

Strong support for an international mass movement against war at Germany's University of Leipzig

IYSSE Leipzig
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In the run-up to the international webinar against war hosted by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) on December 10, IYSSE members spoke to workers and young people in Leipzig about the danger of nuclear war. At the webinar, socialists from many countries and different continents will discuss an international strategy to avert the upcoming world war and to build a mass movement in the youth based on the working class. IYSSE members and supporters posted hundreds of posters around the city.

The IYSSE campaign won a strong response. An American student studying at the Leipzig University of Commerce was particularly concerned that the war in Ukraine is expanding into an all-out war between the NATO powers and Russia: "My father is in the US Army and was recently stationed in Poland to train Polish troops. Why would the US send soldiers to Poland if it isn't going to break out there soon?"

"I think this webinar will be great for stopping the war," said Khalil, who spoke to us in English, in front of the Albertina Library of the University of Leipzig. "We as a population do not want war anywhere in the world. But people suffer under national egoism when someone says: 'This is my country.' This should not be. Everywhere you see double standards. War also takes place in Myanmar and Palestine, but this isn't covered by most media outlets."

In front of the Faculty of Sports Science, the IYSSE spoke with two young students from India, who are also very concerned about the development of the war and would like to participate in the webinar. One of them said: "It is a global development and a global problem. Tensions are growing everywhere. We come from India, the government is also rearming and preparing for a war against China."

Ariana comes from Italy and studies psychology in Leipzig. She asked, "When has a war ever produced anything good? Anyway, never for us, right? I feel like it's not a good time to be alive. The far-right is growing stronger

everywhere, especially in Italy ..." To this, IYSSE members replied that the conditions for the seizure of power by the working class were more favourable than ever, since it is more numerous and interconnected than ever before.

Paul studies American Studies at the University of Leipzig. He said, "I am in favour of the war ending immediately. There is a war because NATO has moved ever closer to Russian territory and the Russian apparatus no longer wanted to tolerate it. The global system is dominated by the US. It is imperialism if states want to have an ever stronger position on the world market for their nation at the expense of others. In my opinion, the whole system is based on violence. I want capitalism to step aside and I want to take action. A mass movement sounds good." Paul said he would familiarize himself with the principles of the IYSSE and take part in the webinar.

"I have been following the danger of nuclear war for some time now," said Anna, who is studying natural resource management at the University of Leipzig. "Nuclear weapons exist for a reason. It's very disturbing." Anna focused particular criticism on the rearmament of the German military: "€100 billion is an incredibly large sum, I can't imagine how much money that is. It is bad that education and health are being cut back because of this. Many professorships and entire courses of study have already been cancelled in the neighbouring city."

Several students criticize the fact that German capitalism is enriched by the war in Ukraine and is pushing ahead with its own great power plans. "The arms industry benefits from the war," said Isabelle, who also plans to participate in the IYSSE webinar. "You hardly find out anything about the German rearmament, I'm very interested in that. Where does the money come from? I think your educational work is very important. It's really good that you're doing this."

Geelke said, "You could invest the money in so many other things, for example in education and climate protection measures." Her friend Finja added: "I try to be optimistic,

but it's not easy. If anyone starts using nuclear bombs, we'll soon have a world war that would destroy all of humanity. But the majority of the population has no interest in war." Svantje, a third student, described the rearmament of the German army in passing as "incomprehensible and inhuman."

Oleksandra comes from Ukraine and studies International Management at the University of Applied Sciences in Leipzig. When she saw the IYSSE's posters, she came directly to the book table. "There is Russian propaganda and there is Ukrainian propaganda," she noted. "I do not believe that the Ukrainian people are in favour of NATO as a whole or that they support the US and its opinion."

Oleksandra reported how her view of the war has changed: "I live with a young Russian woman, she comes from Moscow. In the beginning, I felt a lot of hatred for people. But if you reflect on everything... I would like to say that the contact with this Russian woman helped me a lot. Both we and the people of Russia are affected. From an economic point of view, the whole of Europe suffers from the war."

"My parents, unlike me, grew up in the Soviet Union," she continued. "My mother and my grandparents always said nice things about the Soviet Union. But we have only heard bad things about it at school—about how many people have suffered from forced collectivization and the 'Holodomor', how minorities and other languages other than Russian have been oppressed. One wonders whether everything is as true as it was taught to us at school?"

Representatives of the IYSSE explained that the October Revolution was a tremendous step forward. It created socialist property relations and guaranteed the rights of national minorities. The Stalinist bureaucracy attacked these achievements from a nationalist point of view and finally restored capitalism. This is the reactionary basis of today's oligarchy.

When the IYSSE representatives addressed the pro-capitalist propaganda of a new era of "peace" and "democracy" after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Oleksandra replied: "Yes, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, agreements were concluded that Ukraine would give up nuclear weapons and Russia would undertake never to attack Ukraine. But in 2014, the supposed majority voted in favour of Europe, and much has changed since then.

"I don't think Russia is 'the worst in the world.' I like Russian culture and have nothing against Russian people. I have never been to Russia myself, but I would like to go to St. Petersburg or Moscow." Oleksandra condemned the hypocritical rhetoric of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who abused the Red Army's victory over fascism for nationalist politics:

"Putin's government plays with patriotism in Russia and

presents itself as the winner of the Second World War. They say Ukraine is full of Nazis. Of course, there are such people in Ukraine, 100 percent. Even during the Second World War, there was a minority that saw Ukraine as an independent country and worked with Hitler at that time. Hitler promised to give them a little power. Bandera was a Nazi. But because of this personality one should not think that all people in Ukraine are Nazis."

With regard to the far-right militia in the Ukrainian military, Oleksandra said: "I believe that the reason why they are needed is to convince young people to kill other people." On the history of Ukrainian nationalism she added: "At school I learned that the Bandera people 'fought for our country' and had the 'beautiful, great idea of independence'. But I think to myself: Ukraine was independent for 30 years and what happened now? ... The war. Is politics to blame? The war is not a good prospect for 'the country.'"

"It's all so dangerous. We should work together, stick together, and develop—not the way it's happening. It should not be the case that all countries distance themselves from Russia and do not want anything to do with Russia. Even Russian students are not to be admitted to Europe now. But how are people supposed to change a country if they don't get a chance to see a different perspective? How are we supposed to make something decent out of our environment if people continue to wage wars? I think you can change a lot when you talk to each other. I am very interested in the topic and will be attending your event."

Later that day, IYSSE members distributed a leaflet at the BMW plant in Leipzig. It explained that IG Metall's collective bargaining agreement with the employers in the metal and electrical industries means significant real-terms pay cuts for workers, which are intended to finance the war. The leaflet was received with enthusiasm.



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