

The University of Muenster unanimously votes for a civil clause – already the 14th in Germany [1]

“A specter is haunting Germany...”

by Dietrich Schulze

As if two felonious world wars emanating from German soil and originating out of a falsely understood “service to the fatherland” were not enough, the German army “Bundeswehr” is once again promoting itself by using the slogan “We.Serve.Germany.”. Its techno-scientific accompaniment is scheduled to resonate most deeply with institutions of higher education. Here an increasingly active movement for civil clauses is bound to cause some dissonances, being rather in line with the tune “We.Resist.MilitaryResearch.” The overall situation has with regard to hegemonial jurisprudence just been characterized by Gerhard Stuby as “A specter is haunting Germany, the specter of civil clause.” [2]



“Pictures say a thousand words.”

Students of the University of Muenster in July 2013

Photo: Joerg Rostek

The impressive semi-annual record consists of three civil clauses being adopted at the universities of Frankfurt a.M., Goettingen and Muenster as well as two successful original ballots by students at the universities of Kiel and Kassel:

- On 17 July 2013 the Senate of the University of Muenster voted unanimously for the introduction of a civil clause stating that “Research, teaching and studying at the University of Muenster serves civilian and peaceful aims.” (this being already the 14th German university to give itself a civil clause!). Its implementation is going to be accompanied by a survey questionnaire by the rectorate as well as by the appointment of an ethics advisor. The survey contains questions pertaining to the nature of envisioned research, asking in particular whether the latter “can be employed for the production or development of weapons intended for warfare” and whether there will be “cooperation with domestic or foreign military facilities.”
- On 20 June 2013 in the course of a Student Council survey the students of the Carl-Albrecht-University of Kiel voted at 73% for the inclusion of the following civil clause into the university constitution: “Research, teaching and learning are civil, they serve peaceful purposes and are free of cooperation with arms manufacturers and military actors.”
- On 13 February 2013 the Senate of the Georg-August-University of Goettingen passed the following civil clause: “The University commits itself to peace and justice in the world. The University and its academic staff through their research and teaching endeavor to serve the peace of the world. They are by their actions responsible towards society for keeping to the ethical principles immanent to science.” (the 13th!)
- On 30 January 2013 the Senate of the Goethe University Frankfurt decided unanimously to include the following civil clause into the preamble of the university constitution “Teaching, research and study at the Goethe University serve civilian and peaceful purposes.” (the 12th)
- In an original ballot taking place on 27 January 2013 the students of the University of Kassel voted at 72% for the adoption of the following civil clause: “Research, teaching and study at the University of Kassel exclusively serve civilian and peaceful purposes. With regard to the question of whether research serves civilian purposes, all external funding has to be

disclosed to the public in the forefront of each project, indicating external funding sponsor, period, project managers, financial volume, target and research topic."

Impressive record

This is a truly impressive record for a timespan of only 6 months!

The image represents the totality of 14 actually existing civil clauses at German universities.



Following below is a countrywide overview coupled with some basic reflections on academic standards. The situation at 43 (certainly not exhaustive) universities with respect to military research and the civil clause (listed in alphabetic order) - Aachen, Augsburg, Berlin, Bochum, Braunschweig, Bremen, Bremerhaven, Darmstadt, Dortmund, Dresden, Duesseldorf, Erlangen-Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Freiburg, Giessen, Goettingen, Hamburg, Halle, Hannover, Heidelberg, Ilmenau, Jena, Karlsruhe, Kassel, Kiel, Koblenz-Landau, Cologne, Constance, Leipzig, Mainz, Marburg, Munich, Muenster, Potsdam, Oldenburg, Regensburg, Rostock, Tuebingen, Siegen, Stuttgart – within the German original [1] has been omitted for the sake of simplicity.

Reflections on academic standards

Journalist Nina Marie Bust-Bartels who writes for the German weekly newspaper FREITAG [3] concluded from out of the situation described above that there was a possibility for the civil-clause movement at universities of reviving the peace movement as such. These are of course great prospects!

It must be remembered in this context that war begins in the mind. Ruling elites are thus becoming increasingly nervous about the unwillingness of students for teaching and study to be harnessed to military aims. Students are by way of these disputes developing a sense for something very fundamental for their further professional development: it is creative unrest that will move science and the world forward rather than sedate certitude or even secretive practices.

The civil-clause movement furthers an at least partial return to the pacifism of the immediate post-war period in Germany, which was wiped in the course of re-militarization in spite of much resistance. The expert of constitutional law Erhard Denninger, who prepared an basic report on

whether civil clauses are in line with the German constitution, alludes to precisely this peaceful intent of the founding fathers of the German constitution when he speaks about the "Friedens-Finalitaet" (peaceful purpose) [4].

In the Germany of the early 1930ies science was being deformed, first by so-called "Aryan physics" and then later on, after the Nazi's seizure of power in 1933, these tendencies grew even stronger so that scientists became willing to participate in the monstrous crimes of the concentration camps. Any historical comparison with the latter will always be unacceptable. However, the same does not hold true for comparisons concerning the early origins of this crime, that is, the exclusion, out-migration and later on murder of Jewish scientists. What must not be forgotten is how these developments devastated the self-understanding of science and academic standards. Today's militarization and bureaucratization of science promote conformism and damage academic standards to the detriment of the common good to which universities are bound.

The peace researcher Subrata Ghoshroy from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) had spoken about the "Renunciation of Military Research – Challenges and Chances" when giving his memorable lecture at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in front of a full Redtenbacher [5] lecture hall back in late 2009. He had encouraged his listeners to vote for "civil clauses" and had by giving facts about the domineering influence of military research at the MIT and other US-institutions, warned about the disastrous effects this had on the intellectual climate and independence of universities [6].

It is possible that future generations will not only value the civil-clause movement for its contribution to peace, but also for the creative unrest it causes. This unrest works against the degradation of academic standards caused by third-party remote control that furthers the interests of big business and the military.

Sources used for this contribution:

Almost all material is archived and can be accessed at WebDocu
<http://www.stattweb.de/files/DokuKITcivil.pdf>

The author wants to make special mention of:

- Natwiss survey <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20100609.pdf>
- table of activities 2010 <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20101222.pdf> und
- handout to podium discussion at the University of Aachen <http://www.ghg-aachen.de/wp/wp-content/uploads/handout-RWTH-241012-DS.pdf>

Citations:

[1] <http://www.nrhz.de/flyer/beitrag.php?id=19275>

[2] <http://punxatan.blogspot.de/2013/07/streit-um-die-zivilklausel-gerhard-stuby.html>

[3] <http://www.freitag.de/autoren/bust-bartels/krieg-auf-dem-campus>

[4] http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/mbf_gutachten_denninger_2009.pdf

[5] <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20100113.pdf>

[6] <http://www.openmediaboston.org/node/1084>

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