

“Russian War Crimes” exhibition at Humboldt University in Berlin: Students and staff protest against rearmament and war propaganda

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On September 14 and 15, members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Humboldt University in Berlin spoke to students and passersby about the “Russian War Crimes” exhibition, which was displayed in the foyer of the university’s main building for two weeks. The exhibition has no scholarly value, but serves to demonize the Russian side and fuel the horrific proxy war in Ukraine with further arms deliveries.

The leaflet distributed by IYSSE members explained that the exhibition was intended to counter the “decreasing support for arms deliveries” in order to deliver “more and much faster weapons” to the Ukrainian military.

Humboldt University President Julia von Blumenthal, a former professor for the German armed forces, and Ukrainian multi-billionaire Viktor Pinchuk, who is funding the exhibition, had stated this at the opening. Pinchuk is considered Ukraine’s second-richest oligarch, who gained his wealth through the privatization of state property and is well-connected with Western elites.

The IYSSE warned that after its crimes in two world wars, German militarism is again preparing to bring Ukraine under its control in order to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia. To achieve these goals, the German elites also willingly accept the risk of nuclear war. After HU professors such as Jörg Baberowski and Herfried Münkler played a central role in ideologically preparing this policy for years, Humboldt University, as an institution, is openly placing itself at the service of German war policy with this exhibition.

Students who spoke to IYSSE members were “shocked” and outraged when they learned about the background of the exhibition. Many expressed gratitude for the IYSSE’s information about and criticism of the exhibition, including an elderly passerby who stated, “‘Imagine it’s war and nobody goes’—that’s my attitude.” One student also expressed dismay that the exhibition was set up in the entrance area of the university, where “every freshman has to go through and where it’s the first thing you see at this university.”

A university employee approached IYSSE members to tell them that he “agreed with every word in the flyer.” He warned that the university administration might try to ban the flyers, even though the IYSSE have been represented in the Student Parliament for many years. “If you Google the pictures, every third one of them is fake,” he surmised. The IYSSE members explained that the images had been closely coordinated with the Ukrainian military and were intended to support the German government’s pro-war policy.

In conversation with IYSSE members, many other students criticized German rearmament and the pro-war policies of the imperialist NATO powers.

One student said, “I think the interests of the arms lobby are already a major factor in this war. Further arms deliveries make it difficult to end the war. It is also about how much power we Germans have in Ukraine. Because it exerts power if you are able to control the arms deliveries—afterwards Ukraine then depends on Germany. The money that is being cut now is missing from us and is now all going into

rearmament. I can't understand that.”

“The US government also supports the Ukrainian military,” said Christine, a master's student from the United States. “Without that support, the Ukrainian government would have ceased to exist a long time ago. But I think it's problematic if Germany takes the lead now. It's certainly not in the interest of the working class in Europe. I would rather Germany invest its resources in international cooperation. I am originally from Taiwan, and a war is brewing there as well. An international grassroots movement is the only way. I can't think of any other way to stop another world war.”

Alex, who was visiting the university library, is from Spain and has only been working as an analyst in Berlin for a few days. He said, “I question German intentions in Ukraine. I think this war is about political and territorial interests, including against Russia. There are other ways to help the Ukrainian people. The government should not send weapons, but people who can actually help on the ground.”

Alex added, “I am against any military buildup. There are so many more important things: health, education and social welfare. It's always the working class that gets punished for war, whether it's in Ukraine, Russia or here. War affects prices and the labor market. Those who are most vulnerable are the most affected because they are the most dependent on social welfare. When you use tax money to fund the military, these people have no resources left.”

Omar, a Humboldt University student from the US, said, “This war has to be stopped, it's all about money. Capitalism is behind the war. In the US there is a whole ecosystem of arms corporations and Pentagon contractors that profit from human suffering. This system needs to be dismantled. It is obscene how much money goes to the war machine—the money should be invested in social projects instead. I agree with your struggle, but it will be an uphill battle. Rich people have always benefited from war throughout history.”



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