



Statement by Referat gegen Faschismus and Referat gegen Antisemitismus, June 4, 2016

No room for the „Freiburg Revolutionary Study Group“!

The *Freiburg Revolutionary Study Group* (FRSG) sees itself as an English speaking group which formed around a shared interest in anti-revisionist and revolutionary theory and practice.¹ They want to enable international students English speaking expats to participate and also rediscover revolutionary texts and theories which they perceive to have been “buried behind decades of failed social movements characterised by petty activist lifestylism, and so many “socialist” electoral victories, each of which only ever resulted in another knife in the back of the proletariat [...]” Some of these revolutionary theorists and groups are the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the independence struggles of Europe's former colonies, the student movement leading up to May '68, and the Black Power movement.

They claim to make decisions democratically, while organization structures were still in the making. Perceiving themselves “as a group committed to the study of the emancipation of the working class, oppressed nations, and marginalised identities,” they proclaim no tolerance for “any racist, misogynist, cissexist, ableist, anti-Semitic, or Zionist views and behaviours.”

No harmless reading circle!

Even though one might think the group behind this self-perception there might be just a harmless reading circle, studying and discussing political theory openly and among themselves, we see a group which is politically active in public and has more or less consolidated antisemitic, Maoist and inhuman worldview. The Referat gegen Faschismus and the Referat gegen Antisemitismus criticize the FRSG's public image and its ideology and we demand the group to be expelled from the room at the Studierendenhaus by decision of the Studierendenrat, the AstA and every student. To prove this, we recommend a look at the group's Facebook profile.

Maoism

The cover picture on the FRSG's Facebook profile does not promise too much: It is a painting by He Kongde which shows Mao at the Gutian Congress, speaking in front of an armed group of followers. The FRSG shows its admiration for Mao openly, for example in sharing content from the Facebook page *Mao Zedong*, which glorifies the mass murderers Stalin and Mao, sees increasing contradictions between imperialist countries, meaning the preparation of a new imperialist war, and which claims Boko Haram to be agents of an European imperialism. Boko Haram, by the way, is a terrorist group in Nigeria, with contacts with Taliban and Al-Quaida,² and which meanwhile probably joined the Islamic State (IS) officially. The group also shares common ground with the page *The Mao Zedong Society* in sharing its postings and content. This page, as its name suggests, celebrates Mao Zedong in a highly uncritical manner, while being linked to other pages such as *Stalin Society* and *Red Youth News*, which sees the debate around the accusation of antisemitism

¹Selbstverständnis der FRSG; siehe zu allen Aussagen über die Online-Präsenz der FRSG: fb.com/freiburgrevolutionaries (Stand: 30.06.2016).

²<http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/boko-haram-ueberblick> (Stand: 04.07.16)

against Jeremy Corbyn as a threat to the Labour leadership by a storm in a teacup.³

In a discussion between the FRSG and the AStA members of the group emphasized that they found Maos writings and theory very interesting and inspiring. One member even saw Mao as one of the most important theorists in history, who everybody had to read in order to put revolutionary ideas into practice. Asked if their reading of Mao also involved criticism, the answer was that it did, but that his failures were no reason to take his theories for less important or revolutionary. One of the worst of Mao's crimes – the so-called “Great Cultural Revolution” could not reduce their admiration for the thinker. On the contrary, it was emphasized repeatedly, that the bourgeois view on history would not be accepted by the group. In our opinion, this suggests a certain anti-intellectualism which adheres to the Maoist movement.

We think that the practical application of Maoist theories in organized group has a tendency to not bring forth the most anti-authoritarian structures, even if it claims the opposite. This opinion stems from our occupation with the radical left in Germany, where Maoist organizations flourished during the 1970s. However, many former Maoists turned their back on the movement with the beginning of the 1980s, part because of hierarchical group structures, part in the face of the crimes of the cultural revolution and the authoritarian regime in the PRC. Of course we cannot translate these developments congruently on the members of this group here at the University of Freiburg, but we see the history of Maoist groups as a warning of the possible development of authoritarian structures. The dominant appearance of one of the group's member, who introduced himself as an organized Maoist, also suggests such a conclusion.

We come to the end that what happens in this group is an uncritical affirmation of the theories and actions of dangerous, supposedly revolutionary leaders in history. This is not the kind of political activism we want to offer a platform to.

On their opinions on Israel

We think the FRSG's relationship to Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, is highly problematic. The group shares texts and positions which apply a double standard on Israel and have the objective of the delegitimizing and demonizing the state. This is a handling of the state of Israel which is far from being a proclaimed “legitimate criticism,” but follows nothing but antisemitic resentment.

They shared, for example, an article on Pink Floyd singer Roger Waters, in which he claims that artists were afraid of criticizing Israel, because they could be called a nazi or an antisemite, which in turn could mean the end of their career.⁴ His argument is based on the assumptions that a) there existed a prohibition of the criticism of Israel which, if violated, unknown forces would punish with a career hiatus, and that b) every criticism of Israeli foreign or security politics would immediately be followed by an accusation of antisemitism. Both of these assumptions are untrue: Stars are often even celebrated by their fans when voicing their “legitimate criticism” of Israel.⁵ In fact, accusations of antisemitism are rather rare, while the topic of criticism of Israel is far from being a taboo in the media landscape.⁶ There is often even a play with anti-Jewish patterns and clichés.⁷ The case of Jutta Ditfurth, who was put on trial for calling *Compact* chief editor Jürger Elsässer an antisemite, shows how even today an accusation of antisemitism can criminalize the

³<https://redyouth.org/2016/05/03/corbyn-anti-semite-or-communist-dupe-labour-leadership-threatened-by-storm-in-a-teacup/> (Stand: 04.07.16).

⁴<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/roger-waters-pink-floyd-israel-boycott-ban-palestine-a6884971.html> (Stand: 04.07.16).

⁵<https://artistsforpalestine.org.uk/> (Stand: 04.07.16); <http://www.geolitico.de/2014/07/28/prominente-klagen-israel-an/> (Stand: 04.07.16).

⁶<http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2014-08/israel-medien-kritik> (Stand: 04.07.16).

⁷<http://www.zeit.de/kultur/2016-04/israelkritik-antisemitismus-medien-sueddeutsche-zeitung-10nach8> (Stand: 04.07.16).

person who utters it, rather than the person it is directed at.⁸

Roger Waters even went so far as to liken Israeli treatment of Palestinians to apartheid South Africa and supports the Boycott-Desinvestment-Sanctions-Movement (BDS). While the first of which is a counterfactual comparison which trivializes racist discrimination in South Africa,⁹ the latter is an attempt to abolish Israel, to the disadvantage of Palestinian workers, who are the first to fall victim to the “successes” of the movement.¹⁰

The fact that the FRSG supports the idea of Israeli Apartheid is also backed by an article they shared, which explains that Israel has to be convicted of practicing Apartheid using an UN file. This organization, however, can be accused of legislating an overproportional amount of biased resolutions prosecuting Israeli actions, while ignoring lots of other global conflict regions.¹¹

This opinion is also backed by a video of the *Jewish Voice for Peace*, which is supposed to rationalize and proof the apartheid argument.

Another video shared by the group is one by the *Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU)* in which it perpetuates in unrealistic numbers the myth of the *Nakba* (engl. Disaster) as well as the image of bloodthirsty, inhuman Zionist militiamen and Israeli battle forces. The *Nakba* myth is supposed to attack Israels right of existence in describing the mass persecution, murdering and expropriation of Palestinian arabs. The *Nakba*, although this narrative is being shared in similar ways by other political groups, however, has never happened this way and ignores the Jewish victims of prosecution in the former British mandate.¹² This affirmation of postings by others is just the logical consequence of a self-perception after which Zionism is a form of reign and discrimination just like antisemitism is one.

Therefore the group shares more than on position, which, if looked at closely, can only be seen in the context of Israel-related antisemitism. This is very problematic and there should be no space for this in our Verfasste Studierendenschaft, just as it should have no space in society.

In the mentioned discussion with the AStA this problem was not being perceived as such. Moreover, the criticism was attacked by saying that this kind of position was only shared by neo-conservatives in Canada, and that, within the context of the international left, it existed only in Germany, which the speaking member of the group found “shocking”. This is plainly wrong. Leftist movements, which refer to Israel in a positive way and criticize antisemitism within the left, exist everywhere. The fact that they are often marginalized in an international context does not delegitimize them in our eyes. We rather find this condition deplorable.

The group also uttered concerns about how any criticism of Israel would be considered antisemitic in here, as that the accusation of antisemitism was being used as a knockout argument. This can be called an unfounded fear, given that there were statements dealing with antisemitic content in videos and articles shared on the groups Facebook profile in a differentiated way, rather than stating a blunt causality between the FRSG's criticism of Israel and a resulting antisemitism. The group, however, saw themselves as victims of a blanket assessment. They also claimed to engage themselves with a variety of perspectives and topics concerning the middle east conflict. We, however, have the impression that the FRSG deals with the topic in a very certain way, as described above, which renders the image of a diverse engagement with the subject rather unrealistic.

⁸<http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/23832> (Stand: 04.07.16).

⁹<http://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/11166> (Stand: 04.07.16).

¹⁰<https://lizaswelt.net/2015/06/15/diplomatische-intifada/> (Stand: 04.07.16).

¹¹<http://www.timesofisrael.com/in-geneva-jews-and-christians-from-across-europe-rally-for-israel/> (Stand: 04.07.16).

¹²Jörg Rensmann, *Der Mythos Nakba*, 2013, abrufbar unter: http://www.dig-muenchen.de/files-and-images/nakba_web_end.pdf (Stand: 04.07.16).

The categorization of our position as neo-con shows how critics are being turned into a bogeyman, rather than questioning one's own position. With the groups' revolutionary, violent self-conception, enemies are not only to be fought against verbally. At least this is what can be concluded from posts, which refer positively to revolutionary militia.

Jugendwiderstand

The FRSG is not just all about theoretical, open discussion about literature. Their goal is putting everything into practice, which can be seen with regard to their celebration of revolutions with bloody outcomes and the glorification of existing "revolutionary" militia, and also with their positive references concerning the Berlin group *Jugendwiderstand*.

Jugendwiderstand is a group whose theoretical background remains blurry, while making clear they want to put revolutionary struggle into practice. Doing this, they appear violent and authoritarian. An example of this behavior can be seen in the incidences around the "revolutionare 1. Mai Demo" in Berlin, whose Facebook-event has also been shared by the FRSG. More than one violent attack occurred against bystanders who were waving small Israeli flags at the margins of this demonstration, which "revolutionaries, anti-imperialists, anti-fascists, communists, internationalists, true anarchists and democrats" had been invited to. This was probably a reaction to the unwillingness of the alliance to fight antisemitism within their own circles. During the attack antisemitic language was being targeted at those bystanders. Antisemite Fuad Musa aka "Fuad Afane" took part in the attack. These incidents are well documented, just like the discussions within the alliance behind the demonstration during its planning phase.¹³ It is no surprise that this May 1st demonstration spread radical Palestinian and anti-Israeli positions. *Jugendwiderstand* proclaimed that every attempt by reactionary anti-Ds to sabotage the event can be considered a failure, and that there was nothing to worry about.

Jugendwiderstand, when it comes to their political enemies, likes to use vocabulary like "pigs" and "rats." These terms reflect a dehumanization, usually found in right-wing language and ideology. While we assess *Jugendwiderstand* to be a dangerous group, the FRSG takes them for a revolutionary political group which stays true to their principles and celebrates the awakening of such a movement in Germany, making it possible for the German left to join the international left. This praise came after the incidents on May 1st.

Our criticism of *Jugendwiderstand* does not just concern itself with the events around May 1st 2016, but also with the groups endorsement of groups like the BDS-movement and, among others, *F.O.R. Palestine* (For One State and the Right to Return – Palestine). This group supports, instead of a two-state-solution, a state in which Jews would be a minority. It is obvious that both movements share an antisemitic motivation.

Prevailing in *Jugendwiderstand's* ideology is the problematic concept of a people ("Volk") which rises up against its oppressor. This can be seen on a sticker by the group, which says "Von der Intifada zum Volkskrieg - Freiheit für Palästina." Another example is its celebration of a "Volkswiderstand" in France.¹⁴

It is obvious that no critical debate around *Jugendwiderstand* is taking place here, and it falls neatly into place within the image the FRSG is painting of itself. Antisemitism with regard to Israel, as well as an endorsement of violent revolutions and a cult with regard to the "leaders" Mao and/or Stalin. This uncritical support for *Jugendwiderstand* has to be problematicized.

¹³<http://jungle-world.com/artikel/2016/17/53910.html> (Stand: 04.07.16); Vgl. auch <https://www.facebook.com/friedensdemowatch/videos/1022750057779250/> (Stand: 04.07.16).

¹⁴Vgl. <https://www.facebook.com/Jugendwiderstand/> (Stand: 04.07.16).

Conclusion

To put it in a nutshell, the FRSG can be considered a group dominated by Maoist ideology, which can identify very well with authoritarian and violent groups. Their antisemitism with regard to Israel, as shown on their Facebook-profile, is evident. We think it is an unrealistic hope to think the group would pursue a critical debate on the mentioned topics, and, in case, distance themselves from them. This has not happened until now, even though our criticism had been presented to the group.

As for this, we think the Freiburg University students should not give space to the FRSG, either in the form of *ideelle Unterstützung*, neither in giving them a room for their meetings at the Studierendenhaus.

We are unhappy about the fact that this has to result in a offer for international students being expelled from the Studierendenhaus, which can claim an inclusive character due to its use of the English language. With regard to this, we want to encourage people to create such a group free from antisemitism and other inhuman ideology.

We see an imminent danger in the ideas and theories embraced by this group, and we will not accept this under any circumstances. The group participates actively in the public discourse in using its Facebook-profile, and it probably wants to convince people of its supposedly “revolutionary” ideas. Looking at the idols of this group, one can see what these ideas can look like when put into practice.