

New from Mehring Verlag

Scholarship or War Propaganda? The Return of German Militarism and the Dispute at Berlin's Humboldt University

Peter Schwarz
10 August 2015

At the end of August, Mehring Verlag will publish the German edition of the book *Scholarship or War Propaganda? The Return of German Militarism and the Dispute at Berlin's Humboldt University*.

The volume examines the background to the dispute at Humboldt University in Berlin, which caused a storm in the media in the spring of 2015. Many newspapers, led by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit*, hounded the Trotskyist youth organization International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the *Münkler-Watch* blog, which had spoken out critically against Herfried Münkler, a professor of political theory at Humboldt University, and Professor Jörg Baberowski of Humboldt's Department of Eastern European History.

The book shows in minute detail how in their writings and public statements, Münkler and Baberowski advocate that Germany adopt an aggressive great power foreign policy and downplay German crimes in World War I and World War II. It examines the relationship between the "end of military restraint" proclaimed by the German government and the attacks on freedom of speech at Humboldt University. It documents the struggle of the IYSSE against censorship and against the transformation of Humboldt University into an ideological centre for war propaganda.

The analysis contained in this book, however, goes far beyond the immediate events at Humboldt University. Anyone who wants to understand why the ruling elites in Germany are abandoning their previous policy of restraint in regard to foreign policy, and are

instead rearming, intervening militarily worldwide, and acting, in line with the prescriptions of Münkler, as the "disciplinarian" of the European Union, must read this book.

One of its key theses is that German imperialism is returning to the traditions of the Kaiser's Empire and the Nazi regime. This contention was dismissed in many quarters as an exaggeration or pure invention. The public campaign against the IYSSE served not least to promote this political position. But since the German government imposed new and even more brutal austerity measures upon Greece in early July, the entire international press has been discussing the return of the "German question" as a central issue in European and world affairs.

"Europe, once again at a moment of crisis, faces the quandary of how to deal with German power. The German Question is back," wrote the *New York Times* on 13 July. The French newspaper *Le Figaro* reported an "anti-German zone of turbulence" that is sweeping over France. And the London-based *Financial Times* accused Greece's creditors of reverting to "the nationalist European power struggles of the 19th and early 20th century."

The investigation of the *Netzpolitik.org* blog for treason, which Germany's attorney general launched under pressure from the secret service, confirms another warning in this book: that the return to militarism and great power politics is incompatible with democracy and freedom of expression. The witch-hunting of the IYSSE and *Münkler-Watch* was only the prelude to a campaign of intimidation against all

journalists who uncover or criticise the machinations of the secret services and the military.

Some articles in *Scholarship or War Propaganda?* were previously published by the *World Socialist Web Site*, some appear for the first time. These are essays and lectures that were written by representatives of the IYSSE and the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG—Socialist Equality Party) in relation to the struggle at Humboldt University. They deal with current events as well as their historical, political and theoretical background.

We especially recommend to our readers the 40-page essay by Christoph Vandreier, “Jörg Baberowski’s Falsification of History.” It is based on a lecture Vandreier gave on 12 January 2015 at the invitation of the IYSSE at Humboldt University, but has been thoroughly revised and expanded for this volume.

It carefully documents the relationship between Baberowski’s Maoist past, his purely subjective approach to history, based on the irrational positions of Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, and his falsification of history. The essay is not only a devastating critique of the theoretical and historical conceptions of Baberowski, it also provides insight into an academic milieu in which Baberowski’s statement that “Hitler wasn’t vicious” is accepted without criticism.

Also published for the first time is the lecture “Why Do the German Elites Want War?” by Peter Schwarz, which aroused great interest in October 2014 at Humboldt University and in several other cities. In addition, the book includes the lecture “Socialism and Historical Truth,” delivered March 13, 2015 at the Leipzig Book Fair by David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the US. North’s lecture drew an audience of 450 people. It places the dispute at Humboldt University in its broader historical and international context.

The volume includes three appendices. The first documents the beginning of the confrontation with Baberowski in February 2014, when he invited Robert Service, author of a slanderous biography of Leon Trotsky, to Humboldt University and suppressed any criticism of Service’s book. The other two appendices detail the IYSSE’s defence of freedom of expression at

Humboldt University, including its defence of *Münkler-Watch*.

The WSWS is publishing today the Foreword to the new book. *Scholarship or War Propaganda?* is available for order directly from the publisher Mehring Verlag and will be available in bookstores from the end of August.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact