

# The war in Ukraine and how to stop it: Meeting at Berlin's Humboldt University explains causes of war and socialist perspective

IYSSE at Humboldt University  
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a meeting April 27 at Berlin's Humboldt University on the topic: "The war in Ukraine and how to stop it." It was the first meeting in Germany of an international series on the causes of the NATO proxy war in Ukraine, held by the youth and student movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

The university chapter of the IYSSE distributed free FFP2 (N95) masks to the participants, set up air filters and took further protective measures to ensure the safety of all participants and speakers. IYSSE spokesman Gregor Kahl stressed at the beginning that the convening of a public meeting against the war in Ukraine was of great importance:

The danger of nuclear war has never been greater than it is today. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed on both sides of the conflict. But both the Zelensky regime and the Putin regime—and above all the imperialist NATO powers—continue to escalate the war. They have agreed to include Ukraine in their alliance and thus to enter directly into the war against Russia.

According to Kahl, the IYSSE is implacably opposed to all warring parties and fights for a united socialist movement of workers and youth against the war in Ukraine and the war policies of the NATO powers, which have systematically prepared the war.

The IYSSE invited Johannes Stern, the editor-in-chief of the German edition of the *World Socialist Web Site*, to give a Marxist assessment of the background to the war and to explain the socialist and internationalist perspective against the war.

At the beginning of his speech, Stern stressed that the IYSSE and its parent organizations, the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International, opposed and condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, from the outset. Stern declared:

The IYSSE opposes Putin and the Russian oligarchy, but from a left-wing, socialist standpoint, not a right-wing, pro-imperialist one. We have comrades in Russia and Ukraine who are opponents of both the Putin regime in Russia and the Zelensky regime in Ukraine.

Putin represents a faction of the Russian oligarchy that emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy and the restoration of capitalism. However, the claim that the invasion was "unprovoked" is a lie and a clumsy attempt to remove the war from its larger historical context.

Such an understanding, however, is necessary in order to develop a perspective for ending the war, he continued. In his subsequent remarks, Stern stressed six points about the conflict, which are essential for an understanding of the historical, economic, social and political roots of the war:

- The conflict can only be understood in the context of the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
- The war is the continuation of a three-decades-long and expanding war of the imperialist powers.
- The Russian invasion of Ukraine was the reaction of the Russian oligarchy to the decades-long imperialist encirclement.

- The propaganda about a struggle for “freedom” and “democracy” is refuted by the rise of far-right and fascist forces in Ukraine.

- The ruling class in Germany, which has already tried to annex Ukraine and subjugate Russia in two world wars, is using the conflict to implement long-cherished militarization plans.

- War cannot be understood apart from the growing economic, social and political crisis of the capitalist great powers.

As part of this analysis, Stern discussed the Stalinist betrayal of the October Revolution, which culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism in the early 1990s. He proceeded to examine the wars of aggression of the NATO powers in violation of international law over the past three decades and analyse the propaganda with which the corporate media justified these wars.

Stern placed particular emphasis on the role of German imperialism, which already played a leading role in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the occupation of Afghanistan. Now the federal government is pursuing the declared goal of bringing Europe under German supremacy. Stern traced the eruption of German militarism and showed that the German elite in the war against Russia relies on fascist organizations that operate in the tradition of Ukrainian Nazi collaborators.

The “new epoch” initiated by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz immediately after the beginning of the war marks the greatest German rearmament programme since the fall of the Hitler regime and has been ideologically prepared, especially at Humboldt University. In order to achieve their global war aims, the ruling class must set about eliminating all social achievements of past class struggles.

On a capitalist basis, Stern said, there is no way to stop the looming world war. The cause of the war lies in the capitalist contradictions manifested in all countries, between the world economy and the nation-state, as well as between social production and private appropriation.

It has always been the maxim of the great Marxists—above all Lenin and Trotsky—that the same economic, geopolitical and social contradictions that drive the imperialist ruling elites on the path of war also create the objective impulse for the radicalization of the working class and the outbreak of revolutionary struggles. This is happening again.

The struggles of the working class, which are developing worldwide, form the basis for a struggle against war, continued Stern. But the necessary prerequisite for a successful struggle is the building of a conscious socialist and revolutionary leadership in the working class. This means the building of the IYSSE and the Fourth

International worldwide.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion. One participant raised the question of whether governments of the “Global South” such as the Lula government in Brazil could be alliance partners in the fight against war. The participant referred to the move by several governments to circumvent the US dollar as a global currency and to handle international trade in their national currencies.

Stern replied that the working class, as an international class, was the only social force capable of confronting war. A central political doctrine of the last century is that capitalist governments are not allies in this struggle, but opponents. The efforts of various bourgeois regimes to oppose the domination of US imperialism with a “multipolar world order” are reactionary and part of the development towards a third world war.

Another participant was enthusiastic about the presentation and analysis, and asked how it could be explained that there was no mass movement against the war. Ulrich Rippert, founding member and longtime chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (SGP), replied that parties such as the Greens and the Left Party, which were at the forefront of previous anti-war protests, had turned out to be the most fervent warmongers.

Clara Weiss, an IYSSE member in the United States, noted that the Trotskyist youth movement was the only organization at the universities that opposed the war and held rallies and public assemblies to win young people over to a socialist program. This is no coincidence. In order to win the fight against war, it is necessary to build the International Committee of the Fourth International, which throughout its history has defended socialism and revolutionary internationalism.

The discussion continued long after the end of the event. In the coming weeks, the IYSSE will organise regular meetings at Humboldt University, to which all interested parties are warmly invited.

*The IYSSE will continue its nationwide series of meetings. The next meetings will take place on May 4 in Munich and on May 5 in Leipzig. Further events will follow in Bochum (11.5.), Frankfurt (12.5.), Cologne (16.5.) and Stuttgart (17.5.). More detailed information about the events can be found here.*



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