

IYSSE meetings in Germany oppose militarism and war

Our correspondents
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) has held a series of meetings in Bochum, Frankfurt and Berlin to oppose the return of German militarism and warn about the danger of a third world war. Over a hundred workers and students attended the meetings.

Christoph Vandreier, spokesperson of the IYSSE in Germany, opened the meeting with a presentation on the danger of a world war. He delineated the most significant international conflicts on a map and showed how the US and its allies are encircling China and Russia militarily. “All of these conflicts, from Korea to the South China Sea to the Middle East to Ukraine, are a possible starting point for a comprehensive military escalation,” he said.

Under conditions of a new competition for raw materials and export markets, German militarism is also returning to the world stage, Vandreier explained. He quoted Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who said, “The situation is more dangerous than during the Cold War.”

“The world is searching for a new order,” Vandreier explained. “This struggle for influence, for dominance cannot be exhaust itself in a peaceful discussion, but will also find violent expression.”

Vandreier explained that there has been a systematic militarization and buildup of arms in the past few years. The plans worked out in a 2013 strategy paper of the Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik-SWP) by representatives of the German elite and media in collaboration with the military, government and universities have been implemented. This has included an aggressive stance towards Russia through support of the putsch in Ukraine, the deployment of troops to Mali and Iraq and participation in the bombardment of Syria, which is a violation of international law.

The German army is now involved in 16 foreign interventions with up to 8,025 soldiers. Since 1992, 106 German soldiers have been killed. In addition, Germany is providing logistical support with foreign deployments of the police and as part of interventions by the EU, NATO, and the UN. Vandreier also showed the astonishing scale of these interventions on a map. The maps of the Middle East, Africa and the Caucasus were covered with German flags.

But the plans of the German government go far beyond this, Vandreier continued. Defense Minister von der Leyen plans to raise the military budget by €130 billion by 2030. On the weekend, German Chancellor Angela Merkel promised American President Barack Obama that Germany would massively increase spending on the armed forces and strengthen its troop presence on the border with Russia. The IYSSE spokesperson also discussed in detail the preparations for the occupation and colonization of Libya.

Given the massive opposition to these plans in the population, they are incompatible with democratic rights, he explained. “Consequently, all of the awfulness of German history is returning along with German militarism. Racism, chauvinism and wild hysteria are once again being used to implement policy.”

Since the beginning of the year, the media has been flooded with chauvinistic propaganda, which finds its reflection in the inhumane treatment of refugees. “The attacks on refugees serve as a precedent for the abolition of basic democratic rights. They are directed against the entire population. In addition, the dregs of society are being mobilized to carry out war and social cuts,” said Vandreier.

Merkel’s inhuman policy is considered “left,” in official political circles in Germany, he continued. “It is now only a question whether the German borders or the European borders will be closed. There is no longer a left opposition to this.”

This shift to the right was prepared by the Alternative for Germany (AfD). In addition, the antisocial and right-wing policy of the parties in parliament is leading to a situation in which the anger of broad layers can result in an increase in votes for the extreme right.

The central question is why, in light of this development, there is no movement against racism and war. Although the development of war is far advanced, the former peace movement is silent.

“The explanation for this does not lie in a decrease in the opposition of the population, but in the fact that the organizers of the former peace movement have become organizers of a war movement: the Greens, the Left Party and their pseudo-left appendages.”

The Left Party led by parliamentary faction head Sahra

Wagenknecht is at the forefront of this chauvinism. In the state of Thuringia, Left Party Premier Bodo Ramelow is faithfully carrying out the policy of incarcerating and deporting refugees. The party is also playing a central role in war preparations and the Greens have become the most vehement proponents of war.

“This development contains important political lessons,” said Vandreier. “It shows that one cannot fight against war without fighting against capitalism, which is its root cause.” The deep crisis of capitalism leads to ever sharper social attacks and to growing rivalries between the great powers.

Vandreier discussed Trotsky’s analysis of the Second World War and explained that all the unsolved questions of the twentieth century are emerging once again. The driving force of war is the contradiction between the global relations of production and the capitalist nation-state system.

“Twenty-five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, capitalism is showing itself for what it is once again: brutal class rule,” Vandreier concluded. Consequently, in the struggle against militarism and war, one cannot base oneself on the parties and organizations that defend capitalism, he explained. The only social force that can overthrow capitalism and end war is the international working class.

Vandreier then showed slides that impressively illustrated the enormous growth in the global working class to more than three billion people. “This enormous social force is coming into motion once again,” he said. He reported social struggles in France, the US and Germany.

“The most important thing is to develop a socialist perspective out of this growing movement of workers. This means joining together the fight against war and social cuts with the fight for a society in which the needs of human beings come before the profit interests of the rich and in which the economy is democratically planned,” Vandreier explained.

At the end of his presentation, he explained four principles that the International Committee of the Fourth International formulated in its statement “Socialism and the Fight Against War.” This movement must base itself on the working class, have a socialist perspective, be independent of all capitalist parties and organizations, and above all it must be international.

In all the cities where the meetings were held, the audience was excited by the perspective that was presented. The lectures led to lively discussions. In Frankfurt, a young worker wanted to know how the IYSSE views US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and whether he could change US war policy.

Several participants answered him and explained that Sanders called himself a “democratic socialist,” but actually defended capitalism. He supports both the private property of the banks and corporations and the aggressive foreign policy of the United States. Sanders is a reaction of the ruling class to the socialist mood in broad layers of the American working class. “The aim is to suppress this opposition and channel it back into the Democratic Party,” said a participant.

In Berlin, a member of the audience wanted to know whether

a military confrontation with Russia could be prevented if Russia were armed further. Ulrich Rippert, national secretary of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG), the German section of the ICFI, answered that this is a completely reactionary perspective.

“It is without question that the aggression in this conflict comes from the side of the US and its NATO allies, which want to turn Russia into a colony,” he said. “But it would be completely wrong to believe that the reactionary Putin regime is an ally in the fight against imperialism. Anyone who demands the arming of this regime is not an opponent of a Third World War, but is preparing it. The fight against war must be led by the international working class in Russia, Germany and the US.”

In all three cities, the question arose in one form or another whether the working class could become a revolutionary subject and whether media manipulation and the process of production make this impossible.

Vandreier answered that the mobilization of the working class on the basis of a revolutionary program is not a psychological, but a political question. “History has shown that the working class objectively comes into confrontation with capitalism,” he said. He referred to the experiences in Germany in 1918 and 1933, Spain in 1936, France in 1968 and Egypt in 2011.

The question has never been whether the workers are ready to fight. Rather, the decisive question has always been that of perspective and leadership, he explained. The betrayal of the leaders has brought about the worst defeats for the working class. “In turning this into a psychological question and holding the workers themselves responsible for it, one avoids the political questions,” said Vandreier.

Entire generations of petty bourgeois intellectuals have thought up countless theories about why the workers are supposedly incapable of revolution. In reality, these theories only serve to demonstrate the hostility and arrogance of these layers toward the workers. “For a revolutionary movement, on the other hand, the political questions are central: the betrayal of the SPD, the betrayal of Stalinism. These are the experiences on the basis of which the Fourth International was founded. It is necessary to study them in order to arm the workers.”

After the meeting, many members of the audience bought books at the literature table, registered for International May Day, and filled out contact forms.



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