“100 billion euros for education and health, instead of rearmament!”

“Stop the war!”: Successful IYSSE meeting with students at Humboldt University, Berlin

Our reporters
4 July 2022

Under the title, “Stop the war! 100 billion euros for education and health, instead of rearmament!” the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) organized an online discussion with students at Humboldt University (HU) in Berlin last Monday, in which about 60 people participated. It was the first of two campaign events by the IYSSE university group for the elections to the student parliament (StuPa) at Humboldt University.

IYSSE candidate Gregor Kahl emphasized the importance of the election campaign: The Trotskyist youth and student organization was building a socialist movement against fascism and war, he said. The IYSSE was the only slate running that had placed the fight against militarism at the centre of its election campaign—and this at a university that plays a central role in the ideological preparation for war, he said.

Recently, in an open letter to the HU presidium, IYSSE StuPa representative Sven Wurm had demanded it finally end its support for the right-wing radical and violent professor Jörg Baberowski. The open letter and the announcement of the online event had met with a great response among students. Amid the daily escalation of the Ukraine war and the unprecedented rearmament of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), Kahl said, the fight against German militarism was gaining a burning relevance.

The IYSSE invited Christoph Vandreier, leader of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and author of the book “Why Are They Back? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy, and the Return of Fascism in Germany,” to deliver the introductory report. Vandreier emphasized that the threat of nuclear war was greater than ever before. He explained that the brutal war in Ukraine was a proxy war of the NATO powers against Russia, which they had prepared and provoked for years.

Since the Maidan coup—orchestrated by Germany and the US and carried out by far-right forces—the right-wing Kiev regime had been waging a war against the Russian-speaking population in eastern Ukraine, he said. The reactionary invasion by the Russian military, Vandreier explained, was, at the same time, an expression of the historic bankruptcy of Russian nationalism and must be firmly rejected. What was necessary was the struggle for the unity of the Ukrainian, Russian, European and international working class.

Meanwhile, German imperialism, Vandreier concluded, was using the war to initiate the most extensive rearmament campaign since Hitler, once again marching militarily throughout Eastern Europe. The ideological preparation for war by HU professors such as Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski now formed the basis of German government policy. The long struggle by the IYSSE against historical revisionism and militaristic ideology, which was now being advanced at the HU by a new generation, was therefore of crucial importance, he concluded.

Following these introductory remarks, a lively discussion developed on central questions of the struggle against war and for the unity of the international working class. One participant asked how workers could end the war and prevent a further escalation toward a world war. Another raised the question of how the cultural level and class consciousness of the working class could be raised to meet the tasks of the present epoch. A third emphasized

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the immense danger of nuclear weapons and imperialist war propaganda.

Gregor Kahl pointed to the example of the October Revolution, in which the Russian working class and peasantry, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, overthrew the capitalist class, making the most important contribution to ending World War I. The first successful conquest of power by the working class, which found continuation internationally, for example, in the November Revolution in Germany, should be studied in detail by workers and young people, he said.

Christoph Vandreier emphasized that workers in Greece had refused to load a shipment of weapons to Ukraine and workers in Italy had gone on strike against price increases and war policies. The ICFI and its youth organization support the strikes of the working class, as they would be an important step towards an international anti-war movement.

On the question of culture, Vandreier explained that as capitalism began to decay, so did the level of culture. A society in which fewer and fewer individuals owned more and more was incompatible with cultural development. Concepts such as postmodernism and irrationalism flourished on the basis of this intellectual degradation, of which Baberowski's work was a particularly sharp expression. The assertion that there was no causality in history represented a rejection of all science, Vandreier said.

IYSSE candidate Helmut Wolff recalled that IYSSE resolutions against Baberowski's falsification of history and against right-wing attacks on critical students were always passed with large StuPa majorities. Wolff provided a powerful account of the experiences at Berlin schools, which were being driven to the brink of collapse by the austerity policies of the Social Democratic Party-Left Party-Green Senate (state executive) in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. With a scientific and international plan in place of the official "profits before lives" policies, the virus could be defeated within a few months, he said.

Vandreier concluded that without the working class intervening, the conflict would undoubtedly escalate into a world war, nor would the pandemic be ended. Just as the international revolution had ended World War I over 100 years ago, he said, so today the intervention of the working class must put an end to the Ukraine war and overthrow the capitalist war profiteers.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its youth and student organization IYSSE arm the working class with an international and socialist perspective. Gregor Kahl called on students to vote for the IYSSE on July 12, to support the IYSSE's struggle against militarist ideology at universities and to defend it against right-wing attacks and the actions of the university leadership.

The IYSSE's next event in Germany will take place on Thursday, July 7, 2022, at 18:30. Register here.

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