German protests condemn NATO onslaught against Serbia

Our correspondent
11 May 1999

During a weekend of protests throughout Germany up to 15,000 demonstrators assembled Saturday in the heart of Berlin to voice their opposition to the continuing NATO war. Marchers carried placards and banners proclaiming: "Stop the bombing--Stop the violations of international law" and "SPD and Olive-Green equals war". The Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens form the present German government.

Many Kurdish workers and young people attended the demonstration, bearing placards calling for the immediate release of Abdullah Ocalan. Groups of Yugoslav, Turkish and Iranian workers and organisations also took part. Of the few trade union banners to be seen were those of the German Union of Teachers, which sponsored the demonstration along with a number of different peace organisations and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), successor to the East German state party SED.

Eager to prove that in their opposition to the war the PDS did not seek to burn all of its bridges to the SPD, stewards from the PDS intervened at the demonstration, and with considerable violence tore down the placard of one demonstrator bearing a portrait of German Chancellor Schröder with a Hitler moustache. At the same time a party spokesman snatched the microphone from an elderly doctor who was condemning the war and announced from the podium that the organisers of the demonstration would not tolerate any comparison being made between "our German chancellor and Adolf Hitler".

Despite poor weather thousands of demonstrators listened attentively to a number of speakers condemning the war and the activities of NATO.

The *WSWS* spoke with Christine, 26, who works as a carpenter in Berlin:

"I am taking part in the demonstration because I am outraged by this war and I am seeking information about the background to the conflict. The first priority must be an immediate stop to the NATO bombing, which is illegal and is not in the slightest respect an appropriate means for settling the conflict.

"I find the policy of the German government to be totally half-baked. I myself voted for the Red-Green coalition with considerable expectations, but it is a tragedy that the government has commenced this war. I try to understand their arguments, but in general I wish that those in positions of power would demonstrate more backbone. There is no sign of any conscience on their part and I find that highly regrettable. I know it is easy to criticise and I do not know what decision I would make if were in their position, but I would have preferred to resign rather than be responsible for the NATO attacks, which the government then tries to justify with such mendacious phrases.

"Above all the government's argument that they are only carrying out the war for humanitarian purposes is totally hypocritical. In my opinion the Kosovo refugees are only used as an excuse for the war which is really about how NATO can broaden its sphere of activity and increase its power. In particular it is a clear attack on Russia--a demonstration of power on the part of NATO which I regard as dangerous and simplistic. The risk of unleashing a Third World War is completely underestimated, and those responsible for the assaults are nowhere to be found in the war region itself. They have their safe homes in New York and wherever. For them the whole thing is like a game of Monopoly.

"Russia still has atom bombs, even if the Cold War has passed into distant memory. It is economically weak but the bombs are still there, can be easily activated and pose a danger that no one should take lightly. NATO is a terrible aggressor taking enormous

© World Socialist Web Site

risks in order to establish its power. It is simply incredible that NATO quite openly and unashamedly celebrated its fiftieth birthday pursuing its aims, and without a UN mandate for its actions. This should not be the case. NATO can in no way play the role of a world policeman.

"Over the past period the attacks on the civilian population in Serbia have been enormously intensified, but it was true that the Serb people were punished terribly from the very beginning. Whoever acts or claims that the bombs are only damaging property has no idea of what is happening; it is such an idiotic and thoughtless argument. Some people approve of the bombing because they think it is the only way to help the Kosovar Albanians. Many look back at the Second World War and think that more decisive action by the Allied Powers could have helped the people in concentration camps. It is an understandable argument, but such aims cannot be achieved with bombing. It is the most inappropriate means for reaching a political aim.

"And at the same time it is of little help that now Germany has agreed to accept some of the refugees. The hypocrisy of the whole action is clear when you see how many countries have agreed to take refugees but up until now have not accepted any at all. In particular, America made promises but has taken in only a miserable number of refugees. It makes clear the whole hypocrisy of the war and that in reality it has nothing to do with helping the Kosovar Albanians.

"This has to be more clearly brought out--the information we receive is so vague and things are covered up. In this respect I have my doubts about the media. One has the impression that the media spectrum is so broad and varied, but in the war the slightest reliable information is lacking. The most important aim must be to politically clarify the whole population so that it no longer supports the government and does not react in such a divided manner. In fact everything speaks against the bombing. It is evident it has to be immediately stopped."

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site