

Germany: Rüsselsheim workers oppose war against Syria

Our correspondent
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The overwhelming majority of the German working population is reacting with outrage and revulsion to the war threats against Syria. Last weekend a team from the Socialist Equality Party (Partei für Soziale Gleichheit—PSG), distributed the leaflet “Hands off Syria” and talked to passers-by in the city of Rüsselsheim, which is the location of the German headquarters of GM-Opel. At Opel gate 60 and in the working-class neighborhood of Dicker Busch II many passers-by took the leaflet, expressed their concerns and rejected the planned war.

“Of course I am strictly against any war preparation,” said Sven, a young trainee teacher, who was accompanied by his mother. “Obviously, this civil war has been instigated from outside,” Sven continued. “I think the US wanted a war from the start.” His mother intervened and exclaimed indignantly, “Now it looks like they are really going to war. Does it really have to be so?”

Asked about the situation in Germany, Sven said he would “never vote for any of the established parties,” either those in government or the opposition “because all of these parties were merely concerned with capitalist interests.” This was evident during the euro crisis: “When it came to the euro rescue all they were interested in was saving the banks, but not the Greek workers.”

Sadiyah, a young woman, stopped and immediately came over to speak about the economic interests responsible for the war Syria: “The imperialists are now giving out millions, hoping to earn billions later on. And all of them play along, including the ‘Peace Prize’ winner, Obama. At first he made a nice impression and was highly praised because he promised to close Guantanamo. But it has turned out he is no better than his predecessor [George W. Bush].”

Nano, a young mother who grew up in Germany, and whose parents are from Syria, was deeply shocked by the misery in her homeland. She comes from Aleppo and visited the city recently. She deplored the unbearable

living conditions in the country: “This has gone on now for almost three years. The worst thing is that people suffer who cannot do anything to help themselves.”

Nano addressed the claim by the United States that it had played no role in Syria up to now. “That’s not true at all”, she said. “They financed and organized the rebels from the beginning. There are people sent in from abroad, from other countries, Islamists seeking to split the population.”

She is herself Muslim, but declared “I completely reject the Islamists. They give a completely false image of Islam. Islam is not for terrorism but for peace. There have been so many deaths, it is terribly sad. I have already lost many relatives. And now the use of poison gas.”

She noted that everywhere it was being said that Assad used the poison gas. “But where is the evidence? It makes no sense for Assad to use poison gas. Certainly both sides have made mistakes, but behind the war ultimately lie economic interests. The US is being completely hypocritical when it claims it had nothing to do with it. But apparently they had a hand in what happened on September 11.”

Klaus M., a 50-year-old mechanical engineer, described the US government and its European allies as warmongers. It is not even clear whether poison gas was really used, he said. The US government has even said that the investigations still needed a few days, but in fact they have no real interest. “They want to strike at any price.”

Klaus M. reported on the tense situation in the local factories. He works for a construction company and reported that the effects of globalization were being felt everywhere. “There is a great deal of outsourcing. The company I work for produces large building machines, but now much of the production is being shifted to the Czech Republic.”

He agreed that workers had to unite across national

borders to carry out resistance, but pointed out: “Our trade unions are completely incapable of carry out such a fight. They have not done any fighting for a long time. One has the impression it is because money is flowing into certain persons' pockets.”

“I think the social gap is getting wider and wider,” Klaus said finally. “ Why do people put up with all this?” When he learned that the PSG called for the building of action committees independent of the unions, he reacted with interest and took an election statement to study.

The PSG team also distributed the statement “Hands off Syria” at the GM-Opel plant in Rüsselsheim. Once again the leaflet was met with interest and support. Almost all workers took a leaflet and those who stopped to talk expressed their concern and outrage over the preparations for war.

“This impending war is really bad,” said Franz, a young foundry worker. “I have the most sympathy for the suffering of defenseless civilians who will be punished and are even slaughtered with poison gas. But who is responsible? We Europeans are encouraged to believe that President Assad is responsible. But NATO and the Americans could have provoked him deliberately.”

Mehmet, 45 years old, said: “Everything is taking the same course as Iraq. First allegations are made about weapons of mass destruction, and then later they say, Oh!, it looks like we have made a mistake. They are simply looking for a reason to attack, and Assad is defending himself.”

Mehmet has worked for 23 years at GM-Opel in quality control. He pointed out that “everything has been long planned. First it was Iraq, now it's Syria's turn, then Iran is next. We have been reading about this order of things for ten years, and now it has been confirmed. Only Egypt was missing from the list at the time.”



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