

What is behind the attempt to censor war opponents at Ruhr-Universität Bochum?

IYSSE at the Ruhr University Bochum
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On July 17, the Student Representative Conference (FSVK) of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB) passed a resolution *in camera* calling for opponents of war and socialists to be censored and banned from campus. The resolution calls on the university administration to ban events organised by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organisation of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), and to “not provide resources” and “not give a platform” to “these groups,” as their viewpoints “have no place on the RUB campus.”

The attack follows a well-attended IYSSE event held at RUB, where the causes of the Ukraine war were highlighted and a socialist perspective to end the war was discussed. This perspective of international fraternisation, directed against both the Putin regime and NATO aggression, is defamed by the FSVK as “divisive pro-Russian propaganda” and even as a “call for violence.”

The lies and distortions with which the body justifies its demand had already been comprehensively refuted by the IYSSE in a statement issued before the vote. But the FSVK presidium banned IYSSE representatives from even distributing this statement to delegates. Instead, the FSVK unceremoniously excluded the student public from the debate and conducted the vote behind closed doors.

A number of student representatives, many of whom belong to the youth organisations of the establishment parties, want to further their careers by becoming the government’s campus police force behind the backs of the students and suppress any critical discussion of the government’s insane war course. While hundreds of thousands of young people from Russia and Ukraine are being slaughtered, and society here is also being subordinated to the requirements of waging war, all criticism of this is to be banned.

The significance of this decision therefore goes far beyond the walls of the university; it stands in the vilest

traditions of German militarism. The FSVK careerists want to ban a left-wing student group because it rejects the madness of war and rearmament and advocates a socialist perspective to end the war. In view of the enormous opposition to the escalation of the war, anyone who opposes the mass slaughter is to be muzzled.

Yet all the talk of “freedom” and “democracy” being defended in Ukraine has long been disproven. NATO and Germany have deliberately provoked Putin’s reactionary war and continue to escalate it daily in order to advance their own economic and geostrategic interests. For these goals, they are willing to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainians and Russians on the battlefields and even to accept nuclear war.

In doing so, the government is directly tying in with Germany’s war aims in the two world wars and once again seeks to annex Ukrainian and Russian natural resources. It has geared the entire arms industry towards supplying weapons and ammunition to Ukraine in order to kill as many Russian soldiers as quickly as possible. Seventy-eight years after Nazi Germany’s unconditional surrender ended the worst crimes in human history, the German elites are thirsting for revenge and are again rolling German tanks against Russia.

Every area of society is being subordinated to this madness. While the health budget was cut by two-thirds last year and the new draft budget foresees cuts in student finance running into hundreds of millions of euros, the arms budget is being driven ever higher.

In the face of widespread opposition, this pro-war course is being enforced more and more openly by authoritarian means. Peace activists like Heinrich Bucker are put on trial and the state apparatus and secret services are mobilised against opponents of the war. In 2018, for the first time, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as Germany’s secret service is known) listed the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei as “left-wing

extremist” in its annual report because it was “against alleged nationalism, imperialism and militarism.” In its current report, the intelligence service attacks the Trotskyist party for developing “the humanitarian commitment present among young people” into “resistance against militarism.”

Universities have become important battlefields in this context. As before the two world wars, they are to be transformed into centres of militarism and war propaganda. The IYSSE declared war on this development years ago. At Berlin’s Humboldt University, it pointed out how professors Herfried Münkler and Jörg Baberowski were trivialising the crimes of imperialism in order to prepare new crimes.

When Baberowski declared in *Der Spiegel* in February 2014 that Hitler was not vicious and that the Holocaust was the same as the shootings carried out in the Russian Civil War, there was not a single professor in the whole of Germany who would publicly oppose this groundless historical claptrap. Instead, the IYSSE was attacked by dozens of professors for criticising Baberowski for these statements. At the same time, however, we were able to mobilise enormous support among students. The Student Parliament at Humboldt University and student bodies at the Technical University Berlin, Free University Berlin, Bremen, Magdeburg, Vienna, and many other universities expressed solidarity with our struggle against militaristic ideology.

The opposition among students has not decreased since then, but the war propaganda has become all the fiercer. Baberowski’s defence of the Nazis is now an official government line. Currently, the German embassy in Estonia, in cooperation with the “Estonian Institute of Historical Memory,” is organising a so-called “summer school” that explicitly opposes “the myth that Germany alone started the Second World War.” The Russian invasion of Ukraine is instead presented as a continuation of the Soviet Union’s “criminal path” in the world war!

The war drum is also being beaten at the Ruhr University Bochum. Professor Jörg Schimmelpfennig, long-time holder of the Chair of Economics, is a “Senior Research Fellow” at the German Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies (GIDS), a military think tank of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). In lectures and strategy papers, he agitates against “the dream of a rules-based world order” and instead advocates the massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr. Peace, according to the professor, can only be enforced militarily.

The FSVK is now blatantly telling students they should

simply accept what they are being told. It stands in the worst traditions of the Kaiser’s Empire and the Nazis when it accuses opponents of war of making propaganda for the enemy. For this is its central argument against the IYSSE. Because we question NATO’s war narrative and show how German militarism is following its historical precedents, we are supposedly spreading “divisive pro-Russian propaganda,” according to the FSVK. The great German socialist Karl Liebknecht was accused of making common cause with the Russian tsar because he courageously opposed the mass slaughter of the First World War with an international socialist perspective.

That the members of the FSVK are animated by the same reactionary spirit is also made clear by their hysterical anti-communism. They want to ban our positive references to the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and to the German Revolution of 1919, as well as the call for the fraternisation of soldiers and for world socialist revolution.

The last time socialist and anti-militarist positions were banned from German campuses was between 1933 and 1945, when members of the Trotskyist movement, to which we belong, were condemned by the hundreds, and locked up in concentration camps for calling for the overthrow of Hitler and the prevention of war. But the Trotskyists did not allow themselves to be broken and continued their resistance even in the camps.

At that time, the Nazis could rely on a broad following among students. Today, the careerists and would-be Baldur Benedikt von Schirachs (head of the Hitler Youth) of the FSVK have to decide their censorship plans behind closed doors because they know that after the experiences of fascism and the Holocaust, the vast majority of students firmly reject these militaristic and authoritarian policies.

Therefore, we will not be intimidated by the FSVK in any way but call on all students to protest against the censorship attempt and to oppose the lackeys of the federal government. Do not allow socialists to be banned from campus and join our fight against war! Join the IYSSE!



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