

New book from Mehring Verlag

Scholarship or War Propaganda attracts wide interest in Germany

Christoph Dreier
9 November 2015

The book *Scholarship or War Propaganda*, published by the Mehring Verlag publishing house in October, has hit a nerve. Just a few weeks after its appearance, it has attracted wide interest and prompted important debates.

The book documents the struggle by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International) against the return of German militarism. Last year the IYSSE revealed how Professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski at Humboldt University in Berlin downplayed the historic crimes of German militarism and agitated for an aggressive German foreign policy. In treating these questions, the volume addresses fundamental political issues.

“The subject of this book goes well beyond the conflict at Berlin’s Humboldt University (HU),” notes the book’s foreword. “It is concerned with the relationship between scholarship and politics in periods of militarism, mounting international conflict and growing social tensions. It focuses on the question: Will the universities remain centres of scholarship and free criticism? Or will they once again become state-directed cadre-training centres for right-wing and militarist ideologies, as was previously the case in German history?”

These questions had already met with a polarized response in Germany in the past year. While the IYSSE received widespread support among students and workers, organized meetings with hundreds of participants, and was elected into student parliament at Humboldt University, leading German newspapers reacted with a smear campaign against the IYSSE and

the student group Münkler-Watch. The university leadership also attacked the IYSSE and accused it of “character assassination.”

In the weeks since the publication of the book, Münkler and Baberowski have made their right-wing politics even more explicit. In his new book *War Fragments*, Münkler justifies the US “war on terror” and encourages similar war deployments by the German Armed Forces. He praises “drone and surveillance systems” as “the weapons of post-heroic societies” and mocks critics of combat drones who defend “the ethics of a pre-bourgeois society with heroic, pre-bourgeois ideals.” In the “security agency surveillance and control systems,” he sees the modern counterbalance of the “Hague convention respecting the rules of war and Geneva conventions.”

Jörg Baberowski has made himself the spokesman of extreme right wing circles and exploits his position as a professor in order to gain access to the media and agitate against refugees while demanding the sealing off of Germany’s borders.

In an interview with the Swiss *Basler Zeitung*, he says that “in countries with right wing conservative parties that are critical of immigration,” there is “less violence against foreigners.” He praises the far-right Swiss People’s Party (SVP) as a “corrective for the other parties,” and claims SVP head Christoph Blocher is “on the contrary, not a right wing radical. In Germany, you are a right wing radical if you go to work on time.”

The election posters of the SVP, which contemptuously attack immigrants and the left, have now been copied by far right radicals all over Europe. In July, SVP party president Toni Brunner called on the

functionaries of the party to “systematically” and “consistently” combat the building of new asylum centers. This requires “active opposition,” Brunner declares.

Baberowski has espoused similar views. During a September 24 discussion on Germany’s 3sat television network, he declared, “Wherever many people come from a foreign context and the population is not involved in solving all of these problems, it naturally leads to aggression.” Although there have been 490 attacks on refugee lodgings this year, according to official estimates, Baberowski argues, “Given the problem we currently have with immigration in Germany, I think that’s rather harmless.”

Baberowski’s downplaying of violence against refugees will come as no surprise to anyone who has read *Scholarship or War Propaganda*. The book shows in minute detail how Baberowski works to downplay the crimes of National Socialism in Germany and claims that violence is unavoidable. His agitation against refugees is absolutely consistent with this.

The ruling elite is using the refugee crisis to justify new wars and justify attacks on fundamental social and democratic rights. *Scholarship or War Propaganda* explains this development and shows the connection between the return of German militarism, which is supported by all parts of the German political establishment, from the Christian Social Union to the Left Party, and the deep crisis of capitalism and growing tensions between the imperialist powers.

This is why the book has met with such great demand at meetings at Humboldt University and also at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. “More copies of this book were sold in the first four weeks after it appeared than any other book at our publishing house,” said Wolfgang Zimmerman of Mehring Verlag.

The review published in the Left Party affiliated daily newspaper *Neues Deutschland* is especially remarkable. Author Kurt A. Richter takes exception to the “darts thrown at the Left Party” and “the invoking of an imaginary working class,” but cannot avoid calling the book a “necessary polemic against Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski.” He says the book is by no means about a “tempest in a teapot,” but instead is part of a “weighty dispute.”

The “argumentative volume” is “extremely informative and stimulating and ought to find many

readers,” writes Richter. Baberowski and Münkler are “justifiably accused of downplaying or even falsifying controversial problems of German and Russian history, in order to encourage a hegemonic role for Germany as ‘taskmaster’ (Münkler) of Europe and a policy of global intervention. Now an anthology is available whose authors not only summarize the polemic against Münkler and Baberowski, but carry it forward in an argumentative counter-analysis.”

The review concedes that the IYSSE is right on the fundamental questions. Münkler’s “academically unsound attacks on Fischer are meant to justify the supposed necessity of German interventions globally and the German claim on leadership in Europe,” writes Richter.

The chapter on Baberowski makes it clear “with what appalling ignorance Soviet history after the October revolution of 1917 is falsified, with what embarrassing tunnel vision he judges the civil war, the ‘red terror’, Stalinism and the invasion of the USSR by Nazi Germany. Baberowski even adopts the long refuted thesis of a German preventative attack, with which Hitler wanted to circumvent a ‘planned’ attack by Stalin. In this way, German fascism is actually downplayed and the aggressiveness of the German elite at that time hidden.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact