

Youth and students in Berlin respond to the IYSSE rally against war: “In a nuclear third world war, no one would escape unscathed”

International Youth and Students for Social Equality
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) spoke in recent days to young people in Berlin, who reacted enthusiastically to the IYSSE rally on December 10, which set out the background to the Ukraine war and provided an international perspective against the threat of nuclear war.

“The rally on Saturday was a very special event,” said **Michael** from Berlin, who recently graduated from high school and has been a member of the IYSSE for a few months. “As young people, we have decades of our lives ahead of us and should make it our task to organise such an anti-war movement, to change the world and fight for communism.

“I found it particularly important that speakers came from a wide variety of countries. Andrei Ritsky, the spokesman for the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists in Russia, explained our perspective against the war from his position. For someone like me, who comes from a Russian-speaking family, this was very impressive to hear.

“You can see, of course, that a third world war is brewing. This is shown by the escalation in Ukraine, where both sides have made it clear that they will not give in until one side succumbs. In a nuclear third world war, however, no one would escape unscathed. It would be a disaster for humanity. The working class would have to bear the consequences of the nuclear strikes without having wanted the war itself. It would all be the fault of the ruling class who destroyed the planet and exterminated humanity only for profit.

“The US, Russia and other governments have nuclear weapons with a definite purpose—they would not hesitate to use them. If you look at history, they have been used. That the interests of the working class do not concern the ruling class has just become very clear in the coronavirus pandemic. They have spent billions on military and police instead of fighting coronavirus and investing in social welfare.

“War is the result of the evolution of capitalism. As Lenin explained, imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism and war serves the capitalists to redivide the world. Lenin showed that without capitalism there would be no war. This can only be achieved in a communist society.”

Luc, who is in his first semester studying business administration, was actively involved in the IYSSE campaign, having come across it at Humboldt University recently.

“The international perspective presented at the online rally is very important to me,” he said. “Socialism is only possible through an international and collective perspective. I think it’s very strong that we also have links with Russian youth—that refutes all the war propaganda.”

He continued: “Young people are among those most affected by war. They are sent to war, and they are the ones whose future is being destroyed. At the same time, they are in a position where they can think a lot and bring about sustained change.

“One can see parallels in the current development with previous conflicts, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. At the rally, Biden’s quote about nuclear Armageddon was recalled, demonstrating the catastrophic war rhetoric. This shows that the ruling class is not looking for de-escalation but keeps on provoking the situation. It was also shown that the ruling class has no problem with a world war. A nuclear war would mean the end of the world and the death of billions of people through a nuclear winter. Those least able to protect themselves from war are those furthest down in society.

“War and capitalism are clearly linked. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of other countries—this maintenance of power requires a large military complex. Lucrative deals by arms companies in Germany and the USA also show this connection. Under capitalism, workers are sent to wars while the capitalists make profit. An international socialist society with the working class as decision-makers would have no interest in going to war.”

“War is a threat to us young people and an attack on our living conditions,” said **Tim**, who studied musicology at Humboldt University and was also an active participant in the IYSSE campaign. “If we don’t fight against it, there will be more attacks and it will get worse and worse. The US has recently started openly supporting attacks on Russian soil as well, and the debate about nuclear weapons is being fuelled further.

“The conflict can definitely escalate. A nuclear war would mean the collapse of society and the end of the planet. It would be the end of humanity as we know it.” Tim said the ruling class is “not only capable of waging a world war, but is already preparing for it.”

He continued: “Germany’s growing militarism and arms exports, which are increasing year by year, speak for themselves. The armament of the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces], the acquisition of the atomic bomb jets and the special fund [€100 billion for the

military] are further fuelling the war. Added to this is NATO expansion to include Sweden and Finland.

“Capitalism uses war as an instrument to secure power, influence and resources. War is a welcome vehicle to enforce interests and profit economically. The arms industries in the largest countries are booming and have been for years. The drone war demonstrates another horrific side of war.

“The crises of today show the true face of capitalism. There is a historic opportunity to overthrow it. We need a socialist programme, we see that now, because only with a programme can you get anything done. I sent the video of the rally directly to my friends.”

Humboldt University in Berlin

On the campus of Humboldt University itself, the IYSSE campaign has continued to meet with strong support. The call for an international mass movement against war is supported by many students.

“War is not in our interest and it should not be in anyone’s interest,” said **Greta**, who studies nursing at the Charité hospital in Berlin. A mass movement of youth against war “creates an image of unity and shows that the general population is against it,” she explained. “I try not to think about nuclear war. It’s unimaginable, but realistically, I definitely see the danger. I also think that the Ukraine war is being used as a pretext to arm the Bundeswehr.

“The 100 billion euro special fund should instead be invested in completely different things. I work in social care and health—there is a particular need in care. There are shortages everywhere—especially in Berlin. Better pay would also be important. A lot could be done in the health system with 100 billion euros.”

That German government representatives and advisers instead declare that Germany must become the “task master” and “leading power” of Europe are “breath-taking statements,” she added. “German history must not be forgotten.”

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“The youth are the future,” said **Kosmo**, who is studying history in his first semester at Humboldt University and is very concerned about the development of war. “Nuclear weapons are a huge danger. Einstein said, ‘I don’t know with what weapons the third world war will be fought, but in the fourth, people will fight with sticks and stones.’ I hope it doesn’t come to that. But when the missiles hit Poland, I became quite aware of that danger.”

“War and profit are connected,” Kosmo added. “One look at the arms industry is enough. Profiteering does not shy away from weapons.”

As IYSSE members explained the aggressive role of US imperialism and NATO, Kosmo nodded and said, “The wars in the Middle East are about oil. Wars are fought to expand empires. The world powers will stop at nothing to do so. In Taiwan, too, big power blocs are clashing right now.”

Joshua and **Ilan**, two international students from the ESCP Business School in Berlin, also support the building of an international mass movement of students against war. “Yes, we should do that—like in the 70s,” said Joshua. “I miss such a movement in our generation. We are political, but I feel we are not

yet as active as we need to be.” Ilan added, “The schools and universities should join in. They should give us days off to protest.”

Asked about the development of a third world war, Joshua said, “I definitely see the danger. I hope the US doesn’t intervene any more than it is now. I’m really not sure if our generation in Europe will spend the rest of their lives in peace. The blowing up of the Nordstream 2 pipeline was very suspicious to me, I immediately had a bad feeling about it. One wonders who or what is behind it. Of course, one can only speculate, but the US is benefiting from it.

“I am also worried about how the EU is developing. What is the Frontex border agency for, what’s the point? In my opinion, you can’t prevent immigration and you shouldn’t. For a market research project, we surveyed over 11,000 students from different countries online about the Ukraine war. According to our figures, for the first time, more than 50 percent of young people tend to be pessimistic about the future.”

Joshua pointed out that young people and students want to fight against a wide range of political developments—from war and climate change to attacks on refugees and democratic rights. He said, “The common denominator is growing inequality and unequal distribution of wealth. All over the world, governments are becoming more and more authoritarian. Politics now consists only of populism and disinformation; it is hardly about real things.”

On the proxy war in Ukraine, Ilan said, “For me, war is always about interests. If there is a war in Ukraine, it is because of interference from other powers like the US and France. The US always talks about democracy and human rights, but I think they should learn their lessons first before trying to lecture others.” However, he said, the US is not the only player.

“I am from France, so I also criticise the French government. Neo-colonialism persists, France is still involved worldwide. Macron tours Africa and tries to dictate to governments what currency they should have. The King of Morocco gets money from Europe to hold back refugees. In Ukraine they follow the same interests, I think. Macron should stay out of Africa and Ukraine.”

Joshua and Ilan welcome the IYSSE’s call for youth to reach out to the working class and advocate for the building of rank-and-file action committees and new workers’ organisations. Joshua said, “They should organise, voting [in elections] alone is not enough. There should be many more votes, on all the issues that matter. But such a system has to be implemented on a world level, because if it’s only done on a national level, companies will move their production elsewhere.” Ilan added, “It is important that there are people like you, and it is important that we have such discussions. Protests are important, but on our own we won’t have an impact.”



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