

Students at Berlin's Free University pass motion criticising right-wing Humboldt University professors

Our correspondents

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Last month, the Student Parliament at Berlin's Humboldt University (HU) passed a motion put forward by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) defending student criticism of the militarism and historical revisionism of professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski. Three weeks later, students at the city's Free University (FU) have expressed their own solidarity with the resolution.

Last Thursday, the Student Parliament (StuPa) at the FU—Berlin's largest university, with more than 35,000 students—voted overwhelmingly for the resolution. Forty-five members of the parliament voted in support, and just three abstained.

The resolution has now been published on the FU General Student Assembly (AstA) web site under the headline, "Student Parliament at FU Berlin unanimously supports the criticism of Humboldt University students relating to professor Münkler."

The text, which had been ratified by the Student Parliament at HU on June 11 by a large majority, "deprecates" the attempts to censor the Münkler Watch blog and the IYSSE for their criticism of the right-wing positions of Münkler and Baberowski. It names both professors and calls on students "to express themselves politically, question forms of rule, and oppose tendencies aimed at trivialising Germany's inhuman history, especially in relation to the content of university teaching."

Now, the FU StuPa has expressed its "solidarity" with the resolution passed at HU, and especially supports "the possibility for and central value of the anonymous expression of views."

"Regarding the criticism raised by students at Berlin's Humboldt University against Professor Herfried Münkler, his positions and links to politics, the military and the

media, as well as the subsequent media campaign against HU students, the 34th FU Student Parliament at its meeting on July 2, 2105 unanimously agreed a resolution expressing solidarity with students at HU and underscores the criticisms raised of Münkler's work."

The statement continues, "The FU AStA supports these positions and especially condemns the repressive and unacceptable behaviour of HU towards the criticism raised, and those raising the criticism."

Before the vote, an IYSSE representative at the FU addressed the student representatives, explaining the content and the importance of the dispute at Humboldt.

She first addressed the political background. "At the Munich Security Conference at the beginning of 2014, the government announced the end of German military restraint and has since pursued an aggressive foreign policy. The universities play an important role in this," she explained.

At HU, professors Münkler and Baberowski are outspoken advocates of the new German foreign policy, she noted. They enjoy close ties to the government and the armed forces. They promote their political views publicly on talk shows and in radio interviews, newspaper articles and panel discussions.

At the same time, the professors are working to rewrite history, the IYSSE representative explained. While Münkler has focused on minimising German responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War, Baberowski attempts to justify the war crimes of the Nazis as a legitimate response to "Bolshevik violence"—in the tradition of the Nazi-apologist historian Ernst Nolte.

The IYSSE representative referred to some of the statements and positions of the two professors. Münkler, for example, was a declared supporter of the use of combat drones. In his latest book, *Power in the Middle*, he

urged Germany to once again take on a “leadership” role and become “Europe’s disciplinarian.”

Baberowski, a historian of Eastern Europe, has not only supported Nolte, but has also downplayed the crimes of Hitler. In the newsweekly *Der Spiegel*, he was quoted, saying, “Nolte was correct historically” and “Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not terrible.”

The IYSSE spokeswoman then reported the way in which the two professors, with the support of the university management and the media, tried to suppress every expression of student criticism of their right-wing political views. The Münkler Watch blog, where students anonymously report and criticise the professor’s lectures, became the target of an aggressive media campaign.

“Previously, our group, the IYSSE, had been faced with political censorship and intimidation,” she added. “At meetings and in statements, we have systematically shown how the re-militarisation of German foreign policy is closely linked with a rightward ideological turn at the universities, and explained the role played by professors like Münkler and Baberowski.”

At the end of her contribution, the IYSSE representative called on the StuPa to support the resolution. “It concerns the defence of basic democratic rights,” she said. “You have to uphold the basic democratic position that students have the right and even the duty to criticise professors, especially if they put forward positions that have well-known political consequences, particularly in Germany, and that have a terrible history.”

The unanimous adoption of the resolution by students at a second renowned Berlin university is not just another blow against Münkler and Baberowski. It is a blow against the entire ruling elite. After two world wars, the plans of the German ruling class to once again establish Germany as a military power and make it the “disciplinarian” of Europe lack any support among ordinary people and are encountering growing opposition.



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