

# University of Leipzig students speak out against right-wing professor

Christoph Vandreier  
27 February 2016

Thomas Rauscher, the right-wing professor at the University of Leipzig, has met with opposition from both students and faculty. Both the student council and the teaching staff of the law department have published statements that sharply criticize racist remarks by the professor. The university management has also distanced itself from Rauscher.

Since November, Rauscher, who occupies the chair for private international law, has been posting openly racist tirades against refugees and migrants several times a week on the social media site Twitter.

On January 11, he wrote: “What does not belong together cannot be reconciled. Europe to the Europeans. Africa to the Africans. Arabia to the Arabs.” Twelve days earlier, he called for a cultural war against dark skinned people: “It is natural to defend oneself when one’s own culture is in decline. The ‘fearful white man’ should take up arms!”

In response to the events on New Year’s Eve in Cologne, he combined social chauvinism and obnoxious racism by denouncing “Banlieue hordes from Maghreb”—a reference to the African migrants living in impoverished Parisian suburbs. On New Year’s Day, he had already accused all Muslims of terrorism and warned about the destruction of Germany, writing, “There is no peaceful Islam. Jihad is the task of these people. Germany will destroy itself with well-meaning confusion.”

Rauscher’s hatred for refugees knows no bounds. Referring to the thousands of refugees drowned in the Mediterranean, he wrote about a “dinghy nightmare” that should be countered by “50 patrol ships”.

He compares his critics with Nazis and with the Inquisition, who practiced “thought control”. As a “non-homosexual man over 50” he sees himself “in a role similar to coloured people in the US in the past.”

Rauscher repeatedly solidarizes himself with extreme right-wingers such as the Alternative for Germany politician Björn Höcke and the Pegida group in Dresden. “JE SUIS PEGIDA!” [I am/am a follower of Pegida], he tweeted in January 2015, shortly after the attacks on the newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris. He has repeatedly demanded the resignation of the German chancellor, whom he accuses of destroying Germany.

Student representatives of the law department at the

University of Leipzig referred to some of these tweets in a Facebook post on February 1. Since then, opposition to the racist professor has been forming among students and staff at the university.

Johannes Tunger from the student council in Leipzig told the WSW: “After we found out about Rauscher’s Twitter posts, we immediately sat down together and decided to publish a statement. We have made our position clear, that these claims are incorrect because they oppose the open world view we stand for.”

In the statement, the student representatives explain that Rauscher’s positions contradict their guiding principles. The student council stands “for a university that is open to the world in a pluralistic, solidly united society”, it says.

The student council representative for anti-racism, Marcus Adler, sees a connection between Rauscher’s propaganda and the growth in xenophobic violence: “Anyone who, in the time of increased racist attacks on refugees, migrants and asylum lodgings, makes a call on social networks on the Internet for the defence of the ‘white man’ is on the same level, at least ideologically, as the people who carry out these acts. That Professor Thomas Rauscher holds the post of foreign affairs officer in the law faculty is simply cynical.”

Tunger also sees a direct connection between the strengthening of right-wing extreme parties and organizations such as Pegida and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the openly right-wing behaviour of the professor. “That is no longer a single case”, he said. He identifies nationalist tendencies in other parties, but thinks that the AfD is the sharpest expression of this development.

The academic staff of the law faculty have joined the students and also published a statement on the racist claims of the professor. It reads: “The social responsibility of the universities obliges us in current socio-political debates such as the one on the refugee issue to discuss in a respectful and factual manner and refrain from broad generalizations. Therefore, we decisively oppose every form of xenophobia and intolerance.”

Professors in other departments have not responded to Rauscher’s statements. The university management has said it regrets his statements and is “decisively against intolerant and xenophobic ideas.” At the same time, it says that it will not take

further action against the racist professor: “As long as he speaks as a private person, however, we have to live with it.”

Rauscher’s inhumane and xenophobic tirades are not new. When he ran as a Free Democratic Party candidate for parliament in 2013, he declared: “When one can no longer expel illegal (refugees) without do-gooders protesting, then that is the occupation of the EU by Roma and ‘refugees’.” Rauscher says that he is politically close to the Christian Social Union party (CSU), while, with regard to economic policy, he still supports the neo-liberal FDP.

His current radicalisation is an expression of a basic tendency. There is a new right-wing current developing in German academic circles, which is increasingly loud and represents the re-emergence of the most reactionary traditions of thought in Germany.

The philosopher Peter Sloterdijk accuses the government of abandoning the country “to being swamped by yielding up sovereignty.” His intellectual apprentice Marc Jongen, who teaches at the State University of Design (HfG) in Karlsruhe, is deputy state chairman of the AfD in Baden-Württemberg and is drawing up the philosophical foundation for a right-wing extremist party based on the nostrums of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt.

The Goethe and Heidegger biographer Rüdiger Safranski accuses the government of “infantile unworldliness” on account of its refugee policy and demands the cordoning off of German borders. He denies that human dignity is inviolable and speaks in favour of a strong state that would oppose the dominance of Muslim immigrants.

Professors at the Humboldt University in Berlin have played a pioneering role in the shift to the right at universities. Jörg Baberowski, chair of the Department of Eastern European History, downplays the crimes of the Nazis in his historical writings and regularly propagandizes against refugees in interviews and newspaper articles. He claims that refugees are disrupting the “very continuity” of Germany. In his newest book, *Spaces of Violence*, he pleads for police state measures and war.

The political scientist Herfried Münkler claims that Germany must become the “taskmaster” and the “hegemon” of Europe. He repeatedly advocates new wars and military interventions all over the globe. He has also spoken disparagingly about refugees.

The cause of this shift to the right in sections of the intelligentsia and the formation of right-wing networks is to be found in the extreme sharpening of the social and political situation. The return of German militarism and growing social inequality in Europe are meeting with opposition in broad layers of the population.

Carrying such policies demands not only authoritarian measures, but also ideologies that prepare and justify them. Anti-enlightenment and irrationalist ideas, with all their reactionary consequences, are coming to the fore once again,

just as they did prior to the First and Second World Wars.

This is why it is significant that students are increasingly standing up against such right-wing tendencies and figures at German universities. Jongen has encountered just as much opposition at HfG as his Islamophobe party colleague Hans-Thomas Tillschneider at the University of Bayreuth. At Dresden Technical University, students have distributed fliers against the Pegida sympathizer Professor Werner Patzelt.

However, protesting students at other universities are quite often subjected to repression from academic departments and the university management. When students at Rostock University criticized teachers in the history department, such as Professor Egon Flaig, because of their right-wing extremist and anti-Islamic positions, the university pressed charges. The press officer at the university, Ulrich Vetter, announced legal action in an exclusive interview with the far-right newspaper *Junge Freiheit*.

When the students behind the “Münkler-Watch” blog and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) criticized Professors Münkler and Baberowski last year, leading bourgeois newspapers throughout Germany stepped into the fray. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and others defamed the critical students and defended the right-wing professors.

Rauscher was also among those who attacked the students. Because students published the Münkler-Watch blog anonymously, he declared their right to freedom of opinion null and void. “The authors of this blog earn for their cowardice the common disdain of the academic world. However, what should one expect from a world in which values such as freedom and openness, in which secret denouncers are celebrated as ‘whistle blowers’,” wrote Rauscher on the online portal of the FAZ.

It is therefore all the more significant that faculty and students at the University of Leipzig are opposing Rauscher and are no longer prepared to tolerate his right-wing tirades.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**