

IYSSE members discuss international movement against war at beginning of semester at Berlin's Humboldt University

IYSSE Humboldt University, Berlin
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International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) members organised information stands at the official freshers events at Humboldt University in Berlin. They used the opportunity to promote the international anti-war movement that the IYSSE is building around the world.

Against the backdrop of NATO's "Steadfast Noon" nuclear weapons exercise, members of the IYSSE spoke to hundreds of students about the immense danger of the proxy war in Ukraine escalating into a nuclear conflict between nuclear powers, and the need for a socialist perspective.

Imperialist politicians and strategists had openly admitted this danger in the days before. After former CIA Director Leon Panetta put the likelihood of nuclear war in Ukraine at 25 percent and US President Joseph Biden warned a gathering of wealthy donors of "Armageddon," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Monday threatened to "annihilate" the Russian army if nuclear weapons were used. Days earlier, before a NATO audience, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had called for first strikes against nuclear power Russia.

Under these circumstances, the IYSSE's fight against universities being centres for war research and right-wing propaganda met with concern among first-year students. Many responded positively and registered for the IYSSE newsletter to continue the discussion and attend regular meetings. "It's good that you exist and that you are raising awareness about the threat of war," many said. Others stocked up on literature at the IYSSE stand or took pamphlets to display in their faculties.

A statement by the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists—a group of young socialists in Russia who

have joined the IYSSE's struggle to build a youth anti-war movement—drew particular interest. The group's statement condemns the Russian military's reactionary invasion of Ukraine from the standpoint of socialist internationalism, while also exposing the causes and background of the Ukrainian war.

"How can I join?" asked Konrad, who is shocked by the falsification of history and right-wing attacks at Humboldt University. "I think it's good that you are getting to the bottom of this and countering the right-wing push. That's an important thing—the institutions are all working in the other direction, you can see that right now." At the IYSSE stand, Konrad became aware of the book *Why are they back?* by Christoph Vandreier, which deals with the rise of the far-right in Germany, and wanted to discuss it further in the coming days.

Katharina, who studies law, was particularly interested in the IYSSE's Marxist critique of postmodernism and the Frankfurt School. In her previous studies, Katharina had critically examined political and economic theories that proposed reforming capitalism. "But these theories mostly only serve those who develop them, to give themselves a progressive image and to distinguish themselves in order to climb the ladder," she says. "I also find the role of many NGOs gives pause for thought."

Students reacted with horror to the fact that the right-wing radical Humboldt University professor Jörg Baberowski was defended by the federal government and is still given support by the university administration—even though he networks in the right-wing scene and had to pay €4,000 for assaulting a student who had criticized him. Baberowski, whose

work plays down Hitler and even relativizes the Holocaust, will teach an introductory course in the history major this semester.

IYSSE members explained the significance of the dispute at Humboldt University, pointing out that a “Code of Academic Freedom” was passed at the University of Hamburg earlier this year that opposes civil clauses banning universities from involvement in militaristic research, criminalizes criticism of right-wing professors, and legitimizes police action against student protests. In March this year, in the Berlin state parliament, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) had already moved to introduce such a “code” at all Berlin universities as well.

On the Humboldt University campus, members of the IYSSE also spoke with Tim, who knew the IYSSE from previous events and now works in the music and events industry. “The government increasingly wants to determine what is art and what is not,” he said, referring to the German government’s “Neustart Kultur” funding program. It provides selected associations with funding from a woefully inadequate fund after decades of cuts and further cutbacks in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a catastrophic effect on artists, exacerbating exploitation immensely.

“Many today are unaware that the remaining social programs around the world are achievements from earlier struggles,” Tim explains. This is particularly striking in Latin America, he says, where US imperialism has organized coups d’état and supported reactionary dictatorships to combat social movements. Referring to NATO’s Steadfast Noon exercise, Tim says, “An acquaintance of mine works for the Bundeswehr [armed forces] and told me that during exercises, the enemy territory is still referred to as ‘Red Land.’ That speaks volumes in my eyes.”

In addition to campaigning on university campuses, IYSSE members are also intervening in factories to unite working class struggles internationally—for example, in Ludwigsfelde, south of Berlin, where all workers at the Mercedes-Benz plant are to be laid off. They are also supporting the campaign of autoworker and socialist Will Lehman, who is running for United Auto Workers union president, to abolish the bureaucracy and push for the building of independent rank-and-file committees.

The statement of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists says: “The raison d’être of the IYSSE is to organize and coordinate youth internationally, which is impossible without explaining to youth the most important theoretical and historical questions of relevance to the present state of affairs.” The greatest crisis for youth and the working class, the statement says, was “the crisis of revolutionary leadership,” which would be resolved by building the IYSSE and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In the coming weeks, the IYSSE will conduct an intensive campaign for an online international assembly to create the political conditions for a powerful anti-war movement of youth and the working class against capitalism.



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