

Final IYSSE election campaign event: How the return of German militarism was prepared at Humboldt University in Berlin

Our reporter
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On Thursday, about 50 students and workers at the second online election campaign event of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) discussed how the return of German militarism has been ideologically prepared at Berlin's Humboldt University (HU).

The IYSSE university group is running in the HU student parliament (StuPa) elections on July 12 and is fighting to build an international socialist movement against war and social inequality.

At the first election event, "Stop the war! 100 billion euros for education and health, instead of rearmament!" we warned that the NATO proxy war against Russia could escalate into a third world war. Just how real this warning is was demonstrated a few days later at the NATO summit in Madrid, where the member countries discussed their plans for nuclear war against Russia and China.

"Germany plays a central role in rearmament," emphasized IYSSE election candidate Gregor Kahl in the introductory talk of the second event. He detailed how Humboldt University has increasingly turned into a centre of militaristic ideology.

Leading up to the event, IYSSE members held discussions with students on campus about German war policies and great power politics. Many students spoke out vehemently against the historical falsehoods being propagated at HU and condemned the right-wing attacks on students.

"Eight years ago, when we started pointing out how professors at this university were trivializing the crimes of German imperialism and drumming up support for brutal wars, we were attacked by representatives of all Bundestag [federal government] parties, by most of the

media and by the university leadership," Kahl explained. "In the meanwhile, it's clear why: Right-wing ideology and bottomless falsification of history is now the official government line."

Notorious for their warmongering, he said, are Professor Herfried Münkler, now emeritus, who taught at the Institute of Social Sciences, and radical right-wing professor Jörg Baberowski, who still heads the Department of Eastern European History. Both have made it their mission to "rewrite history and wash German imperialism clean of its crimes in World War I and World War II," Kahl explained. He quoted extensively from Baberowski's publications, which leave no doubt that the latter relativizes the Nazis' war of extermination against the Soviet Union and trivializes Hitler.

Several audience members at the event reacted with shock when Kahl showed a video of Professor Baberowski himself, moving about campus as a radical right-wing activist, tearing down student election posters and physically attacking IYSSE StuPa deputy Sven Wurm. Wurm's open letter to the HU presidium, in which he demanded disciplinary proceedings against Baberowski, has gone unanswered.

The university leadership, all parties in government and most of the media back Baberowski and call criticism of his falsifications of history an attack on academic freedom, Kahl said. One participant asked with revulsion how it can be that Baberowski gets full backing from above and continues to hold a department chair.

Kahl made it clear in his talk that this is no coincidence. On the contrary, "The government has in the meantime openly adopted large parts of

Baberowski's and Münkler's positions." The Russian invasion of Ukraine, he said, is increasingly being put on par with the Nazis' war of extermination and even the Holocaust:

We are not whitewashing Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine, but the invasion does not begin to approach the dimensions of the Nazi war of extermination or the wars of aggression waged by the NATO powers against Iraq, Syria, Libya or Afghanistan, which claimed millions of lives and were carried out with the utmost brutality. Equating the Russian invasion with the war of extermination and the Holocaust is an intolerable falsification of history that serves to whitewash the crimes of German imperialism.

At the same time, fascist forces in Ukraine are being deliberately armed and courted by the media in Germany, as the recent case of Andrij Melnyk highlights. The Ukrainian ambassador in Berlin, who has now been recalled to Kiev, was passed from talk show to talk show, although he has long and openly revered the Nazi collaborator and anti-Semite Stepan Bandera and rehabilitated his fascist movement.

"The reason for this bottomless falsification of history lies in the politics of war," which are rejected by the vast majority of the population, Kahl emphasized, recommending to all listeners the book *Why Are They Back?* by Christoph Vandreier, which goes into detail about the connection between history and politics. The ruling class, he said, is trying by all means to break through the broad opposition to war and fascism that has burned itself into people's consciousness after the horrors of two world wars.

But the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, which has groups in numerous countries, is relying on the growing resistance that is developing all over the world against surging inflation, wage theft and mass layoffs. Just two days after the event, hundreds of thousands in Sri Lanka stormed the presidential palace and forced the government to resign. Gregor Kahl's presentation showed a world map showing hundreds of strikes that had broken out since the Ukrainian war

began. "This powerful international working class is the social force on which a movement against the war must be based," he said.

The event ended with a strong appeal to all participants to vote for IYSSE (List 4) in the July 12 StuPa election and join the struggle for socialism. All information, including directions to polling places, can be found here on the IYSSE website.



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