

Social welfare services for students under National Socialism a new survey

Associations of student services organisations under National Socialism

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Deutsches Studentenwerk presents first historical monograph on the NS Reichsstudentenwerk. Author: Dr Christian SchÄlzel, Berlin. Occasion: founding of the Deutsches Studentenwerk (the German National Association for Student Affairs a new survey; DSW) exactly 100 years ago. As of 1933, standardisation of the student services organisations by the NS dictatorship and corresponding harnessing of their umbrella organisation. DSW President Rolf-Dieter Postlep: We are facing up to the darkest chapter of our history. Online publication on the DSW Website www.studentenwerke.de

To mark its centenary, the Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW), the association of the 57 student services organisations, has presented the first historical monograph on the National Socialist Reichsstudentenwerk.

We are doing this to demonstrate our political and moral responsibility, explains DSW President Professor Dr Rolf-Dieter Postlep. Exactly 100 years after its inception, the DSW is not merely filling a research gap. We are facing up to the darkest chapter of our history.

The author of the study Das Reichsstudentenwerk. Sozialbetreuung von Studierenden im Nationalsozialismus is Berlin historian Dr Christian SchÄlzel, who was commissioned by the Deutsches Studentenwerk to write it.

SchÄlzel refers to a swift Gleichschaltung, or standardisation, of key student welfare services following the National Socialist seizure of power, which started on the 30th January 1933. He writes: Staff purging can be demonstrated, although there are hardly any signs of active resistance.

In his foreword to the publication, Postlep notes that the student welfare services experienced a decisive institutional turning point, becoming standardised and robbed of any autonomy; their umbrella organisation was harnessed by the NS dictatorship and integrated in its overall structure.

However, SchÄlzel also refers to nationalist sentiments, pointing to evidence of this in the Deutsches Studentenwerk earlier than 1933. He says that in the inter-war years, the association saw itself as part of a national project and demonstrated tendencies towards the Volkstum ideology of the Nazis.

SchÄlzel concludes that the National Socialist Reichsstudentenwerk (imperial student service association) set up

in 1934; was steeped in NS ideology by its protagonists among the students, politicians and industry; and was dominated by a politicised notion of promoting higher education and research; which had less and less to do with traditional research ideals. Denying Jews financial support for students highlights NS racial ideology as a prime driver of action taken; SchÄlzel adds.

According to SchÄlzel, Gustav Adolf Scheel, a senior officer in the Schutzstaffel (SS), a major paramilitary organisation under the Nazis, had already played a key role in the student services context before he assumed leadership of the Reichsstudentenwerk. The Führerprinzip; instead of federalism, deploying operatives true to Nazi party principles and a Nazi-conform funding policy guided his action; SchÄlzel explains, describing Scheel.

Historical context: the 100th anniversary of founding the Deutsches Studentenwerk

The Wirtschaftshilfe der Deutschen Studentenschaft e.V. (economic support for German students, reg. Ass.) was founded in Tübingen on the 19th February 1921. As the umbrella organisation of Studentenhilfen (student welfare services) already established in Dresden, Bonn, Munich and other cities from 1919 on, the Wirtschaftshilfe; headquartered in Dresden, was the immediate predecessor organisation of the Deutsches Studentenwerk, which assumed this title in 1929. In view of the coronavirus pandemic and the difficult situation which both the students and the student services organisations are in during the digital semesters, for the time being, the Deutsches Studentenwerk is not planning any major events celebrating its founding 100 years ago.

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