NATO summit in The Hague, this course was further intensified. Member states agreed to raise their military spending to 5 percent of GDP over the next 10 years—at least 3.5 percent for weapons and troops, and 1.5 percent for infrastructure, cyber and logistical capacity. This would raise the annual spending of the NATO states to \$2.8 trillion, more than the entire economic output of Italy or Canada.

Germany is driving this rearmament particularly aggressively. Berlin’s defence budget is to rise to more than €150 billion by 2029, around 3.5 percent of GDP. Counting the “infrastructure-adjacent” war expenditures, the government is in fact investing around 5 percent of total economic output in military purposes, roughly €215 billion annually. To implement this madness, comparable only to the rearmament programme of the Nazis on the eve of the Second World War, the government, with the support of the Greens and the Left Party, has made 1 trillion euros available for rearmament.

The interview with Breuer is a warning in two senses: It underscores how aggressively the ruling class is preparing for war again. And it shows how provocatively the German military command is once again acting. It increasingly dominates politics, and politically, that is exactly what is intended.

In April 2024, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrat, SPD) had already announced a structural reform for the “Army of the future,” which included creating a unified central command structure for “national operational planning and command of missions.” For this purpose, the existing Territorial Command (for domestic operations) and the Joint Operations Command (for foreign deployments) were merged into a single Operational Command of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). At the time, we commented:

This measure means the de facto reestablishment of a general staff, which was banned in the Potsdam Agreement of 1945 following the criminal role played by the German military leadership in the two world wars. Now it is being tacitly reintroduced. Civilian control over the Bundeswehr, which was enshrined in West Germany’s post-war constitution, is being removed with the return of the old war and great-power ambitions of German imperialism.

Breuer’s intervention, as de facto Chief of the General Staff, into the conscription debate shows how far the

“Bundeswehr of the future” has already become reality. The militarisation supported by all parties in the Bundestag (parliament) is inseparable from growing social inequality and authoritarian tendencies. As the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and its youth and student organisation, the IYSSE, have repeatedly emphasised, the “war-readiness” of the Bundeswehr is not compatible with democracy. It requires, as in the past, the suppression of the working class and the establishment of dictatorial forms of rule.

The reintroduction of conscription means subjecting youth to the war interests of capital, and it must be fought on the basis of a clear political perspective. The IYSSE explains in its statement “For a socialist perspective against the reintroduction of conscription”:

War does not simply arise from the bad intentions of individual politicians at the top of society but from the objective contradictions of capitalism itself. The contradiction between a world market, on the one hand, and its division into rival nation-states, on the other, inevitably leads to the struggle for markets and resources—in the form of wars.

As long as capitalism exists, there will be war. This means that a “peaceful Bundeswehr” is impossible and a dangerous illusion! Decisive conclusions must be drawn: The struggle against conscription is the struggle against war and against its root, capitalism.

The alternative to conscription, militarism and war, repression and the political dominance of the generals is the conscious building of an international socialist movement of the working class. Only through expropriating the armaments and financial oligarchy, dissolving NATO and the EU as imperialist military alliances and establishing the United Socialist States of Europe can a new world war be prevented.



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