

IYSSE (Germany) lecture series: The return of German militarism and the falsification of history

27 December 2014

The IYSSE at Humboldt University in Berlin is standing candidates in the January election to the university's student parliament (StuPa). As part of its election campaign against war, the IYSSE will hold a series of lectures under the title, "The return of German militarism and the falsification of history".

2014 marks the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War and 75 years since the beginning of the Second World War. Instead of using the anniversaries to recall its previous crimes and warn of the danger of a new war, the German ruling class is again heading on the path to war.

Earlier this year, President Joachim Gauck proclaimed an end to Germany's post-war policy of military restraint. The German government has quickly begun to put this policy into practice, actively supporting the right-wing coup in Ukraine and the imperialist war against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). At the start of the new year, a third world war is no longer a theoretical hypothesis, but rather a real danger.

The return to a policy based on militarism and war has been accompanied not only by a massive media propaganda campaign, but also the rewriting of history. Professors at Humboldt University (HU) are particularly active in seeking to belittle the historic crimes of the German Reich and National Socialism in order to provide an ideological basis for Germany's renewed bid for world power.

The IYSSE is standing candidates in the elections to the HU parliament (StuPa) to oppose the drive to war and to prevent HU from being transformed into an ideological think-tank for war and dictatorship. This requires, above all, a clear understanding of the key political and historical issues.

The lectures will address the following topics:

1) *The WWI war guilt debate and the continuity of German foreign policy*

The 100th anniversary of the First World War has sparked a fierce controversy over the reasons and causes of the seminal catastrophe of the 20th century. The debate has taken place against the background of a major reorientation of German foreign policy. Demands today for an end to the post-WWII policy of military restraint have gone hand-in-hand with efforts to relativize Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of WWI. Leading German academics have played an important role in this campaign, directing their venom primarily against the noted historian Fritz Fischer. In his book from 1961, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, Fischer wrote that the German elite systematically prepared for world war to pursue its economic and political interests, and that the war aims of the Nazi regime during World War II followed in the same tradition.

The seminar will provide an overview of the controversy and discuss its relevance for today.

January 5, 2015, 18:30

Humboldt-University, Room 1.405

Seminar building (Dorotheenstraße 24)

2) *The relativization of Nazi crimes at the Humboldt University*

In an article written in 1986, Ernst Nolte played down the role of the National Socialists, arguing that the Nazi regime was an understandable reaction to Bolshevism. His article led directly to the so-called Historians' Dispute (*Historikerstreit*) of the same year. Following the dispute, Nolte's views were widely regarded as thoroughly discredited by serious historians and political scientists. A systematic campaign is now

underway at one of Germany's leading universities (HU) and in the media to rehabilitate Nolte's views and once again relativize Nazi crimes. This development is closely bound up with the change undertaken in German foreign policy. The "end of military restraint" requires a new, reactionary interpretation of history.

The seminar will also explain why long-discredited views are now widely accepted uncritically in academic circles.

January 12, 2015, 18:30

Humboldt-University, Room 1.405

Seminar building (Dorotheenstraße 24)

3) *The universities as ideological centers for militarism*

The year 1933 was the beginning of *Gleichschaltung*—that is, the policy, pursued by the Nazi regime, of suppressing political and intellectual opposition at German universities, which had the active support of the majority of professors. Jewish and dissident members of the university were expelled, and the crude ideology of the Nazis was elevated to the status of science. Today, university professors are once again applauding methods of conducting war that contravene all international norms and conventions. At the same time, there is a concerted effort to silence all oppositional voices.

The seminar will examine the role played by the universities under National Socialism and in the development of Germany's new war policy.

January 19, 2015, 18:30

Room to be announced



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