

Frankfurt students protest presence of far-right Alternative for Germany on university campus

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18 April 2019

Defying protests by students, politicians from all of the establishment political parties, including the Left Party, shared a platform with Jörg Meuthen from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) at a debate at Frankfurt's University for Applied Sciences (UAS) on April 5. The police had to clear a path for the AfD leader to attend the event.

Several hundred students protested against the invitation to the AfD to participate in the event at the UAS. Meuthen is a deputy in the European parliament and the federal leader of the right-wing extremist AfD. As soon as plans for the debate became public, students protested against it in a letter to the university administration.

Their demand was for Meuthen to be removed from the guest list. But the university's president, Frank Dievernich, insisted on inviting the AfD. On the day of the event, 16 students occupied the lecture theatre to be used for the debate. The university called the police and ordered them to clear the room.

The police intervention was brutal and militaristic. Over a hundred police officers, armed to the teeth and wearing helmets, stormed the lecture theatre and dragged the students out. Some students who refused to divulge their personal details were held in custody for several hours. The university president informed the media that he was pressing criminal charges against all 16 students.

The entire building was subsequently surrounded by a cordon of armed police, and every entrance to the university was manned by several police cars. As one approached the lecture theatre, the realisation that this was the same police department that was recently in the headlines for its neo-Nazi networks sprang to mind. One participant in the occupation said, "There was no violence on our part. But the police beat us and didn't even let those injured through to the canteen."

Only registered visitors were allowed to attend the debate. Everyone had to pass through the police cordon and provide

his or her personal details before entering.

Along the line of people waiting to be granted entry, the students hung protest placards from a washing line. "How could you let them speak?" asked one of the placards. "Our goal is to allow the event to go ahead without the AfD, or not at all," said one of the students. But not a single one of the invited politicians chose not to appear on a platform with Meuthen.

While the AfD leader, as was to be expected, was permitted to rant unhindered in the lecture hall about the influx of refugees, he was joined on the platform by Nicola Beer (Free Democratic Party—FDP), Sven Simon (Christian Democratic Union—CDU), Katarina Barley (Social Democratic Party—SPD), Terry Reintke (Greens) and Dietmar Bartsch, the Left party's parliamentary group leader in the German parliament.

The fact that Bartsch did not declare his solidarity with the students, but took his place alongside Meuthen on the platform that had been cleared by the police underscores on whose side the Left Party stands. It plays a critical role in providing a platform for the AfD and its far-right filth. Bartsch's only remark on Twitter was, "Lecture halls are never usually this full."

Students gathered on the campus to protest against the brutal crackdown. "We are shocked that the university administration would use such police violence against us," said one of the protest organisers. He added that the action taken by students had been planned as a peaceful protest. "We merely wanted to achieve what the student body has been demanding for weeks: the disinviting of the AfD. The AfD doesn't belong at the university."

Some 400 students and supporters took part in the protest in the course of the afternoon. At the table set up by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP), one student said, "If we don't begin questioning now the context and structures under which we live, then we have really learned nothing from fascism."

“As students, we of course support democratic discourse,” said Maike Reichartz, a student representative on the social work departmental committee at UAS. “But a right-wing extremist election advertisement has nothing to do with scholarly debate.” She confirmed that her initiative won the support of several students, as well as members of staff and lecturers at the university.

UAS President Dievernich claimed that the AfD is a democratically elected party, and it is a matter of democratic discourse that all parties represented in the federal parliament be invited. Yet this wasn’t a debate concerned with the German parliament, but the European elections. More significantly, the AfD is not merely a “democratically elected party.” The AfD has been deliberately promoted and built up by the state, the established political parties and the media over recent years. The fact that the AfD enjoys protection from the highest levels of the state was once again graphically demonstrated by the events in Frankfurt.

Through right-wing extremist cliques, the AfD has extensive ties to the state authorities, the army, police and intelligence agencies. This could no longer be denied following the events in Chemnitz last year, when Hans-Jörg Maassen, chief of the domestic secret service, defended neo-Nazi rampages through the city, and Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union) said he would have joined the march if he hadn’t been a government minister.

At the university, the SGP sold its book *Why Are They Back?* The book, authored by Deputy SGP National Secretary Christoph Vandreier, shows in detail how the revival of fascism is bound up with a sharp shift to the right within the political establishment, the return of German militarism, and the construction of a police state. These reactionary policies would be unthinkable without a reactionary offensive on university campuses, led by falsifiers of history and right-wing extremist professors such as Humboldt University’s Jörg Baberowski, who infamously told *Der Spiegel* that “Hitler was not vicious.”

Students at the UAS who protested against the AfD last week are part of a growing movement of young people and workers against this right-wing agenda in schools and at universities. As Vandreier writes in his book, “The AfD neither enjoys mass support, nor does it possess combat units like the Nazi SA, which recruited uprooted soldiers from the First World War, ruined members of the petty bourgeoisie, and desperate unemployed workers. The AfD’s strength arises exclusively from the support it receives from political parties, the media, government and state apparatus.”

However, the mounting opposition requires a viable perspective, which can be only the construction of a new workers’ movement on the basis of a socialist and

internationalist programme. Anyone who believes that the struggle against the far-right can be waged in alliance with the so-called “democratic” parties is in for a rude awakening.

All of the parties, from the CDU/CSU to the FDP, SPD, Greens and Left Party, cooperate with the AfD on a daily basis. In the fields of refugee, domestic and foreign policy, these parties are increasingly embracing the AfD’s line. The SPD, Greens and Left Party also ruthlessly deport refugees, are systematically strengthening the police-state apparatus in every state, and tolerate the emergence of right-wing extremist falsifiers at the universities.

The SPD-Green Party state government in Hamburg even deported refugees in an ambulance plane. In Thuringia, the Left Party-SPD-Green coalition government under Minister President Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) permitted the state prosecutor to investigate, as a criminal association, an artistic group critical of the AfD. In Berlin, the SPD-Left Party-Green state government launched a police raid on a party organised by refugee aid organisations.

And in Frankfurt and Hesse, the political parties all rushed to cover up the Nazi network in the police, which has terrorised lawyer Seda Ba?ay-Y?ld?z with faxes signed with the name “NSU 2.0,” a reference to the right-wing terrorist National Socialist Underground, which killed 10 people across Germany. As the Hessenschau, the state’s flagship evening news programme, reported on the same day as the protests took place against the AfD at the UAS, the Hesse state government is preparing to deport a young man to Albania who has lost both his legs.

These are all reasons underscoring the necessity of building the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei. The SGP not only fights the return of fascism, but also the capitalist system that gives rise to it. Against the propaganda of a “democratic” European Union trumpeted by the politicians in the UAS lecture theatre last week, the SGP counterposes the United Socialist States of Europe.



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