

Scholarship not war propaganda at Humboldt University!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Germany)
14 October 2015

On October 13, the new academic year began at Humboldt University in Berlin, and student organisations were able to participate in an “Info Market” The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) welcomed new students with the following leaflet.

Dear new students,

The military interventions by the great powers have left entire societies in the Middle East in ruins. The confrontation in Syria threatens to lead to nuclear war between the US and Russia. The desperate refugees seeking to escape these wars, for which Germany is partly responsible, are being stopped at Europe’s borders, crammed into inhumane camps or driven to their death in the Mediterranean Sea.

Humboldt University is at the heart of these developments. Students who oppose the government’s war policy and stand for solidarity with refugees immediately find themselves in conflict with the university management and certain professors. You are not entering a temple of learning, but a political battlefield.

In this regard, Humboldt University has a long and very diverse history. Not only did outstanding philosophers and scientists such as Hegel and Einstein teach here, but also the “Crown Jurist of the Third Reich,” Carl Schmitt. Karl Marx studied here, but the university was also the location for the founding of the National Socialist Students’ Union in 1926 and the notorious book burning of 1933.

Today, influential circles are once again seeking to turn Humboldt University into a state-run training ground for the promotion of right-wing and militarist ideologies. Whether this campaign succeeds, or whether the university remains a place of scholarship and research, depends on our actions.

A leading role in this endeavour is being played by professors Herfried Münkler (Political Theory) and Jörg

Baberowski (History of Eastern Europe). Not a week passes, and often not a day, without at least one of them speaking publicly.

Münkler promotes German great power politics in books, newspaper articles and interviews. He insists that Germany must play the role of the “hegemon” and “disciplinarian” of Europe. He supports the government’s demand for an “end to military restraint” and conducts a polemic against a “world-view, according to which abstention and waiting, rather than intervention, is the key to a more peaceful world.”

Baberowski has downplayed the crimes of National Socialism (Nazism). Eighteen months ago in *Der Spiegel*, he professed his support for German historian Ernst Nolte, the infamous Nazi apologist. Baberowski said that Hitler was “not a psychopath” and was “not cruel”. In his books, he presents German war crimes in the East as a response to “Bolshevik violence” and denies that Nazi ideology bears any responsibility.

In October 2014, Baberowski called for methods to be used that violate all international law as part of the fight against Islamist groups. His exact words were: “And if you are not willing to take hostages, burn down villages and hang people and spread fear and terror, as do the terrorists, if you are not ready for such an approach you will not win, then we should leave it alone.”

Meanwhile, Baberowski operates openly as a political agitator and is using his position at Humboldt University to establish a far-right movement. In numerous articles and interviews—among others in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, the Swiss *Tages-Anzeiger*, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and the Austrian *Presse*—and at a Christian Social Union meeting in Bavaria, Baberowski has spoken out against the admission of refugees into Germany.

He calls for the closing of borders, rants against “the talk of a [German] welcoming culture” and claims that too many immigrants from foreign cultures are destroying

the foundation of society. Attacking the government from the right, he has complained that Germany has “abandoned its national sovereignty and left the decision about who may come and who may remain in the hands of illegal immigrants.” The chancellor is closing “her eyes to the disaster that she has caused,” and has violated “her oath of office.”

Echoing the rhetoric of the far-right Pegida movement, Baberowski has proclaimed that the media has turned Germany into a “kingdom of moralists”, in which “prudence and reason” are prohibited. Critics “who raise their voice against the virtuous madness” are excluded from the debate on immigration by “the authorities”.

The fascist German National Party (NPD) has recognised Baberowski as a kindred spirit. His articles are quoted approvingly on NPD Facebook pages. The monthly party newspaper *Deutsche Stimme* (*German Voice*) devoted its latest issue to an article defending Baberowski against his left-wing critics.

It is up to us as students to prevent the transformation of Humboldt University into a centre of right-wing ideology. The university administration and the professors will not do it. They have backed Baberowski and Münkler.

The IYSSE publicly criticised the right-wing positions of Baberowski last year. We have done this on leaflets and in a number of well-attended meetings. The university administration has responded with censorship, intimidation, defamation and the mobilisation of the bourgeois press.

Professor Peter Burschel from the Department of History and University President Professor Jan-Hendrik Olbertz have published official statements accusing us of “defamation” and of conducting a “smear campaign”, without producing any evidence to back up their claims. They called upon teachers and students to oppose the “campaign” of the IYSSE. These statements remain on the web site of the university, despite repeated requests that the administration repudiate this attack on freedom of expression and remove them.

The media has also supported Baberowski and Münkler. Dozens of articles condemn the criticism of their right-wing views as “vulgarity” and “bullying”. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* even linked criticism with “bomb threats and calls for murder”. The university administration did not defend students against this incitement, but took part in it.

Baberowski obviously felt strengthened and encouraged by this support, making public his xenophobic positions. Everything the IYSSE has said and written about him is

confirmed by the facts. Anyone can check this for themselves. The articles, statements and speeches that we have produced as part of this dispute are documented in the book *Scholarship or war propaganda?*

We have not allowed ourselves to be intimidated by the smear campaign. In January, in spite of the campaign of the university administration, the IYSSE won a seat in the student parliament. In June, on the initiative of the IYSSE, the Student Parliament adopted a resolution by a large majority disapproving of the attacks by the university administration and the Institute of History and inviting students “to express themselves politically, to question domination and...oppose tendencies trivialising the inhuman German history.”

The dispute has only just begun. With the development of war in the Middle East and the deployment of NATO against Russia, the ruling elites are pushing more and more for the revival of German militarism. Capitalism is in a deep crisis worldwide. In order to suppress social struggles and opposition to war, they once again need a strong right-wing movement.

Those determined to prevent Humboldt University from being transformed into a centre of militarism, xenophobia and right-wing ideology must support the struggle of the IYSSE. We invite all students to contact the IYSSE, come to our meetings, follow our web site (iysse.de) and read the *World Socialist Web Site* (wsws.org).

As the youth and student organisation of the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International, we work closely with our sister organisations around the world.

IYSSE at Humboldt University



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact