Berlin names extreme warmonger as head of armed forces: The return of German militarism

Johannes Stern
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With the appointment of Christian Freuding as the new Inspector General of the Bundeswehr (armed forces), the German government is initiating a further stage in the country's aggressive rearmament programme and preparations for war. The 55-year-old lieutenant general, who has led the army since October 2025, is to replace General Carsten Breuer as Germany's highest-ranking soldier in February 2027. Breuer himself is moving to Brussels to head NATO's Military Committee.

The appointment underscores the determination with which the Merz-Klingbeil government, a coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SPD), is reviving German militarism and preparing for a direct war against Russia, a nuclear power. More than almost any other German officer, Freuding embodies the return to an aggressive foreign and military policy that takes up the most disastrous traditions of German imperialism. His career is inseparably bound up with the wars of the past three decades, from the NATO interventions in the Balkans and Afghanistan to the escalation of the war in Ukraine.

When Freuding was appointed Inspector of the Army in October 2025, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (SPD) was already praising him as the "general of the new era" and the "head of German Ukraine policy." Now he is promoting this militarist to the top of the entire Bundeswehr.

In the official press release of November 5, Pistorius gushes with enthusiasm. Freuding was a "strong, intelligent and convincing leader" who had everything required to lead the Bundeswehr into a "new age," he declared. He had proved that he could take and implement decisions quickly, and would now be responsible for the "strategic direction of the Bundeswehr and its build-up with new capabilities."

What Pistorius celebrates as military competence and strength of leadership is the willingness to press ahead with the war policy of the ruling class without any regard for its devastating consequences. Freuding stands for a generation of officers who no longer regard war as a state of exception, but as the defining purpose of the whole of society. Under his leadership, the Bundeswehr is to be transformed into a gigantic war machine, capable not only of defending NATO territory but of waging a major European war.

From NATO missions in the Balkans to war against Russia

Freuding is himself a product of the return of German militarism after reunification in 1990. That year, he joined the Bundeswehr and pursued his military career in the very period in which Germany increasingly began to act as an independent military power again for the first time since the end of the Second World War.

He was stationed in the Balkans, as part of the SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The NATO interventions in the former Yugoslavia, which culminated in 1999 in the bombing of Serbia in violation of international law, marked a historic turning point. For the first time since 1945, Germany again took part in a war of aggression. Freuding was later also deployed in Afghanistan, where the Bundeswehr participated in an imperialist war lasting almost two decades, which devastated large parts of the country and finally ended with the return of the Taliban to power.

Along the way, Freuding became a leading representative of the new German military leadership. From 2017 to 2019 he served as adjutant to then Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) and later took command of the 9th Armoured Training Brigade. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, he became head of the Special Staff for Ukraine in the Defence Ministry. From 2023 to 2025 he headed the newly created Planning and Command Staff, thereby coordinating central areas of German military policy.

In these posts he played a central role in the ever more extensive military support for Ukraine, the delivery of heavy weapons and the preparation of attacks on Russian territory with long-range weapons systems.

How openly Freuding is driving this escalation was shown by an interview with public broadcaster ZDF in July 2025. In it he called for weapons systems that can reach "deep into Russian territory" and attack "depots, command facilities, airfields" there.

At the federal press conference on July 16, the government was confronted with the question of why a leading German general was speaking of such attack options in the first person plural if Germany was supposedly not a party to the war. The Defence Ministry spokesman said that "we" referred merely to the German suppliers of weapons. He also confirmed that Berlin was financing the production of long-range Ukrainian weapons systems.

The distinction is absurd. Germany organises and finances the provision of weapons that make it possible to attack military targets deep inside the territory of a nuclear power, while claiming not to be directly involved in the war itself. The danger that the continued escalation will turn into a direct and potentially nuclear war of annihilation between NATO and Russia is being consciously accepted.

Freuding has made clear time and again that he regards the Ukraine war not merely as a military conflict in which Germany supports one side, but as preparation for a wider war. In an interview with the daily *Die Welt* in April 2026, he summed up the strategic logic of his policy, saying, "Everything that wears Russia down puts us in a better situation."

Behind the constant invocation of the supposed defence of Ukraine thus stands the cold imperialist calculation of exploiting the military weakening of Russia for Germany's own strategic aims, while also

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gaining time to rearm the Bundeswehr. According to this logic, the longer the war lasts and the more Russian and Ukrainian soldiers die, the more favourable the starting position becomes for the next military confrontation.

Freuding's meeting with Ukrainian neo-Nazis

Particularly telling in this context is Freuding's contact with Ukrainian right-wing extremists.

In May 2025, during an official visit to Kiev, he had himself photographed with Oleg Romanov, a commander from the milieu of the neo-Nazi-dominated Azov movement. In the pictures, the two officers posed together with a T-shirt of the "Paskuda Group" drone unit. Romanov has come to public attention through his use of far-right symbols and his glorification of Hitler's Waffen-SS. His unit is part of Ukraine's 3rd Assault Brigade, which emerged from the Azov milieu.

The photo was taken, of all times, during the days commemorating the defeat of German fascism in the Second World War. While people all over the world were remembering the liberation from Nazism and the millions of victims of Germany's war of annihilation, a leading Bundeswehr general posed with a representative of far-right forces that openly glorify fascist traditions.

The political significance of the incident cannot be brushed aside with the Defence Ministry's official justification that the encounter merely took place as part of an official programme of visits. That a high-ranking German general meets a commander from the Azov milieu during an official visit throws a spotlight on the real character of the war. It shows how far the normalisation of these forces has already advanced in the course of the Ukraine war.

Eight decades after the Wehrmacht, the Nazi army, waged a war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, in which 27 million Soviet citizens lost their lives, German imperialism is once again collaborating with ultra-right and fascist forces in Ukraine in the fight against Russia. The historical parallels are unmistakable. In both world wars, the domination of Eastern Europe and the subjugation of Russia were among the central war aims of German imperialism. Today these geopolitical ambitions are returning in a new form.

"March forward, increase speed, fire at will!"

In his public statements, too, Freuding regularly lapses into the language of a war-crazed militarist rallying the whole of society for war.

In his very first order of the day as Inspector of the Army in October 2025, he declared that the army had to grow, establish new formations and massively increase its fighting capability. His central message was, "The enemy will not wait for our 'ready' report." He wanted to lead an army "that is ready to fight, that prevails, that wins."

Even more blatant was his appearance at the end of September 2026 at an army command conference in Munster. In a video distributed via the German army's official Instagram channel, Freuding declared, "We know our ambitions, the direction of march. Now the order is: mount up, keep marching forward, increase speed, fire at will!"

At the end of October, together with his Dutch counterpart and more than 70 German and Dutch generals, he toured the Baltic states. There they reconnoitred possible areas of operation for a war with Russia, were shown new weapons systems and prepared military operations. Afterwards, Freuding demanded that NATO become even faster for the "fight tonight" and increase its fighting capability day by day.

This is the spirit that is to prevail at the top of the Bundeswehr in future. Freuding is, as it were, the German counterpart to US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, who is drilling an aggressive warrior cult into the American armed forces. Both embody a new generation of militarist leaders who elevate open enthusiasm for war, soldierly obedience and the glorification of military violence into a political programme.

The parallels with the earlier leaders of German militarism lie not only in the martial language and military bearing. They lie above all in the political objectives. Once again, a huge German army is to be built up that can operate in Eastern Europe and fight against Russia. Once again, the population is being told to prepare for privation and sacrifice. And once again, under the pretext of external threats, democratic rights are being curtailed and society militarised.

It is no accident that this development arouses nostalgic feelings on the far right. Dieter Stein, editor-in-chief of the far-right weekly *Junge Freiheit*, commented on Freuding's appointment on X with the words, "I admit that it stirs sentimental feelings when Christian Freuding becomes Inspector General of the Bundeswehr."

Stein recalled his own period of service in the same armoured reconnaissance battalion that Freuding later commanded, and his father's military tradition. While he did not yet wish to pass final judgement on Freuding's political suitability, his comment ended with the telling sentence, "One thing is certain: without soldiers, there is no state to be made."

The remark sums up the authoritarian conception of the state held by the far right, which is now spreading ever more openly at the top of the German military and throughout the ruling class.

War abroad and repression at home

Freuding's appointment comes at a time when the German government is pursuing its war policy even more aggressively, despite growing opposition in society.

On October 31, more than 120,000 young people took to the streets in over 30 German cities against cuts to education and social spending, militarism and the reintroduction of conscription. The next demonstrations are planned for November 14 and 20. Strikes and protests are also developing across Europe. This movement is an expression of deep-seated opposition to the policies of the ruling class, which is pouring billions into rearmament while schools, hospitals and social infrastructure are systematically destroyed.

The response of the German government consists of threats, police repression and a further escalation of its war policy. Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU) are defaming the protest movement. Dobrindt told the tabloid *Bild* that "violent left-wing groups and troublemakers from migrant communities" had hijacked the peaceful demonstrations of October 31 and demanded "serious penalties," and Merz backed this campaign. At the same time, Pistorius is pressing ahead with the programme of massive military rearmament. While the defence budget is to rise by almost a third in 2027, sweeping attacks on pensions, healthcare and social benefits are being prepared.

Freuding's appointment shows that the ruling class is determined to impose its war programme even against the will of broad sections of the population. The government is responding to resistance not with concessions, but with an intensified turn to militarism and authoritarian forms of rule. This disastrous course can be stopped only by the

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independent mobilisation of the working class on the basis of an international socialist programme.



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