

# Berlin university meeting discusses election of Trump and the return of German militarism

**Our correspondents**  
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On Tuesday, January 4 more than 60 students and young workers attended the second meeting organized by the IYSSE group at Berlin's Humboldt University as part of its campaign for this year's elections to the university student parliament. On December 14 several hundred students had attended a lecture given by David North.

On Wednesday the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) invited Johannes Stern as speaker. Stern is a member of the IYSSE and of the World Socialist Web Site editorial board in Germany. He regularly writes on issues of militarism and state rearmament.

Stern began his contribution with a characterization of the Trump government, due to enter office on January 20. "This will be the most right-wing government the United States has ever seen," he said, adding that the incoming cabinet was composed of right-wing extremists, generals, and politicians notorious for their hostility to social programs. The new president is intent on destroying all social achievements and plans to lead the US into new wars.

The new American government is the product of profound social and political processes. The crisis of the capitalist system has become increasingly acute since the end of the Soviet Union. Unprecedented levels of social inequality, ceaseless wars with millions of victims and the growth of totalitarian state measures were the hallmarks of this development. "The same issues and conflicts that led to the Russian revolution in 1917 are back on the agenda at the beginning of 2017," Stern said.

Developments in Europe are characterized by the same contradictions as those in the US, Stern stressed. The ruling elite in Germany has reacted to the election of Trump with a massive lurch to the right and growing

nationalism.

In a PowerPoint presentation, Stern showed how German militarism had already been systematically advanced in recent years. In January 2014, leading German politicians announced the end of the country's post-World War II policy of military restraint and then implemented the new line. Now German troops are stationed on the Russian border and the issue of nuclear weapons for Germany is openly discussed.

The return of German militarism was closely linked to the expansion of the police and surveillance state, Stern emphasized. The attack on the Berlin Christmas market was being exploited to dismantle basic democratic rights. The campaign following the 2016 New Year events in the city of Cologne Silvesternacht had whipped up racism and justified the arming of the police.

Stern drew attention to the important role Humboldt University plays in the ideological preparation of militarism and right wing ideology. HU professors such as Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski used every form of the media to rail against refugees, campaign for a police state or demand new wars.

The lurch to the right would not be possible if it were not for the support provided by nominally "left" parties, Stern declared. He cited a series of comments by representatives of the Greens and the Left Party in support of an aggressive foreign policy and the strengthening of the state. Many representatives of the Left Party and other pseudo-left organizations have gone so far as to defend Trump, Stern said, citing statements by Sahra Wagenknecht and the political scientist Chantal Mouffe. US Democratic Party presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has made similar comments.

The rhetoric of these tendencies makes clear that the

working class cannot rely on former left representatives of the establishment, but needs its own party to overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist society. Otherwise, new wars, dictatorship and the growth of social inequality are inevitable.

The lecture was followed by a lively discussion focusing on the assessment of pseudo-left tendencies such as the Left Party, Syriza and similar groups supporting Sanders in the US. Some participants had raised the question as to what extent Sanders could be regarded as an alternative to Trump and Clinton.

Sanders, with his support for Clinton, had made it clear that he ultimately also represented the interests of Wall Street, Stern explained. In the discussion other members of the IYSSE also spoke of the importance of an independent party of the working class.

“The claim that it would be possible to stop Trump by supporting Clinton, as Sanders asserted, has been disproved by the election. In fact the pseudo-lefts who try to herd workers behind the establishment are largely responsible for the rise of the right,” said one IYSSE member. “One can only stop the turn to the right with a broad and independent movement of workers.”

“Syriza epitomised the role of these tendencies, which employ leftist phrases while carrying out right-wing policies in the interest of the upper middle class. Syriza is now implementing the austerity measures more brutally than any other Greek government,” said another member.

Sven Wurm, who chaired the event and is the lead candidate of the IYSSE for the StuPa election, ended the meeting by calling upon all the participants to draw the appropriate conclusions from the discussion and build the IYSSE.

Discussion continued for some time after the official end of the meeting in corridors and at the book stall. Many students attending an IYSSE meeting for the first time declared they were impressed by the lecture and interested in the socialist perspectives of the IYSSE.

David, who has just begun studying political science at Humboldt University, found the meeting very rewarding. “I will certainly look more closely into the discussion about professors Münkler and Baberowski,” he said. A bioinformatics student from the Free University in Berlin also enjoyed the discussion and agreed to support the IYSSE by distributing flyers.

Moni is studying agricultural sciences in the fourth

semester. It was her first attendance at a political meeting and she had been politicized by the election of Trump. “I was not aware of the developments towards militarism outlined in the meeting report,” she said. In any event she declared she wanted to attend the next meeting on January 11, on the subject, “The Universities as a Bulwark for Right-wing and Militarist Ideology.”



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