

Far-right Identitarian movement attempts to disrupt IYSSE meeting in Dresden

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality
20 July 2018

On July 12 the far-right Identitarian movement attempted to disrupt a meeting of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held at the University of Technology in Dresden. The plot failed since the meeting had been switched to a bigger room in the Lecture Hall Centre shortly before it began due to the large number of students attending.

Nevertheless, the attempted disruption must ring alarm bells and be roundly condemned and rejected. Fuelled by the current hate-filled media campaign against refugees and the right-wing politics of the ruling grand coalition—a coalition of the Christian Democratic Union, (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD)—neo-Nazis feel encouraged to attack the basic right of freedom of speech and to resort to violence against Marxist and left-wing students, as the Nazi Student Union did in the 1920s and 1930s.

These forces are receiving support from the government camp. The day after the meeting, the RCDS, the student organisation affiliated to Angela Merkel's CDU, wrote on its Facebook page in Dresden that “such ideologies [the IYSSE] do not belong in our university, but rather in the files of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (the German domestic secret service).” The RCDS's justification for this hardly concealed call for the banning of the IYSSE—they make a clear distinction “between the violence of the ruling class and the violence of the oppressed” and are unwilling to “distance themselves from Lenin and his crimes.” A graphic published alongside the RCDS text recalls the anti-communist propaganda of the Nazis, depicting a skull and crossbones next to a hammer and sickle.

The IYSSE meeting in Dresden was the last of a series of meetings titled “200 Years, Karl Marx—The

Relevance of Marxism.” The previous meetings in Berlin, Bochum, Munich, Bonn, Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main and Karlsruhe had attracted a significant and interested audience. Over a hundred students and young people also attended the meeting in Dresden. Almost 1,000 participants in total attended a lecture on Marxism given by Peter Schwarz, secretary of the International Committee of the Fourth International, and participated in the ensuing discussion.

This considerable response evidently prompted the provocation by the Identitarian movement, which has close links to German and international neo-Nazi groups, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the German state apparatus.

The Identitarians had carefully prepared their attack on the meeting. They had mounted a megaphone behind a projector on the ceiling of the room, connected to an MP3 player. About 15 minutes after the meeting started, a woman's voice began to denounce Marx and Engels as anti-Semites and racists. Shortly afterwards, five people with a banner entered the room, clearly intent on disrupting the meeting. They stood, however, in front of empty chairs because the meeting had switched to a larger room.

In the meeting, three more people, armed with a camera, sat in the first row. They left the room when they realised their attack had failed and joined the other five. The megaphone and MP3 player were dismantled and secured by the caretaker of the university.

There can be no playing down of the significance of the attack launched on the IYSSE and its potentially dangerous consequences. The Identitarian movement was founded first in France 16 years ago and now exists in a number of countries. It is part of a network which has links to right-wing parties and to militant neo-Nazi groups, from which many members of the Identitarians

were recruited.

Ideologically, they advocate a race-based, extreme “volkische” form of nationalism. To blur the obvious parallels to the ideology of the Nazis they prefer to speak of “ethnic groups” instead of “races” and “identity” instead of “Volk” (“people”). They combat the influence of “foreign” cultures, which they regard as a threat to their “own identity.” They call for resistance to the “exchange of populations,” which, they allege, is the result of migration.

The Identitarians are characterised by their methods of direct action, which range from stunts to intimidation and physical violence against political opponents and migrants. One example was the sailing of the ship “C Star,” chartered by Identitarians last year in order to disrupt NGO rescue missions and prevent refugees from crossing the Mediterranean to Europe.

In Graz, Austria, 17 members of the Austrian Identitarian Movement are currently in court, charged with forming a criminal organisation. The accused include the leader of the Austrian Identitarians, Martin Sellner, who is in close contact with German Identitarians and has spoken at rallies in Dresden organised by the xenophobic Pegida movement.

The Identitarians have close personal and political relations to the entire camp of the extreme right. The movement has close links to the “Institute for State Policy” led by the far-right ideologue Götz Kubitschek, the weekly newspaper *Junge Freiheit*, *Compact* magazine edited by Jürgen Elsässer and the milieu of right-wing student fraternities. The Identitarian movement is also closely involved with the AfD, especially through its youth organisation Junge Alternative (Young Alternative). Many Identitarians are employed by AfD deputies, drawing their salaries directly from the German state.

The state of Saxony, governed by the CDU, is itself a stronghold of the extreme right. The neo-fascist NPD sat in the state parliament from 2004 to 2014 and the AfD took first place in the state at the last general election with 27 percent of the vote. In addition, the state capital city of Dresden is a nexus for the activities of the police, secret services and right-wing extremist scene. The Saxon city of Chemnitz was home to the far-right National Socialist Underground (NSU), which conducted a campaign of murder for years surrounded by secret service undercover agents and the police.

For the past five years the Saxony state intelligence agency has been led by Gordian Meyer-Plath. Meyer-Plath was a member of the Marchia Bonn duelling student fraternity and was personally involved in the emergence of the NSU. In the 1990s he was controller for the Brandenburg intelligence service of the undercover agent Carsten Szczepanski (aka Piatto), one of the most violent neo-Nazis in Germany. Szczepanski was instrumental in building up the right-wing international network “Blood & Honour” in Germany and maintained close links to the NSU when the gang went underground in 1998. Now the RCDS is calling for the very same intelligence service to act against the IYSSE.

Given the close links between the right-wing extremist scene, the intelligence agencies, the police and leading political circles, it would be thoroughly naive to regard the attack on the IYSSE as the result of an isolated initiative by local Identitarians. Under conditions of increasing social tensions and growing opposition to militarism and the victimisation of refugees, the German ruling class is mobilizing right-wing and fascist forces to intimidate and persecute left-wing opponents of their reactionary and anti-working-class policies.

Under these conditions the ruling class regards the IYSSE and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) as a central opponent who, based on the tradition of revolutionary Marxism, strives to mobilise workers and youth for an international socialist program directed against social inequality, militarism and state repression. The attack against the IYSSE is directed against the entire youth and working class as the state seeks to suppress every conscious expression of opposition to capitalism. We call on all readers of the WSWs to defend the IYSSE and condemn the attack in Dresden.



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