

The conditions facing youth in Europe and the tasks of the IYSSE

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For young people across Europe and internationally, this year's May Day comes as they are being rapidly drawn into a global crisis of historic dimensions. In the eyes of hundreds of millions of young people, the lies that have been told about this society are being shattered by events.

The capitalist governments—far from working together to solve mankind's problems—are engaged in an insane race for the redivision of the world that leads directly to World War III. The war in Ukraine, which has already cost hundreds of thousands of lives, threatens to escalate into a nuclear conflict and signals the re-eruption of historic rivalries between the European imperialist powers.

A young person born after the dissolution of the Soviet Union has grown up in a capitalist system in perpetual crisis, characterized by ever more brutal wars as well as economic and ecological degradation.

At the same time, young people witnessed the unrestrained enrichment of a tiny layer of oligarchic lunatics. In the warehouses of Jeff Bezos and factories of Elon Musk, as well as in service and online industries, they are supposed to work until the end of their lives for a pittance. The majority of jobs today are low-paid and insecure and make it all but impossible to raise a family.

According to the EU's own statistical office, more than 20 percent of young people were "at risk of poverty" in 2021, including more than 25 percent in Greece and Denmark. Currently, the economic situation of youth is deteriorating most rapidly in countries such

as Denmark and Sweden, which were long associated with social stability.

Independent surveys have found that among underage children across the EU, almost one in four are at risk of poverty. In Romania, Bulgaria and Italy, the share of young people unemployed, not in training or not in school, has again risen to 20 percent or higher.

In Britain, France and Germany—supposedly the richest countries of Europe—the situation is no different. Amid levels of social inequality that would have been unimaginable even for Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and Karl Marx, young people are struggling to make ends meet and wonder if they will have a future at all.

After decades of unending social attacks—carried out above all by Labour and Green governments with the support of the union bureaucracies—hardly anything remains of the social gains that had been won by the working class in Europe and around the world. In the last three years alone, the capitalist agenda of militarism, social devastation and mass infection with COVID-19 has had devastating effects on youth across Europe.

Youth have been confronted with the fact that their lives and those of their relatives are to be sacrificed on the altar of profit. Just in the past year, the Turkish-Syrian earthquake and floods in Pakistan both displaced millions and killed tens of thousands, the results of a conscious policy of "social murder."

Since the outbreak of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, more than 10.5 million children worldwide have been orphaned or have lost a primary caregiver. Millions more have lost teachers, grandparents or friends, while countless others suffer from long term debilitation due to Long COVID. The combined burden of illness and death, and the effects of half-hearted pseudo-lockdowns have profoundly impacted the lives

and consciousness of an entire generation.

Climate change—which threatens hundreds of millions more people with the destruction of their livelihoods and has already led to the extinction of countless animal species—is regarded by the capitalist elites as just another factor in their reckless gamble for world domination. Behind closed doors, discussions do not revolve around international planning and collective action, but around who will come out on top on the world’s grand chessboard.

As in World Wars I and II, young people in Europe and all over the world again face the prospect of being sent off to die on the battlefield. Be it war, inflation or the danger of fascism, our generation is brought face to face with the life-and-death questions that our grandparents and great-grandparents confronted as well.

But the destruction caused by a Third World War, which would inevitably involve the use of nuclear weapons, would be qualitatively more devastating. To be blunt: If the [Ukraine] war continues to escalate into all-out nuclear conflict, nothing will be left of human civilization.

Yet this is what the ruling elites are actively preparing. Politicians across the continent demand the militarization of every aspect of society and the creation of a “war economy.” Governments in Latvia, Poland and the Netherlands are taking measures to reintroduce the military draft, while France prepares for a comprehensive modernization of its nuclear arsenal.

The historic traditions they are following are displayed most clearly in the explosion of German militarism. The country that committed the worst crimes in human history is now engaged in its largest military rearmament campaign since the defeat of the Nazis in 1945.

The German government is pursuing its stated goal of becoming Europe’s leading military power, bringing Ukraine under its economic control and inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia. This in turn exacerbates geopolitical rivalries with the U.S. and intensifies the tensions between the European imperialists which led to World Wars I and II.

If anything, this war has shown that unity, peace and progress cannot come from the capitalist elites of each country—they must be won in a struggle against them.

There is a way forward: It lies in the tradition of

Marxism and revolutionary socialism. The conditions for the development of a powerful socialist movement of the international working class and youth are emerging rapidly. It is such a movement that can and will stop the war and establish the United Socialist States of Europe.

Against the self-serving illusions and the complacent pessimism promoted by the various pseudo-left tendencies, the IYSSE will expand our fight for a unified world movement of workers and youth. Against the anti-Marxist and anti-working class theories of the Frankfurt School and postmodernism, we will educate young people as Trotskyists and arm them politically against all forms of nationalism and opportunism—to build the International Committee of the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.



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