

IYSSE meetings in Germany: Stop the shift to the right at the universities!

Our correspondents
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A series of meetings titled “Stop the shift to the right at the universities!”, organised by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), began last week. Some 70 students and workers attended presentations last Tuesday and Wednesday at Humboldt University (HU) in Berlin and Ruhr University of Bochum (RUB). Further meetings will take place in Leipzig today and in Karlsruhe on Thursday, 7 November.

In Berlin, Christoph Vandreier, author of the book *Why are They Back?*, spoke on the current relevance of the issue. Just two days earlier, he noted, the fascist Björn Höcke had won 23 percent of the vote in the state elections in Thuringia as the lead candidate of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

At the same time, Vandreier said, the rightward shift of all the parties is becoming ever clearer. He explained that while the Christian Democrats (CDU) are preparing for a coalition with the AfD, the Left Party is considering aligning with the CDU. Although there is not yet a mass fascist movement as in 1933, he continued, developments in Thuringia show that the rehabilitation of Hitler is aimed at strengthening Nazi forces.

This has been possible only due to the ideological offensive carried out in particular at Humboldt University by Professor Jörg Baberowski, who notoriously stated in 2014 that “Hitler was not vicious.” Baberowski’s efforts are aimed at making right-wing extremist positions politically acceptable once again.

Vandreier went on to point out that along with all of the history institutes at the university and the university administration, Höcke backed Baberowski, including by spreading his anti-refugee agitation.

Opposition to this development is building among

students. Two student representatives, Bafta Sarbo and Juliane Ziegler, have filed a lawsuit and an official complaint to Baberowski’s employer in opposition to his slanders and acts of intimidation. Against this, an aggressive campaign is being waged by the media and the political parties aimed at silencing Baberowski’s critics.

Vandreier made clear that the IYSSE fully supports the student representatives. He received a loud round of applause when he called upon the meeting’s attendees to show their solidarity. He also condemned a violent police intervention against students who had occupied the Institute of Social Sciences the previous week.

In Hamburg, hundreds of students protested against the AfD founder and far-right ideological inciter Berndt Lucke. As in Berlin, where the Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Greens defended Baberowski, the Social Democratic Party (SPD)/Left Party/Green government in Hamburg ordered a police operation to enable Lucke to lecture at the University of Hamburg.

While the 1968 student movement rose up against the old Nazis and the “residue of 1,000 years” at the universities and effected a certain degree of liberalisation, the professors and politicians of today are seeking to impose right-wing extremist ideology, explained Vandreier. He went on to warn against the “renazification” of the universities.

In Berlin, members of the AfD sought to disrupt the meeting, dominate the discussion and present the protests in Hamburg as an attack on academic freedom and freedom of speech. Vandreier sharply refuted these claims. In reality, it is the state that is attempting to suppress the students’ freedom of speech, he declared, not the other way around.

The remainder of the meeting focused on the question of what perspective is required to oppose the shift to

the right. A lively discussion developed at both meetings on the role of the established parties.

Participants wanted to know why the IYSSE describes the politics of the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party as right-wing. Vandreier explained how these parties paved the way for the AfD over recent decades and are now implementing the agenda of the far-right, whether it be in the area of refugee policy, militarism or austerity.

The lessons of 1933 show that Hitler was not an accidental phenomenon, but a product of the crisis of capitalism. Vandreier stressed that it is possible to fight fascism and war today only by taking up a struggle against their social roots. This is why the decisive question is the building of an independent party of the working class based on a socialist perspective. This is what the IYSSE, as the youth organisation of the International Committee of the Fourth International, fights for, he concluded.



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