

Germany: Humboldt University Student Parliament opposes military advertising at university

Our reporter
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The Student Parliament (StuPa) of Humboldt University (HU) in Berlin voted on November 21 to oppose any Bundeswehr (armed forces) advertising at the university. The motion was tabled by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) chapter at Humboldt.

The StuPa adopted the resolution by a large majority: 19 voted in favor, six against and seven abstained. The resolution reads: “The Student Parliament rejects all forms of advertising for the Bundeswehr at our institution and calls on the Berlin Students Union and the University administration not to allow advertising by the Bundeswehr on the campus of HU.”

The resolution was triggered by the latest Bundeswehr advertising campaign, part of a drive that is increasingly targeting young people at schools and universities. The Bundeswehr has been advertising at HU since the beginning of the winter semester, especially in the canteen at the university’s North Campus. The advertisements are particularly aimed at recruiting medical students for the Army Medical Service.

In the days leading up to the StuPa meeting, the IYSSE distributed leaflets informing students of the motion to be discussed. Many students were indignant that the Bundeswehr was being promoted so openly at an institution of science and learning.

In its leaflet, the IYSSE explained that the Bundeswehr advertisements directly contradicted the principles of the university, which called for the “humanization of social life.” The university’s constitution states that HU promotes “the maintenance of peace.”

The resolution was introduced at the StuPa meeting

by Sven Wurm, an IYSSE spokesman and member of the parliament. “It is important that the StuPa act from the outset against this development,” Wurm said. “If we do not intervene early, the Bundeswehr will feel encouraged to push their offensive at other universities, including setting up recruitment stalls and holding evening lectures and the like.”

The Bundeswehr advertising campaign is part of Germany’s return to aggressive foreign and great power politics. Ever since the incumbent president, Joachim Gauck, and the federal government officially announced the end of German military restraint at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, “career counselors” and Bundeswehr “youth officers” have increasingly sought to recruit new soldiers at schools and job centres.

The passage of the resolution by the StuPa is an expression of growing opposition among young workers and students to the militarization of society. Students have also successfully protested against the Bundeswehr campaign at other German universities. Following an official protest by the General Student Committee (AStA) at the University of Hamburg, the Bundeswehr was banned from advertising there.

The rejection of Bundeswehr advertising by the StuPa at Humboldt University in Berlin has a particular significance. Two Humboldt professors, Jörg Baberowski and Herfried Münkler, have close links with the Bundeswehr and play an important role in the elaboration and ideological justification of the new German war policy.

In the book *Scholarship or War Propaganda?* the IYSSE has documented how Baberowski writes for and lectures at the Centre for Military History and Social

Sciences of the Bundeswehr (ZMSBw) in Potsdam. For example, he wrote for the Military History Research Institute (MGFA), which opened in 2012 in ZMSBw, producing two publications intended “as guidance in action” for German soldiers. [1]

Professor Münkler regularly participates in public panel discussions about rearmament and war with representatives of the Bundeswehr, and in his capacity as a Humboldt professor makes statements lauding senior military figures. For example, on January 21, 2015, he delivered the testimonial lecture on the 60th birthday of the ZMSBw commander Colonel Dr. Hans-Hubertus Mack. The lecture was titled “1914-2014: The long roots of the recent wars in Europe and the Middle East.” [2]

While Humboldt professors such as Thomas Sandkühler try to suppress student criticism of the militarist tendencies at Humboldt University, students are no longer willing to accept the use of their university for war propaganda. **

Notes

[1] Vandreier, Christoph (2015): “Jörg Baberowski’s falsification of history,” in *Scholarship or War Propaganda? The return of German militarism and the dispute at Berlin’s Humboldt University*, p. 103

[2] Testimonial lecture by Prof. Dr. Herfried Münkler in Potsdam at the ZMSBw: “1914-2014: The long roots of the recent wars in Europe and the Middle East,” http://www.mgfa-potsdam.de/html/aktuelles/festvortrag_1914?PHPSESSID=92bb8



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