

IYSSE protest against war propaganda at Berlin's Humboldt University generates strong support and media coverage

Our reporters
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The public protest by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) against the exhibition “Russian War Crimes” in the foyer of Humboldt University (HU) in Berlin has generated a powerful response on social media and in traditional media coverage. On Monday, the online edition of the *Berliner Zeitung* (BZ), one of the most popular media outlets in the German capital, prominently reported on the student protest and the “sharp criticism of the president and professors of Berlin's Humboldt University” made by the IYSSE due to the “exhibition of grisly photos at HU.”

The article by Carola Tunk links to an article on the *World Socialist Web Site* in which IYSSE spokesman Gregor Link reported growing outrage among students and university staff about the exhibition: “The IYSSE explains on leaflets that ‘German militarism after its crimes in two world wars’ is again making an effort to ‘bring Ukraine under its control in order to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia’. In order to achieve these goals, German elites would also ‘willingly’ accept the risk of nuclear war, according to Gregor Link.”

The leaflet, which IYSSE members have distributed at the university in recent days, Tunk notes, “draws attention to the aim of the exhibition, which is to counteract the ‘decreasing support for arms deliveries’ in order to supply ‘more weapons much faster’ to the Ukrainian military.” According to IYSSE member Link, HU President Julia von Blumenthal, a former Bundeswehr professor, and Ukrainian multi-billionaire Viktor Pinschuk, who finances the exhibition, explained this at its opening.

The BZ article then cites a viral video in which Link

explains the background of the exhibition and calls on students and workers to support the IYSSE's fight against the falsification of history and war propaganda. The article quotes from the video: “The exhibition has no scientific value, but serves to demonize the Russian side and fuel the horrific proxy war in Ukraine with further arms deliveries.”

On social media and in letters to the *World Socialist Web Site*, many readers expressed their appreciation for the public statement by the IYSSE. The BZ article and IYSSE's statement have been shared and commented on dozens of times on X/Twitter alone.

“Courageous student protest against the exhibition of horror photos at HU Berlin,” wrote X user Doris. Another user wrote: “Hats off to the students who protest against this. Hopefully, students will reconsider studying at such a racist university. I'm sure it will be very well received abroad.”

“Be strong and keep going! This is damn important,” wrote a third.

A letter to the WSWs stated, “Thank you very much for your engagement against the war propaganda at HU,” and added: “It takes quite a bit of courage in today's world.” Wolfgang W. wrote: “A propaganda machine has started that misleads us all. One highlight of the propaganda is probably also the Ukrainian flag in front of the German-Russian Museum in Berlin Karlshorst.”

On Tuesday, the BZ published another article that confronted Humboldt University with the student protest against the pro-war exhibition it is hosting. Without going into the well-founded criticism, the university management said that the videos and leaflets of the IYSSE have been “noted,” but “negative

reactions” were “factored in” from the outset. The positions of the IYSSE are “not representative,” it was claimed.

In fact, the IYSSE speaks for a significant part of the student body. The university group was elected to the student parliament (StuPa) for the ninth time in a row at HU in July. Their motions against the militarist and right-wing positions of professors and against Bundeswehr (German army) advertising campaigns at the university have regularly received overwhelming majorities.

As early as 2014, the IYSSE protested against HU professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski for seeking to drum up support for new wars and whitewash German imperialism of its historic crimes. While Münkler declared Fritz Fischer's research on the imperialist goals of Germany in the First World War to be “in principle a fairytale,” Baberowski stated that the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte was “historically right” because Hitler was “not vicious.” Since then, the IYSSE has been at the forefront of the fight against the militarization of the university.

The university management responded by publishing angry statements against the IYSSE, declaring “media attacks” on Baberowski “unacceptable” and even defending the right-wing extremist professor when he threatened and physically attacked an IYSSE StuPa deputy. In the last StuPa elections, the university management also supported right-wing groups that systematically sabotaged the IYSSE election campaign.

The war propaganda exhibition is in keeping with this record and puts the university directly at the service of German militarism. Far from accepting criticism of this, the university management continues to support attacks on the IYSSE and thus on the fundamental democratic rights of all students and their physical safety.

It is significant that the same groups that received cover from the university management during the election campaign for their hostility to the IYSSE, once again organised a veritable smear campaign against the IYSSE's protest. In addition to the most vulgar insults and concrete threats of violence, they falsely declared the Trotskyist university group to be supporters of Putin or agents of Moscow in dozens of posts on social media.

“We completely reject Putin's reactionary attack on

Ukraine,” IYSSE spokesman Gregor Link told the WSWS on Tuesday. “The accusation of enemy propaganda is as old as German militarism. Karl Liebknecht was already accused of representing the cause of the Russian tsar because he opposed the mass slaughter of the First World War. Like Liebknecht, we stand for the immediate end of the terrible war in Ukraine through the fraternization of the Russian and Ukrainian workers and an international movement against the war and its root: capitalism.”

According to Link, the fight against ideological warfare at the universities is an essential part of this. “That is why we are not intimidated by Ukrainian nationalists or German militarists. They also react so aggressively because they know that the vast majority of the population rejects militarism and war. Together with our comrades around the world, we will fight all the more resolutely in the coming weeks and months to build a mass movement against war,” he concluded.



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