

Roger Waters in Berlin: A powerful musical and political statement against fascism, militarism and war

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Roger Waters visited Berlin as part of his *This Is Not a Drill* tour on Wednesday and Thursday last week. His concerts provided two exciting evenings in the almost sold-out Mercedes-Benz Arena on the banks of the Spree. Many thousands of Berliners of all generations praised the music of the now almost 80-year-old Pink Floyd co-founder, as well as his clear political statements.

Bourgeois politicians and the media could hardly hide their frustration about this and reacted with an intensification of their repulsive campaign of incitement. “Roger Waters brings anti-Semitism with him,” wrote the *BZ*; “Roger Waters is bullying his critics in Berlin,” the *Berliner Morgenpost*; the *Rolling Stone* even denounced the performance as a “symphony of horror” and Waters as a “musical Reichsbürger.” In Germany, the Reichsbürger is a far-right movement that seeks to reestablish the German Empire as it existed in 1871.

The shabby political elite of the city struck a similar tone. The new Berlin Senator for Culture Joe Chialo (Christian Democratic Union) condemned the concert “in the strongest possible terms” and accused Waters of anti-Semitism as well. His predecessor Klaus Lederer (Left Party) explained in an interview with *Die Zeit* that he would have tried to “prevent” the concert if Waters had “played in a municipal hall” as in Frankfurt.

In Munich, where Waters performed another successful concert at the Olympic Hall on Sunday, the smear campaign continued. At a small rally in front of the hall, Charlotte Knobloch, the president of the Jewish religious Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria, described Waters as an “anti-Semitic arsonist.”

The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote that Waters “drew attention with an anti-Semitic post on social media a few hours before his already controversial appearance.” The singer spread a message in which he described Israel as a

“tyrannical, racist regime.”

The method used by politicians and the media to crack down on Waters is as dirty as it gets. Using the charge of anti-Semitism, any opposition to the oppressive, anti-democratic and extremely belligerent policies of the Israeli government, in which far-right forces set the tone, is to be silenced.

In addition, the accusation of anti-Semitism is raised by the same parties that openly support fascist and neo-Nazi forces in Ukraine and also strengthen the far right in Germany itself. Significantly, the “anti-Semitism resolutions” adopted by the German Bundestag (parliament) in recent years have all been supported by the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD)—a party whose leaders trivialize the Holocaust and glorify the Nazi Wehrmacht.

Waters has refused to be intimidated by the right-wing media and political mob in Germany. In Frankfurt, where a coalition of all established parties tried to ban Waters’ appearance at the festival hall on May 28, he defended his right to freedom of expression and art in court.

To great applause, the show began in Berlin with the following message on the video screens installed above the stage: “On a matter of public interest: A court in Frankfurt has ruled that I am not an anti-Semite. Excellent. Just to be clear, I condemn anti-Semitism unreservedly.”

The same message delivered at the beginning of every show then followed: “If you’re one of those ‘I love Pink Floyd, but I can’t stand Roger’s politics,’ people you might do well to fuck off to the bar right now.” In fact, no one went to the bar, but the message was greeted again with strong applause!

The following two and a half hours made clear why the Establishment denounces Waters and would like to stop

his tour. As the WSWWS commented in an earlier review of the tour, nearly every song addresses the “pressing issues of our time: imperialist war, fascism, the poison of nationalism, the plight of refugees, the victims of state oppression, global poverty, social inequality, the attack on democratic rights and the danger of nuclear annihilation.”

Here are just a few of the most memorable moments of the show in Berlin. One of the last songs of the evening was “Two Suns in the Sunset” from the 1983 Pink Floyd album “The Final Cut.” The song warns of the devastating effects of a nuclear war. The video animation to the song is shocking and moving. It shows a man who is on his way home to his family and is taken unawares by the nuclear inferno.

In announcing the song, Waters warned that the Doomsday Clock is now 90 seconds before midnight. And one thing is certain: “Next year, it will be less than 90 seconds. Because this year coming is more dangerous than last year.” He added, “Stop these arseholes from destroying the world, which is what they are doing at the moment because they are not paying attention.”

Waters left no doubt as to who were the main warmongers. For another anti-war song “The Bravery of Being Out of Range” from his solo album “Amused to Death” (1992), the portraits of all US presidents since Ronald Reagan were displayed—each with the slogan “War Criminal” and a list of their war crimes. Waters savaged George W. Bush for his lies “about weapons of mass destruction,” and Barack Obama and Donald Trump for their “drone murders.” In reference to incumbent US President Biden, he stated, “Just getting started....”

Another highlight of Waters’ solo career was the song “The Powers That Be” from the 1987 album “Radio K.A.O.S.” The song is a scathing indictment of the “powers that be” and their current and past crimes. To howling sirens and shots, heavily armed marauding police units or groups of fascist thugs are displayed on the screens along with a selection of their victims. These include Sophie Scholl and Anne Frank, who were murdered by the Nazis; migrants who were killed by “Fortress Europe”; and victims of the Israeli occupation regime in Palestine and police violence in the US. The song ends with the lyrics: “Wow! Why are they so brutal? Because they want to crush our resistance and keep ruling the world.”

The entire show is a call to confront the “Powers that be.” Waters uses both immortal Pink Floyd classics such as “Another Brick in the Wall,” “Comfortably Numb” or “In the Flesh” (a song against anti-Semitism and fascism),

as well as his recent solo releases.

“Déjà Vu,” from Waters’ last album, “Is This the Life We Really Want?” (2017) and “Run like Hell” (“The Wall”—1979) form a unit and, based on the infamous “Collateral Murder” video, address US war crimes in Iraq. The video, leaked by Chelsea Manning and published by WikiLeaks, shows American soldiers shooting indiscriminately at unarmed civilians and journalists from a US Apache helicopter in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. The presentation culminates in the call: “Free Julian Assange! Lock up the Killers!” The audience responded with thunderous applause.

It was a recurring feature of the show that the audience responded with applause, especially in Waters’ clear political statements, which were often displayed in large letters on the video screens. “Fuck all Empires,” “Fuck Drones,” “Fuck Bombing People in their homes,” “Fuck the Occupation” and “Human Rights.” The same strong reaction was given to the militant calls for resistance in “Sheep” (“Animals” – 1977): “Resist War,” “Resist Fascism,” “Resist Militarism,” “Resist Capitalism.”

Another strength of the show was that the clear political focus was never at the expense of great music. On the contrary, form and content formed a mutually nourishing unity. Waters and his entire band played at the highest musical level. What we already wrote about Waters’ performance in Detroit was also confirmed in Berlin:

Waters proves in practice at every performance on this tour the truth of Leon Trotsky’s proposition that “a protest against reality... always forms part of a really creative piece of work,” and that every new tendency in art—and such an installation-concert must be considered a “new tendency”—“has begun with rebellion.”

This Is Not a Drill has a revolutionary element. The tour encourages millions worldwide to think more critically, to confront the capitalist elites and their system and to fight for a better future without oppression, social inequality and war.



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