

Student initiatives in Germany oppose media witch-hunt against IYSSE and “Münkler-Watch”

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21 July 2015

A growing number of students at German universities are speaking out in opposition to right-wing professors and the media campaign against their critics.

Last week, the group “Critical Rostock University” published a statement on its website denouncing a recent article by Sebastian Kempkens in Uni-Spiegel.

Kempkens’ article is a vicious attack on the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the Münkler-Watch blog. Both the IYSSE and Münkler-Watch have been attacked by the university administration and various media outlets for criticising Humboldt professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski. Kempkens uses distortions, lies and vulgar insults to defame students who are opposed to the militaristic and right-wing positions of these individuals.

The statement by Critical Rostock University accuses Kempkens of providing “support” for the right-wing professors. “According to the article, criticism of public persons is not part of the democratic debate but an unjustified attack,” the group writes. “With phrases like ‘mind police’, ‘put in the pillory’ and ‘small war’, a completely normal process is presented as a scandal. This leaves little hope for the democratic culture of debate.”

Critical Rostock University is a blog that has documented and criticized right-wing professors at Rostock University for almost two years. According to their own statements, the blog was initiated by Rostock students and alumni who are not prepared to leave the right-wing positions of professors unopposed.

The university attacked the students when the blog demonstrated links between professors and German nationalist and extreme right-wing circles and their

ideas. Even the secret service intervened and observed the bloggers.

Now the group accuses Kempkens of utilising arch-conservative arguments and right-wing strategies: “The author of the article seeks out a young audience and reveals his ultra-conservative views. He does not seem to be aware that he thus provides a prototypical example for conspiracy theories, a reversal of perpetrator and victim roles, and the extremism of the bourgeois political centre.”

In Kempkens’ tirades, Critical Rostock University sees a familiar strategy: “The extremists with a professor’s chair respond no differently than any racist mob when confronted with criticism. They construct an image of the enemy that is opened up for attack: moles that are unknown and who only seek maliciously and secretly to undermine and overthrow the community.”

On the other hand, the professors are presented as persecuted innocents who are being “hunted”. When Jörg Baberowski declares that he is being put under pressure by critical students, then he is “obviously incapable of intellectually opposing them”, the bloggers write. “Presenting themselves and being presented by others as victims of persecution also has strong linguistic similarities with the actions of other right-wing and new-right movements.”

The Free Student Newspaper (*freistuz*), which appears on the internet and in print editions in Freiburg and Berlin, has also spoken out against the one-sided presentation of the major media, publishing a comprehensive and unabridged interview with the IYSSE spokesman at Humboldt University, Sven Wurm. In June, the paper posted an interview with Herfried Münkler on its website.

When interviewed, Wurm spoke about the growing media witch-hunt: “That so many media outlets are now reporting about us, often in defamatory terms, is not only a consequence of Münkler’s celebrity, but also the fact that our positions find increasing resonance among students. This was also shown by the fact that the Student Parliament adopted a resolution that we introduced.”

Münkler, Baberowski and the university administration have refused all discussion and instead respond with enormous aggression against dissenting students. The reason for this lies in the logic of their political positions, Wurm said.

“Münkler uses his position as a professor in lectures to publicly advocate a policy that boils down to Germany again becoming Europe’s ‘disciplinarian’, in his words. If criticism of this is not to be permitted, we really have a problem. Then we have a politically conformist university.”

The IYSSE has demonstrated the relationship between the change in German foreign policy and the rewriting of history at Humboldt University, Wurm said. Because this is now understood by an increasing number of students, the ruling class feels that “such voices should be silenced.”

“Here we have a conflict between a very small but influential elite and a majority of the population that is of a different mind, who do not want Germany to emerge again as a great power, but who see no possibility to articulate this politically,” Wurm said. “There is a tremendous amount of disquiet. This will eventually be expressed. The developments at Humboldt University have thus anticipated what lies ahead for society as a whole.”



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