Successful election result for IYSSE at Humboldt University in Berlin

The IYSSE chapter at Humboldt University
26 January 2019

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) has achieved an important success in the student parliament elections at Humboldt University (HU). According to the provisional result, the IYSSE increased its share of the vote by a third, from 3.75 percent to 5.01 percent. Despite a slight decrease in overall voter turnout, the IYSSE total rose to 156 votes, compared to the 129 votes won last year.

In parts of the university where the IYSSE has campaigned strongly, it obtained a leading share of the vote of up to 20 percent. With 5.01 percent of the vote, the youth organisation of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) won more votes than the Left Party youth (SDS, 4.92 percent), and was roughly neck-and-neck with the Greens (Grünbolt), which secured 5.08 percent. The three strongest lists were the non-party Power of Science (12.25 percent), the List of Independent Students (11.31 percent), and "Left-Green Filthy" (9.8 percent). In total, 19 lists stood for election.

The strong result for the IYSSE indicates the enormous level of opposition to the political establishment's lurch to the right. "Faced with the capitalist crisis, young people are turning to a socialist perspective," said Sven Wurm, lead candidate and IYSSE spokesperson at HU. Wurm added that a number of nominally left-wing lists were on the ballot paper. "Therefore, the vote for the IYSSE was a conscious expression of support for its revolutionary and Marxist programme, and for its work at HU."

Over recent years, the youth organisation of the ICFI has waged a systematic struggle against the rise of the far-right, the return of militarism, and its roots in the capitalist system. The IYSSE has oriented students to the international working class, and advocated an internationalist and socialist perspective.

The IYSSE election statement said, "We are standing in the student elections to build a socialist movement against militarism and war, social inequality, and the rise of the far-right. We want to prevent the universities from becoming transformed into state-directed training camps for right-wing and militarist ideologies, as they were prior to World War I and World War II."

In this struggle, the work at Humboldt University is of particular significance. The IYSSE has been struggling there for years against efforts by Humboldt professors Jörg Baberowski and Herfried Münkler to rewrite the history of the 20th century and whitewash the crimes of German imperialism so as to make right-wing extremist and militarist positions socially acceptable once again.

The IYSSE has drawn attention to these developments among students and beyond. It showed how Baberowski established a widespread network within the New Right, trivialised the Nazis' crimes ("Hitler was not vicious"), and advocates brutal wars. The university administration defended Baberowski and sharply criticised the IYSSE. Ultimately, the university sued all student representative bodies at the initiative of the AfD in order to obtain the names of all students who were active in the student council over the past 10 years.

The IYSSE decisively rejected this campaign and organised a solidarity meeting with the student council. This year's IYSSE election campaign began with the presentation of the book *Why are They Back,* which carefully documents how the AfD's rise was ideologically and politically promoted by professors, the media and political parties. Over the past two weeks, the IYSSE chapter also organised three well-attended meetings. The first focused on the lessons of 1933 for the struggle against fascism today, the second

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on the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and the third on how the rise of the far-right can be stopped.

The IYSSE's strong election result is all the more significant given the waging of an aggressive counter-campaign by right-wing extremist forces who consciously sought to sabotage the IYSSE's campaign. AfD officials attacked IYSSE meetings, Baberowski threatened the IYSSE and urged others to put a stop to its work, and right-wing provocateurs systematically tore down IYSSE placards. The IYSSE refused to be intimidated, responding on the contrary by intensifying its campaign. While the far-right forces are a despised minority, the IYSSE's policies are winning growing support as the election result at HU confirms.

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