

“Worldwide socialism is the only possible way out”

IYSSE election campaign at Humboldt University finds support among students

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) ran three candidates in the student parliament election at Berlin’s Humboldt University (HU) in June, campaigning among students for a socialist program.

Due to irregularities in the recent postal vote, it is being repeated and the election result will not be known until August. We call on all students to vote again for the IYSSE (List 14) by mail ballot by August 6!

As we explain in our election statement, we are fighting among students, youth and young workers to build a socialist movement against militarism and war, social inequality and the rise of the extreme right.

At the first online election event, we pointed out how 80 years after the war of extermination against the Soviet Union, HU professor Jörg Baberowski is trivializing the crimes of the Nazis and laying the ideological groundwork for new wars. At our second event, members of the IYSSE from Germany and Britain addressed the catastrophic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and explained why an international socialist perspective was necessary to stop the pandemic.

The campaign received a strong response from students and youth. In particular, the disciplinary complaint filed by IYSSE spokesperson Sven Wurm against University President Sabine Kunst at the end of May was widely discussed. Kunst continues to support the right-winger Professor Baberowski, even though he has threatened and physically attacked students.

Many students were appalled that the university administration tolerated and even justified these attacks. “A right-wing extremist professor has no place at the university and he certainly shouldn’t be defended,” one student declared on Instagram. Another student wrote, “As a Jew, I’m particularly outraged that such a person is

being defended (but honestly, not particularly surprised).”

A history PhD student stressed the importance of IYSSE’s commitment and clear stance against these developments, “Silence is always acceptance. I really like what you guys are doing!”

WSWS also spoke with 20-year-old Luna, a second-semester social science student at HU, who became acquainted with the IYSSE during the campaign. She supports the disciplinary complaint and condemns the university president’s stance on Baberowski: “If you tolerate right-wing extremism and Holocaust relativization at a university, that’s as much a political statement from her as from him.”

Baberowski’s statements, she continues, about Hitler and the war of extermination “indisputably relativize the Holocaust and National Socialism” and are moreover historically false.

Further: “It is incredibly dangerous when such statements are tolerated. The fact that this is happening at the university and that the professors and the university administration are doing nothing is not simply apolitical restraint, but quite clearly a solidarizing with the extreme right. Of course, on the one hand, this leads to students probably no longer feeling comfortable at the university and, on the other, to a rightward shift and in some fields to a right-wing university culture. This supports the formation of new extremist groups and the strengthening of the right in general.”

Luna expresses concern about “the new rearmament and the idea of giving Germany more power as a country.” Most people are not aware of the rearmament, she notes. “These are decisions that are being made behind their backs.” She points out that “right-wing regimes are more and more coming to power in countries around Germany and also all over the world,” for example, in Hungary,

Austria, Italy, but also in Brazil, where far-right President Jair Bolsonaro rules.

Luna considers it particularly problematic that in Germany, with the Left Party and the Greens, even the parties that present themselves as left-wing support war policies. “That way they catch left-wing voters who are actually strongly against rearmament and militarization.”

That’s why she finds “the work of the IYSSE very important,” especially because it “advocates very strongly for the cohesion of the working class, which must fight together.” The issue of class society is far too often forgotten, she said.

“You can see in many undeniable examples that capitalism is moving further and further into its final stages and that it is suffering crisis after crisis, now with the coronavirus, with environmental disasters, in general with the climate disaster,” Luna said. “But still, capitalism continues to be supported by official politics.”

That the IYSSE fights for socialist ideas is why she was particularly drawn to it. “As Marx already foresaw, it can’t go on like this. I think that worldwide socialism, as Marx said, is the only possible way out. If such a system is properly implemented, there will no longer be the possibilities of exploiting the planet and people as much as under capitalism.”

“All these problems that are getting worse and worse are driving me to become politically active,” says Luna, who also notices a growing mood of protest in her community. “Today it’s incredibly important, especially as a young person, to get involved and show that you don’t agree with it and won’t accept decisions being made behind people’s backs.” Both at universities and in society in general, she says, it’s necessary for resistance to take place. “And I would like to be part of that.”

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