

Oppose right-wing censorship at Frankfurt University

International Youth and Students for Social Equality
23 June 2018

With this open letter, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) is protesting against the banning of its meeting on the contemporary relevance of Marxism by the student union at the University of Frankfurt. In an email, the student union justified its censorship with baseless slanders.

Your decision to ban an IYSSE meeting on the contemporary relevance of Marxism at Frankfurt University is a completely unacceptable attack on the basic democratic right to freedom of opinion. While right-wing and ultra-right groups are given student union rooms, you are censoring a left-wing, Marxist group on campus.

In your letter of June 4, you justified your decision by claiming that it is “not possible to cooperate with fascists and anti-Semites,” which amounts to a comparison of the IYSSE with “fascists and anti-Semites.” This is a baseless slander and demeans the victims of the Nazis.

The only justification you cite is that the relationship of the IYSSE and the *World Socialist Web Site* to Israel and Zionism “appears to be dubious.” However, criticism of the right-wing Benjamin Netanyahu government has nothing to do with anti-Semitism. On the contrary, the attribution of the murderous acts of the regime, including the massacring of peaceful protesters in Gaza, to the Jewish people as a whole is drawn from the classic arsenal of anti-Semitism.

Nothing could sum up more clearly the reactionary character of the Israeli state and its current government than Netanyahu’s close collaboration with anti-Semites such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Members of Netanyahu’s Likud Party cooperate with far-right parties including Austria’s Freedom Party, Italy’s Lega, and the Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Everyone familiar with German history knows that

anti-Semitism and the far-right are inseparably connected. The federal spokesman and parliamentary group leader of the AfD, Alexander Gauland, declared his pride at the “achievements” of Hitler’s Wehrmacht and recently trivialised the Holocaust as “bird poop in over a thousand years of successful German history.” But while the AfD is represented in parliament with 92 seats and championed by the entire political establishment, you occupy yourselves with denouncing their most indefatigable opponents as “anti-Semites.” It is virtually impossible to surpass the level of historical ignorance and intellectual bankruptcy involved here.

Modern political anti-Semitism emerged as a movement in the last third of the 19th century and culminated in the industrial extermination of European Jewry by the Nazi regime. It reflected a reaction by layers of the petty-bourgeoisie to the capitalist crisis and is inseparably bound up with the efforts of the ruling elite to mobilise these sections of the population against the socialist workers’ movement. “Hitler was not repelled by the workers’ movement because it was led by Jews. Rather, he was repelled by the Jews because they led the workers’ movement,” wrote the historian Konrad Heiden.

The Trotskyist movement, in whose traditions the IYSSE works, fought like no other against anti-Semitism and all forms of social, religious and racial discrimination. Thousands of its members lost their lives in the struggle against Nazism, fascism and Stalinism. Leon Trotsky’s writings on National Socialism remain to this day unsurpassed in their far-sightedness and sharpness.

Already after the Kristallnacht pogroms on 9 November, 1938, Trotsky warned of the impending extermination of the Jews in a letter to American friends. “It is possible to imagine without difficulty

what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of the future world war. But even without war, the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty the *physical extermination of the Jews*,” wrote Trotsky.

Around the world, and in the United States in particular, Trotskyists campaigned for the unconditional acceptance of Jews fleeing from Germany. A statement by the Fourth International from May 1940 declared: “In the epoch of its rise, capitalism took the Jewish people out of the ghetto and utilized them as an instrument in its commercial expansion. Today, decaying capitalist society is striving to squeeze the Jewish people from all its pores; 17 million individuals out of the two billion populating the globe, that is, less than 1 percent, can no longer find a place on our planet! Amid the vast expanses of land and the marvels of technology, which has also conquered the skies for man as well as the earth, the bourgeoisie has managed to convert our planet into a foul prison.”

Precisely because it understood the connection between the capitalist crisis and anti-Semitism, the Trotskyist movement opposed Zionism as a “bloody trap for thousands of Jews.” Trotsky stated in 1937, “I don’t believe under any circumstances that the Jewish question can be resolved within the framework of decaying capitalism and under the auspices of British imperialism.”

The IYSSE today stands in this tradition. We are well known for our struggle on university campuses against right-wing ideology and the downplaying of the Nazis’ crimes. Our critique of the right-wing extremist Humboldt University professor Jörg Baberowski, who defended the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte and described Hitler as not being “vicious” because he didn’t want to hear about the extermination of the Jews at his table, has been supported by numerous student representative bodies.

By contrast, the student union in Frankfurt wants to suppress this criticism of right-wing extremist positions and Marxist politics as a whole on the campus. This is an effort to facilitate the state-led cooption of the universities in the tradition of the National Socialist German Student League (NSDSTB).

While you ban Marxist meetings, you open your arms to right-wing extremists. In 2016, the student union offered a platform to the declared AfD supporter Thomas Maul and his xenophobic filth. Maul declared

on 9 May that the AfD is the “only voice of reason left in the German parliament,” and justified this by citing a speech by Gauland.

It is no mere coincidence that the largest grouping in the student union is the Jusos, which is aligned with the governing Social Democratic party (SPD). In alliance with the conservative CDU/CSU, the SPD is enforcing the AfD’s refugee policy, organising the largest rearmament programme since the Second World War, and preparing massive social spending cuts.

The SPD’s university movement and their coalition partners within the student union want to suppress all criticism of these right-wing policies on campus. This is why they want to prohibit the work of the IYSSE and ban a meeting that has already attracted hundreds of students in Berlin, Bochum, Bonn and Munich.

We hereby demand that you immediately revoke the ban on the IYSSE meeting and publicly retract your despicable slanders.



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