

Germany: Successful IYSSE meeting on Trump's election held in Frankfurt

Our correspondents
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On November 30, over 60 students and workers came to the meeting in Frankfurt organised by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality: “Trump’s election—the political causes and lessons.” The room was full to capacity, and extra chairs were needed.

The significant interest in the meeting underscores the fact that a new generation has been politicised and is seriously looking for political answers and a perspective to oppose war and militarism. In recent weeks, the IYSSE has held successful meetings with several hundred attending in Berlin and in San Diego in the US.

Introducing the meeting, Philipp Frisch, a spokesman for the IYSSE in Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia, said, “The election of Donald Trump as American president is a historic turning point.” The administration of the incoming president would, without doubt, be the most reactionary in American history and will intensify the policies of social cuts and war, he said.

Beginning his report to the meeting, Johannes Stern, also a member of the IYSSE and an editor of the *World Socialist Web Site*, went into the composition of the next US administration. With figures like General David Petraeus, General James Mattis, Betsy DeVos, Sheriff David Clarke or Steven Mnuchin, Trump was gathering together an extremely right-wing team of billionaires, war generals, intelligence officials and representatives of law-and-order and Wall Street.

An example of the right-wing character of Trump’s team is Stephen Bannon, a long-standing banker at Goldman Sachs and until recently the editor-in-chief of the far-right web site Breitbart News. The web site, which regularly publishes anti-Semitic propaganda and witch-hunts foreigners, has even been compared by Republican Party representatives with the Nazi paper *Der Stürmer* of the 1930s. Bannon’s appointment as Trump’s chief strategist was like “appointing Björn Höcke of the Alternative for Germany as the chief adviser in the

chancellery.”

The turn to the right in the ruling establishment in the US should not be underestimated, Stern warned. Trump had announced that millions would be deported, a wall would be built along the Mexican border and war conducted around the world for raw materials and resources. More serious bourgeois commentators were even drawing parallels to the 1930s. But it was important to understand that Trump, unlike Hitler in Germany in 1933, had not come to power at the forefront of a fascist mass movement, rather in a situation where workers and youth were moving to the left, but where there was not yet any international and mass socialist movement.

On the basis of statistics from 2008, 2012 and 2016, Stern was able to demonstrate that Trump had not been elected by the “white working class,” as was often claimed. “That is a completely false narrative,” he said. In reality, the Republicans’ vote had remained almost constant at 60 million. However, the vote for the Democrats had “completely collapsed,” Stern continued, and the vast majority of the electorate, almost 100 million people, did not vote for Trump or Hillary Clinton.

Stern spoke about those primarily responsible for Trump’s election: as a representative of Wall Street, the military and identity politics, Clinton had attacked Trump from the right as an “agent of Putin.” Eight years ago, Obama had been supported by many workers as the candidate of “hope” and “change,” but had then continued the hated war policies of the previous administration, pushing through austerity measures and restructuring at the cost of the working class, especially in the auto industry.

And then there was the role played by Bernie Sanders, the pseudo-left organizations and trade unions. “In the primaries, Sanders had won support particularly because he called himself a socialist and called for a political revolution against the billionaire class. But then he had

lined up behind Clinton and made it possible for Trump to divert the widespread anger to his benefit and in a nationalist direction,” Stern said.

Now, the ruling elite was closing ranks in the face of mounting class tensions. “Shortly after the election, everyone, from Obama to Sanders and the trade unions, had lined up behind Trump and announced their collaboration with him.”

In order to better understand how, in the land of Abraham Lincoln, someone like Trump could become president, one had to consider the great political and historical developments of the last 25 years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Stern also spoke about the US-led wars (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria); the collapse of American democracy (the “stolen election” of 2000, Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Obama’s drone programme) and the extreme social polarisation in the US, which was accompanied by an unparalleled stepping up of state powers at home.

In summary, Stern quoted from a perspective on the *World Socialist Web Site* headlined “Mass student protests against Trump election: The way forward”: “Decades of war, austerity and social reaction have fatally undermined democratic processes and produced a society dominated by financial parasitism and political corruption. These are the conditions that have vomited up Donald Trump, the fascist personification of the collapse of American democracy.”

For this reason, “The fight against Trump must therefore be based on the fight against capitalism.” It was not a question of “opposing one individual, but an entire social and economic system that is based on private ownership of the levers of production and the ever-greater accumulation of wealth by the corporate and financial aristocracy.” It is a matter of unifying “working people and youth of all races and genders, in the United States and internationally, on the basis of a socialist program.”

Especially in Europe, this was an “immediate task” said Stern. The German ruling class is using Trump’s election to implement their long-worked-out plans for rearmament and great power politics. The 2017 federal budget, adopted on November 25, was a turning point in Germany’s post-war history and will see billions being spent on armaments and war. In parallel, the media and politicians were beginning debate on the reintroduction of conscription, and even on the acquisition of Germany’s own nuclear weapons.

Stern concluded his contribution with a quotation from David North’s lecture on October 22 at Frankfurt Goethe

University: “We are living in revolutionary times. The contradictions that give rise to war also prepare the ground for social revolution. Contradicting the claims of the subjectivists and irrationalists, who proclaim the disappearance of the subjective agency of socialist revolution as conceived by Marx, the global development of capitalism during the past half-century has vastly expanded the ranks of the working class. This is the basic force to which Marxists turn. The great challenge that confronts Marxists is the political preparation of a vanguard of advanced workers that can direct the coming mass movement of the working class toward the conquest of political power.”

Stern’s remarks were followed by an extensive discussion. One participant raised the question of whether Trump perhaps represented an opportunity to avert the danger of a war against Russia. Stern said this was “a dangerous illusion.” The war policy had deep objective roots. Ultimately, the US was reacting to its economic decline with an increasingly aggressive military foreign policy. “Just the fact that Trump has appointed several leading generals and warmongers to his cabinet proves that the ruling class in the United States is preparing for even broader wars.”

When asked by a participant about the work of the American section of the Fourth International in the current tense situation, the IYSSE spokesman reported on the recent electoral campaign of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and its candidates Jerry White and Niles Niemuth: “The main objective of the campaign was to educate workers and youth politically and in this way to prepare for the upcoming class battles. Niles and Jerry explained what Trump represented and the right-wing programme of Clinton and the Democrats. Above all, they made clear the difference between real socialist politics and charlatans like Sanders.” To develop this work and build an international revolutionary movement against the danger of war and reaction was the most decisive lesson to draw from Trump’s election victory.



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