

Scholarship, not war propaganda!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Germany)
18 October 2016

As the new academic year begins at German universities this week, the IYSSE is distributing the following statement to freshman students.

Dear first year students,

You are beginning your studies today at a time which will be as turbulent and crisis-ridden as the first half of the last century. Like our grandparents and great grandparents, we are entering a period which will be dominated by wars, major social upheavals and revolutionary struggles.

The war in Syria is threatening to escalate before our very eyes into a nuclear conflict between the United States and Russia, which would encompass large areas of Europe. The ruling elite in Germany is responding to this by proclaiming the end of military restraint, implementing a major rearmament programme, participating in the wars in the Middle East and Africa and playing a leading role in NATO's military buildup against Russia.

The European Union (EU), which was presented for a long time as a bastion against a relapse into nationalism and war, has been exposed as a hotbed of xenophobia and militarism. The EU is stopping refugees fleeing wars at the borders, detaining them in inhumane camps or driving them to their death in the Mediterranean Sea. Like Trump in the US, right-wing and fascist parties are once again raising their heads in Europe, including the National Front in France, FPÖ in Austria, UKIP in Britain or the AfD in Germany.

The IYSSE (International Youth and Students for Social Equality) is not prepared to stand idly by in the face of the return of war and militarism, the growth of poverty and inequality and the rise of the far right. Our standpoint is that the struggle against war, social inequality, the strengthening of the state apparatus and xenophobia requires the abolition of the capitalist system and the adoption of an internationalist and socialist programme.

As the youth and student organisation of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), we fight for the unity of all workers, regardless of origin, nationality, skin colour or religion and are constructing an international anti-war movement. In this, we base ourselves on classical Marxism as it was developed by Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky.

Universities play an important role in this struggle. They are being transformed, as was the case prior to World War I and II, into state-directed training centres for right-wing and militarist ideologies. We oppose this and campaign for them to remain places of scholarship. This demands an ideological and political struggle against postmodernism and the Frankfurt School, which reject a scientific understanding of history.

Over the past two and a half years, the IYSSE has fought in Berlin against the transformation of Humboldt University (HU) into a stronghold of war propaganda. Two professors played a central role in this drive: Herfried Münkler (political theory) and Jörg Baberowski (history of Eastern Europe).

Both attempted to relativise the responsibility of German imperialism for the First and Second world wars. Münkler called for Germany to become the hegemon within Europe, play the role of "taskmaster" and wants to draft "a real geopolitical strategy" for Germany in the 21st century "to combat the challenges of our time."

Baberowski downplays the historic crimes of National Socialism. In *Der Spiegel* in early 2014 he indicated his support for the now late Hitler apologist Ernst Nolte and claimed Hitler was "no psychopath" and not "vicious." In his books, he presents the war of annihilation in the east as a reaction to the violence of the Bolsheviks and denies any responsibility on the part of the National Socialist ideology. In October 2014, Baberowski appealed for methods to be used in the struggle against Jihadi terrorism which violate all norms of international law. He stated, "And if one is not prepared to take hostages, burn down villages and hang people and spread fear and terror like the terrorists do, if one is not prepared to do that, then such a struggle cannot be won, then it is better to stay out of it."

Since last summer, Baberowski has used his position at the HU in order to advance far-right positions in newspaper articles, interviews and public appearances. He agitates against the acceptance of refugees, calls for the closure of Germany's borders and claims that illegal migrants from foreign cultures are destroying the fundamentals of society. His crude theses on the origins of violence are well suited to

his calls for a strong state and more police, while justifying dictatorial forms of rule.

Münkler and Baberowski are part of an entire layer of German professors responsible for jointly drafting German imperialism's war plans and providing them with ideological justification. The work on the official "White Paper 2016 on security policy and the Future of the German Army," which, among other things, called for the domestic deployment of the army, the expansion of foreign interventions, a European war policy dominated by Germany and a major rearming of the German army, included over a dozen professors, among them Gunther Hellmann (Frankfurt), Joachim Krause (Kiel), Klaus Naumann (Hamburg) and Sönke Neitzel (Potsdam).

When the IYSSE campaigned publicly against the positions advanced by Münkler and Baberowski, the right-wing media responded with a witch-hunt campaign. They denounced political criticism as "ideological terrorism" and an "inquisition." The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* titled its piece "Mobbing: Trotskyist." The conflict was documented in the book *Scholarship not war propaganda* published by Mehring Books last year.

But the IYSSE was not intimidated. At the last election to the student parliament (StuPa) at HU, we were able to more than triple our support by securing 6 percent of the vote and four seats in the parliament.

Resistance to the rightward shift is developing among students. At the beginning of the year, students and academic staff protested at Leipzig University against the right-wing law professor Thomas Rauscher. At the University of Bremen, the general students' committee is demanding that the university withdraw an invitation extended to Baberowski and is "outraged that the downplaying of right-wing violence is given any space at all."

The IYSSE welcomes all measures and initiatives which seek seriously to prevent the rightward shift in politics and at the universities. This also requires a political reckoning with the SPD, the Greens, the Left Party, trade unions and pseudo-left organisations in their environs.

Like the Greens 18 years ago, the Left Party is in the process of transforming itself into an openly pro-war party. Events over the summer break have shown that there is no longer any doubt about this. As the first "Left" Minister President in the state of Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow, told *Der Spiegel*, the Left Party is "not pacifist." Sahra Wagenknecht, who regularly agitates against refugees in the manner of an AfD politician, noted reassuringly in the ARD summer interview, "Germany will of course not leave NATO on the day we enter government."

If a red-red-green coalition is established at the federal

level following the model in the state of Berlin, the Left Party will represent the same anti-working class politics as the SPD and Greens, the parties of Hartz IV welfare reform and war, or their Greek sister party Syriza. The Left Party does not represent the interests of the working class, but privileged sections of the middle class which are moving sharply to the right under the pressure of growing class tensions and support austerity and militarism.

The historic crisis of capitalism will produce great class struggles. Our work in the new semester is aimed at acquainting young workers and students with the history and political experiences of the unfinished 20th century, winning them to a socialist programme and preparing for a revolution. Only through the intervention of hundreds of thousands into political events can the drive to dictatorship and war be stopped.

We warmly invite you all to contact the IYSSE, attend our meetings, follow our website (iysse.de) and read the *World Socialist Web Site* daily. As the youth and student organisation of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party) and the ICFI, we collaborate closely with our sister organisations around the world.

International Youth and Students for Social Equality

IYSSE meetings

Goethe University Frankfurt
Philosophy and politics in periods of war and revolution
Saturday, 22 October, 6:00 p.m.
Campus Westend, Hörsaalzentrum (lecture hall HZ 3)
Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 5, 60323 Frankfurt

Humboldt University Berlin
What is the IYSSE?
Wednesday, 26 October, 6:30 p.m.
Seminar building (room 1.303)
Dorotheenstraße 24, 10117 Berlin



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact