

Christian Democratic student association calls for the banning of the IYSSE at German universities

By Christoph Vandreier
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Last week, the RCDS (Ring of Christian Democratic Students), the student organization of the two governing parties in Germany—the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU)—published two statements in which it called for the banning of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at German universities. The demand is part of a campaign to suppress socialist and anti-militarist opposition on campus.

The two statements were written by the Leipzig branch of the RCDS, published on its Facebook page and distributed on the Leipzig University campus. The organisation welcomed the decision of the Leipzig Student Council to deny the IYSSE the status of a “working group,” which is required for a student group to use university facilities and campaign on campus. The RCDS called the decision an important step in the fight against “extremism.”

The statements say that “fundamental democratic rights” should not apply to the socialists of the IYSSE because they exploit them in order to act against the “system in a revolutionary way.” Anyone who refers positively to the October Revolution is in violation of the “basic democratic order,” the right-wing university group claims, employing standard anti-communist rhetoric. Finally, it slanders the IYSSE as being “anti-Semitic” and “violent.”

Anyone who has followed the political activity of the IYSSE knows that these are outrageous lies. The IYSSE strictly rejects individual acts of violence as a political method. As a Marxist organization, it does not oppose the “democratic order”; it opposes capitalism, which once again, as in the 20th century, is leading to war and dictatorship. At universities, it fights against militarist and racist ideology and the trivialization of Nazi crimes.

The RCDS, which has numerous links with the right-wing milieu, is not concerned with defending democracy, but with abolishing fundamental democratic rights and making universities conform on the basis of an extremely right-wing programme. In its eyes, any criticism of the German government’s militaristic policies, social attacks and mass deportations of refugees should be banned from the campus.

The RCDS leaves no doubt about this. On October 27, the RCDS Federal Association published a catalogue of demands on its website for the establishment of a type of university regime seen only in military dictatorships and fascist states. The RCDS wants to ban all political activity by students that has not been accredited by the German Secret Service.

Thus, its university group calls for “a ban on the cooperation by student bodies and universities with organizations classified as extremist by the Secret Service.” The Secret Service, known in Germany by the Orwellian name “Verfassungsschutz” (“Office for the Protection of the Constitution”), is not subject to any democratic control and is intertwined

with the right-wing terrorist milieu. It alone, according to the RCDS, should be able to decide for whom students are allowed to vote as their representatives and with whom they may associate.

But even that is not enough. The intelligence services are also to decide whether a student organization can be accepted as a “university group,” and thereby have the ability to participate in the democratic process at the university. The national chairman of the RCDS, Henrik Wärner, even wants to compulsorily de-register critical students from universities. “We have to deal with the question of whether we want to allow this type of student to study at our universities,” he said.

In the 1970s, the German government responded to the student revolt by imposing employment bans on alleged “radical leftists,” preventing them from working in the public sector. The RCDS wants to go much further today and expel everyone from the university who criticizes militarism and capitalism.

The RCDS is reacting, with its demands for dictatorial measures, to the growing resistance to right-wing politics among workers and students.

As a university association of the governing parties, the RCDS careerists see their role as ideologically preparing and promoting the politics of militarism and social attacks. For example, the RCDS defends radical right-wing professors against student criticism, organizes events with them, and regularly obstructs the work of left-wing university groups.

One of their heroes is the far-right Professor Jörg Baberowski, who is notorious throughout Germany for his incitement against refugees and his trivialization of Nazi crimes. Like no other, Baberowski combines his falsifications of history with calls for brutal wars and military interventions. He is defended by the RCDS at Humboldt University in Berlin, as is his militarist colleague Herfried Münkler, who wants to make Germany “Europe’s taskmaster.”

There is opposition to such right-wing and militaristic ideologues at many universities. In Bremen, the RCDS had to cancel a planned event with Baberowski because the local Student Union called for broad protests. The student parliament at Humboldt University overwhelmingly passed a resolution opposing Baberowski. Only the three members of the RCDS voted against the resolution. Numerous student bodies throughout Germany have expressed their solidarity with the Bremen Student Union and the IYSSE.

This is why the RCDS is now calling for dictatorial measures at the universities. The struggles on campus reflect fundamental social developments.

Everywhere, the ruling class is increasingly relying on police state measures and dictatorship. In Spain, the CDU’s sister party, the Partido Popular (PP), brutally attacked peaceful participants in a referendum on Catalan independence and then sacked the democratically elected regional

government and placed the region under Madrid's rule.

The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) is currently elevating the openly extremist right-wing Freedom Party into the government in order to carry through extreme-right and xenophobic policies. The chairman of the RCDS in Leipzig, Lucas Schoppföfen, campaigns on the Internet for the ÖVP candidate for Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who has long advocated far-right policies.

In Germany too, basic democratic rights are being attacked to impose the government's policy of rearmament and social attacks against the population. In recent years, under the leadership of the CDU/CSU, systematic spying on the population has been implemented, the separation between police and intelligence services has been for all practical purposes abolished, and most recently, the Network Enforcement Act has been adopted, establishing the infrastructure for systematic censorship. With the prohibition of the website Indymedia, a precedent has been established for the arbitrary criminalization of left-wing media outlets.

The RCDS provides the foot soldiers for these policies at the universities. It appears to feel encouraged to demand even more radical attacks on democratic rights in the aftermath of the mass neo-Nazi demonstration in Warsaw and the offensive of the ultra-right around the world.

The denial of working group status for the IYSSE in Leipzig sets an important precedent for the RCDS to deprive socialist student organizations of their standing as university groups at all universities and to thus abolish fundamental democratic rights. We call on all students to oppose this reactionary attempt.

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Open letter to the Student Council of the University of Leipzig

From the Leipzig IYSSE

November 11, 2017

The following letter was sent by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) group at the University of Leipzig to the members of the Student Council (StuRa).

Dear StuRa members,

At its first session in the new semester, the StuRa has decided to deny working group status to the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). This is an attack on the fundamental right of freedom of expression and association. The StuRa presumes to decide which political views are allowed on campus and which are to be censored. While right-wing university groups such as the RCDS are granted working group status, provided offices and allowed to work on campus, left-wing and socialist groups are to be banned.

At the StuRa plenary session, for the RCDS and right-wing groups in the "anti-German" milieu, no lie was too bold for use in justifying censorship of the IYSSE. They claimed that the IYSSE opposed the fundamental democratic order because it calls for the expropriation of banks and corporations. Socialist criticism of capitalism was declared to be a "conspiracy theory" and "anti-Semitic."

All of these claims are absurd. They serve to cover up the right-wing agenda of the above-mentioned groups. In fact, the IYSSE is a Marxist student group, which, like no other, opposes all forms of nationalism, militarism and racism. As the youth and student organization of the Fourth International, it operates worldwide and has groups at universities and colleges in many countries around the world.

In Germany, the IYSSE is one of the largest groups in the student parliament at Humboldt University in Berlin. Because it publicly criticized right-wing extremist Professor Jörg Baberowski for his trivialization of Nazi crimes, a storm of indignation was unleashed by the right-wing media—from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* through *Cicero* to *Junge Freiheit*.

The courageous stance it has taken against right-wing and militaristic ideologues has made the IYSSE known throughout Germany. The Student

Unions at the Technical University of Berlin, the Ruhr University Bochum and the University of Bremen have organized meetings with the IYSSE on the subject and several other student bodies have declared their solidarity.

The fight against the right wing and for a socialist perspective is more urgent today than ever. With Trump's threats against North Korea, the world stands closer to nuclear war than ever before. All the unresolved problems of capitalism are breaking out again, threatening to once more plunge humanity into a catastrophe.

The German elites are reacting to the growth of nationalism with military rearmament. They want to dominate Europe in order to play a role in world politics and impose their economic interests internationally. This is the background of the shift to the right that has led to the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Now, all parties are reacting to the electoral success of the right-wing extremists by adopting the far-right's slogans and stepping up the policies of deportations, social attacks and militarism.

Your decision to deny the IYSSE working group status at Leipzig University sets a dangerous precedent. In the face of the right-wing offensive, the trivialisation of Nazi crimes at German universities, and the return of German militarism, you are blocking the work of a left-wing, Marxist university group that is keenly opposed to these developments. Without working group status, university groups are not allowed to use university facilities and work politically on campus.

While the RCDS, which invited the right-wing radical Professor Baberowski to the University of Bremen, gets rooms for free in Leipzig, you are censoring critics of this policy. You are creating a campus on which the right can grow, and Marxist politics are banned. This recalls the policy of political conformity enforced at universities under the Nazis.

Especially here in the state of Saxony, where the AfD became the strongest force in the recent general election, and here in Leipzig, where a professor like Thomas Rauscher spreads right-wing extremist propaganda on Twitter, we not only have the right, but the duty, to counteract these trends.

We hereby emphatically apply again for working group status.

IYSSE Leipzig

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>