

Packed IYSSE meeting at Humboldt University in Berlin

Our correspondents
25 October 2014

On Thursday, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a very successful meeting at Humboldt University in Berlin. Some 200 people, including many students from Humboldt, as well as groups of students from other universities in Berlin, apprentices and workers filled the meeting room to capacity. The attendance was especially significant because the university administration had sought to censor the meeting.

There was enormous interest in the subject of the meeting: “Why do the German elites once again want war?” Attendees said they had seen placards advertising the meeting and decided spontaneously: “I have to go.” The IYSSE, the youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG), had previously held well-attended public meetings on the same topic in Frankfurt and Bochum. Further meetings are planned.

Peter Schwarz, a member of the Socialist Equality Party executive committee and secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International, gave a comprehensive report, which was followed with great attentiveness by those present. The spokesman for the IYSSE at Humboldt University welcomed Schwarz, saying no one was better placed to answer the evening’s question. This was because, as a member of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) editorial board, Schwarz had played a major role in analysing the political and historical reasons for Germany’s renewed drive for world power.

At the outset, Schwarz stressed that there had been a fundamental change in Germany over the past year. “The German elites are suddenly calling for war,” he said. “Politicians are demanding military interventions and a program of rearmament. The media is propagandising against Russia and even news programmes like *Tagesthemen* are mainly churning out propaganda.”

Many people are deeply concerned about these developments, he continued, and the majority of the population opposes them. However, a deeper historical understanding and a political perspective to struggle against war is lacking.

In the first part of his presentation, Schwarz showed in detail how the return of German militarism was systematically prepared behind the backs of the people. For more than a year, representatives of political think tanks, government ministries,

universities, party foundations, political parties, NGOs, corporations and the media had worked out a new foreign policy strategy under the direction of the government-aligned Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Institute for International and Security Affairs) and the Washington-based German Marshall Fund think tank.

The strategy paper that emerged from the discussions, with the revealing title “New Power, New Responsibility,” called for Germany to take on more responsibility in leading military interventions, arguing that as a “trading and export country,” Germany, more than virtually any other country, was dependent on “demand from other markets, as well as access to international trade routes and raw materials.”

With the help of a PowerPoint presentation, Schwarz exposed the extent of the political conspiracy. “It is no accident,” he said, “that German President Joachim Gauck’s speech on October 3 last year corresponds almost word for word to the strategy paper ‘New Power, New Responsibility.’ Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, one of the primary initiators of the project, now works as Gauck’s speech writer in the president’s office.”

If one examined the list of those collaborating in the “New Power, New Responsibility” project, it came as no surprise that all of the parliamentary parties, the media and the universities had joined in the war offensive. The Left Party’s foreign policy advisor Stefan Liebich had taken part, as had Georg Nolte, a professor of international law at Humboldt University.

Schwarz explained that the discussions on a shift in foreign policy had by no means remained on the level of theory. “Since the new German government came to power,” he noted, “it has implemented this course with all its might. First, with the right-wing coup in Ukraine and the expansion of NATO military forces in Eastern Europe, and currently with the German intervention in the Middle East.”

Schwarz devoted the second part of his report to answering the question: “Why do the German elites once again want war?” He cited the resolution “The Return of German Imperialism and the Tasks of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit,” which was adopted by the PSG at an emergency conference against war in September. A key passage reads: “The reason for the revival of German militarism is the historic crisis of global capitalism and the nation-state system upon which it rests.”

Schwarz explained that as at the beginning of the 20th century and in the 1930s, the German elites were responding to the crisis of world capitalism with an increasingly aggressive foreign policy. In 1932, Trotsky examined the objective driving forces that produced the rise of Hitler and described Germany as the “most progressive capitalism under conditions of the European dead-end.” As in the First and Second World Wars, the German elite was once again striving to dominate Europe in order to become a world power.

It was no exaggeration to speak of a direct line leading from the Wilhelmenian Reich, through the Third Reich, to the Foreign Ministry today under Steinmeier. As in the past, German imperialism had set itself the goal of integrating Ukraine, Georgia and other countries that had previously belonged to the Soviet Union or the Tsarist Empire into the German sphere of influence. Today, German imperialism uses for this purpose the European Union, which it dominates.

“In this,” Schwarz said, “it is cooperating closely with political forces such as the Svoboda Party and the Fatherland Party, which hail Skoropadsky and the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera as national heroes.”

Schwarz cited an essay on the official web site of the Foreign Ministry with the revealing title, “Germany’s destiny: lead Europe in order to lead the world.” Another example was the recent book by former Green Party leader Joschka Fischer with the title *Will Europe Fail?* In it, the former foreign minister writes: “Two decades after Germany’s second unification, Germany and Europe have once again been overtaken by the old contradiction of Germany’s central position: Germany is and remains too large for Europe but too small for the world, too small for an independent world political role.”

Schwarz showed how the return of German imperialist politics was combined with a revision of history. Right at Humboldt University, he said, there were professors such as political scientist Herfried Münkler and the head of the Department for the History of Eastern Europe, Jörg Baberowski, who were systematically working to revise the previous understanding of the origins of both world wars and Germany’s responsibility. Both were using their academic positions to publicly beat the drum for a more aggressive German foreign policy.

In this context, Schwarz discussed the conflict between the IYSSE and the university administration in the lead-up to the meeting. The administration had attempted to politically censor the IYSSE meeting, he explained, by presenting the critique of the right-wing professors as an “insult” and “smear that violated the standards of academic discourse.”

Schwarz firmly rejected this accusation. The IYSSE had never insulted or smeared anyone, but merely “very soberly and objectively analysed what the Humboldt professors Münkler and Baberowski said on talk shows, in radio interviews and newspaper articles, and in public panel discussions.”

Baberowski’s statements were particularly scandalous. Students did not only have the right, but also the duty to protest against them, Schwarz declared. He presented several citations.

On February 10 of this year, Baberowski stated in *Der Spiegel*: “Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not evil. He did not want the extermination of the Jews to be discussed at his table.”

At the beginning of October, in a public discussion at the German Historical Museum on military combat against non-state actors such as ISIS and the Taliban, Baberowski said, “And if one is not prepared to take hostages, burn down villages and hang people, and spread terror and fear as the terrorists do, if one isn’t prepared to do that, one will not win such a conflict.”

In concluding his report, Schwarz posed the decisive question: “What is to be done against war and the return of German militarism?” He said the struggle against war was inseparable from the mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme. “There can be no struggle for socialism without a struggle against war, and in turn, no struggle against war without a fight for socialism,” he declared.

“The PSG and its youth organisation, the IYSSE, base the struggle against militarism and war theoretically, politically and organisationally on the working class,” Schwarz said.

He continued: “As an international class, it is the only force capable of preventing a Third World War. Its interests bring it into conflict with the capitalist system. But the socialist revolution is not an automatic process. The determination of its tempo and its success falls to the arena of politics. As Trotsky wrote on the eve of World War II, the historical crisis of humanity is summed up in the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The resolution of this crisis depends upon the decisions, actions and building of our party.”

Due to the great interest in the presentation, it was agreed to hold a follow-up meeting on Monday to continue the discussion.



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