Frankfurt protest against Western intervention in Syria

Our correspondents
5 September 2012

"Stop the war! Hands off Syria"—this was the main slogan on a demonstration in Frankfurt, Germany last Saturday. The protest was the main event on the annual Anti-War Day (September 1), with about one thousand people participating in the protest in the center of the city.

Participants on the demonstration, which set off from the Old Opera house and marched to Frankfurt's historic city centre, carried banners reading: "US hands off Syria", "Against the destruction of international law by imperialists", "[Turkish Prime Minister Recep] Tayyip Erdogan: US puppet", "Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya: It's enough", "Make sure Syria is not a second Iraq" and "Stop the media war."

A portion of the protesters were Syrian immigrants intent on defending their country of birth from the escalating intervention organized by the imperialist powers and supported by most of the media. They were accompanied by German participants who expressed their concern and outrage about the recent war preparations and the one-sided media campaign.

Supporters of the World Socialist Web Site distributed the article "US, UK and France threaten military intervention against Syria" in the form of a leaflet. The statement warns against military intervention by the Western powers, declaring: "The war threats against Syria represent a dramatic escalation of this campaign, with potentially devastating consequences for the peoples of the region and the entire world. The death toll in Syria of a military assault by Turkey and regional allies backed by US, French and British airpower has the potential to dwarf that in Libya."

A number of participants pointed out in conversations that the German government was actively involved in sending arms to the region, and had recently supplied warships to Israel. The German ministry of foreign affairs is also actively involved in preparing "regime change" in Syria.

Klaus Weber from Karlsruhe took part in the Frankfurt demonstration to protest the pro-war propaganda of the media.

"It all seemed like a repeat of what we experienced during the last twenty years in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan", Klaus said. "They always try to find a reason for 'humanitarian intervention'. And I don't like that at all."

He was not here as a supporter of Syrian president Bashar Assad, Klaus continued. At the same time, he had no negative opinion about Syria. It appeared to be a secular state, although certainly there was injustice. But that by no means justified the outside interference now taking place.

The attitude of the German government was clearly directed at regime change in Syria. "They want to overthrow the government there", Klaus commented, "but they know that an open intervention in the area is very dangerous, more dangerous than in Libya. Therefore, they are trying other methods to achieve the same goal."

Unlike the Iraq war, it was not so obvious that the US in particular was pursuing economic interests in its involvement in Syria, Klaus noted. As was the case with the war in Yugoslavia, the Western powers were seeking to elevate the humanitarian tragedy to the foreground. And as was the case in the past, the Greens and Social Democrats (SPD) were going along with the official campaign.

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Alyin from Turkey took part in the demonstration with her mother "because I am against a foreign military intervention in Syria". The family is from Hatay, right on the Syrian border, and have Syrian roots. The situation in Turkey is very confusing, Alyin declared. "The Turkish government is naturally seeking to benefit from the situation". That should not take place, however, at the expense of the Syrian people.

The situation in Syria was in no way comparable with the uprisings in Egypt last year, she continued: "Many of the rebels in Syria are foreign militias, and now everything is decided on the basis of religious faith. … The situation was very different in Egypt". She went on, "As long as there is no reasonable alternative for the people, then neither war nor the overthrow of Assad's regime will solve anything."

Hakan described the German government and Turkish president Erdogan as "puppets" and criticized France's Socialist Party president, François Hollande, for his role in arming the rebels in Syria. "I would have expected something like this from his predecessor [Nicolas Sarkozy], but not from him", Hakan said. In Syria, the big powers were acting according to the motto "divide and rule", he continued. There were popular uprisings taking place in many countries, and "if foreign forces are flown in then a civil war like the one in Syria is inevitable."

"I am not fighting for Assad, or for anyone else, but rather for the truth", Hakan declared. "And the truth is that those in power have not the slightest interest in democracy and human rights. They are only interested in their power and money and how to preserve their influence. If children die in the process, it leaves them completely cold."

The demonstration was called by a "Solidarity committee with Syria", which consists of members of the German-Syrian society, the Turkish DIDF organization and the German Freethinkers Association and is supported by various Syrian, Turkish, Russian and German groups. The common demand was "an end to the aggressive, illegal interference by NATO countries and the Arab monarchies in Syria."

The organizers were clearly divided over the issue of support for the Assad regime. Salim Tas, chairman of the Alawite German youth, told the newspaper *Junge Welt* that supporters of Assad would be welcome on the demonstration. He was personally convinced "that the ideals and values ??of secularism and patriotism that Bashar al-Assad represents are the only basis for peace and stability," he said.

There were a number of supporters of the Assad regime among the demonstrators. A block of Syrians chanted "We want Bashar al-Assad". Most of the participants from the region, however, expressed their agreement with the WSWS statement which reads: "Not just Assad, but all of the region's reactionary and despotic regimes deserve to fall. But this is a task for the working class, mobilizing behind it the rural poor and all oppressed social layers."

In order to combat the efforts of the imperialist powers, which are fomenting religious and ethnic divisions, the WSWS statement insists on the necessity for the international unity of the working class to end imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation and establish workers' governments throughout the Middle East.

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