

Stop the censorship of socialists and opponents of war at Ruhr University Bochum!

IYSSE at the Ruhr University Bochum
13 July 2023

On 11 May, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the Ruhr University Bochum held an event against the war in Ukraine.

In leaflets, posters and at the event itself, we strongly condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine. But we also strongly rejected the pro-war policy of the German government, which is using the war in Ukraine as a pretext for the biggest rearmament since Hitler, is deliberately fuelling the war and rejects any diplomatic solution. The government not only accepts the death and maiming of hundreds of thousands of young people from Russia and Ukraine but is also prepared to bring the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation.

We are opponents of NATO, which is pursuing the same geostrategic and economic interests in the war against Russia as it did in the criminal wars against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. We have made it clear that there is only one way to end the butchery in Ukraine: Building a powerful anti-war movement that unites the working class and youth worldwide—including in Ukraine and Russia—and linking the struggle against war with the struggle against its cause, capitalism.

The IYSSE is the only youth movement whose members around the world—in the US, Canada, Germany, France, England, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and Ukraine—are conducting a common struggle against war. That is why we are hated by the rulers on both sides of the front.

We expected that we would not meet with approval from some at the Ruhr University Bochum. Our meeting aimed to initiate a serious debate about the causes and background of the war in Ukraine. But some of those who support the war want to prevent such a

discourse by all means; they are demanding the suppression of freedom of expression, censorship and event bans.

On Monday, Steven S. from the Archaeology Student Council and Robin W. from the Green-Alternative Students Bochum (GRAS) brought a motion to the Ruhr University Student Council (FSVK) calling on the university administration to ban IYSSE events at the university as well as socialist and anti-militarist positions from the campus. The motion is to be put to a vote next Monday. We call on all students and all WSWs readers to protest to the FSVK against this attack on a fundamental democratic right.

The motion is full of insinuations, insults, and baseless accusations against the IYSSE. In the one and a half pages there is not a single quote or other evidence from the meeting or our extensive published materials. The worst slander is that we have called for violence.

In reality, the authors are seeking to ban any opposition to the war from campus. The IYSSE should “not be given a platform,” its statements have no place on campus and the university should “not provide it with resources,” i.e., rooms for events, those moving the motion demand. This call for censorship is obviously not only directed against the IYSSE, but against socialists and all opponents of war.

The justification used by the authors is that the IYSSE is engaged in “divisive pro-Russian propaganda.” The only evidence they provide for this shameless slander is our condemnation of the Maidan coup of February 2014 in Ukraine, which was proven to be based on fascist forces such as Svoboda and Right Sector and was actively supported by the German

government.

In this way, the authors equate any criticism of NATO and German militarism with a defence of the Putin regime. The same construct was used to defame opponents of war in this country during the two world wars. Karl Liebknecht was accused of advancing the cause of the Russian tsar because he opposed mass slaughter in World War I, declaring, “The main enemy is at home!”

The authors leave no doubt that they are also seeking to suppress socialist positions. They claim that the call for a mass revolutionary movement against capitalism is a call for violence, and the call for Russian and Ukrainian soldiers to fraternise is an attack on the “self-determination of Ukraine.” They claim the IYSSE is an “enemy of liberal democracy” because of its anti-militarist and socialist stance. What they find worst of all is that we refer positively to the October Revolution in Russia and the November Revolution in Germany, which ended the mass slaughter of the First World War.

The last time these socialist positions were banned from German universities was between 1933 and 1945, under the Nazis.

Socialists are not “enemies of democracy” but consistent defenders of basic democratic rights. In the Kaiser’s empire, the social democrats, who were still in a Marxist party at that point, had fought for basic democratic rights with its revolutionary programme. In the 1930s, the Trotskyists were the only ones to advocate a united front of the Social Democrats (SPD) and Communist Party (KPD) that could have blocked Hitler’s path to power. In the Stalinist Soviet Union and German Democratic Republic, members of our party, the Fourth International, were persecuted for fighting for internationalism and workers’ democracy.

A revolution is precisely what is needed to bring about real democracy. Only when the vast majority actively intervenes in political events, breaks the power of the banks and corporations, and places them under democratic control, can the urgent problems of humanity be solved. This is shown today particularly clearly by the rapid development towards a Third World War, the mass slaughter in Ukraine and the strengthening of far-right and fascist parties in numerous Western countries.

To defame this perspective as a “call to violence” comes straight from the moth-eaten rags of anti-

communism. Steven S. and Robin W. are now reviving this in order to suppress any criticism of the German government’s pro-war policy.

This is not simply a matter of a bumbling tract by these two individuals or the possible decision of a subordinate student body. The demand for a ban on anti-war events at the university and the suppression of an official student group is part of a broad offensive to turn universities back into centres of militarism.

At Humboldt University in Berlin, the IYSSE group has been fighting for years against the trivialisation of Nazi crimes and the rehabilitation of German militarism by professors like Jörg Baberowski and Herfried Münkler. We will not allow universities to be misused again for the ideological and technical preparation of war, as they were before the First and Second World Wars. At Humboldt University, the university management has tried in vain to deny us rooms and to suppress our work in the student parliament.

Professors at the Ruhr University Bochum are also working on the ideological justification of rearmament and war. For example, Professor Jörg Schimmelpfennig, who holds the Chair of Economics, agitates against “the dream of a rules-based world order” and instead advocates the massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). Peace, according to the professor, can only be enforced militarily.

A Student Council that claims to represent students should oppose such militaristic positions and defend student criticism of them, instead of supporting the university administration in acting against those who are critical. Therefore, we call on all students and all WSWS readers to protest to the FSVK against the passage of this motion. Send an email to fsvk@lists.ruhr-uni-bochum.de and a copy to iysse@gleichheit.de.



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