

Speech at the rally in front of Berlin's Humboldt University

Defend the Berlin4! Stop the deportation of genocide opponents!

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On Thursday, April 17, the rally "Defend the Berlin4! Stop the deportation of genocide opponents!" took place in front of the main building of Berlin's Humboldt University.

The protest, organised by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the Student Council (AStA) of the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, was directed against the threatened deportation of four activists who expressed opposition to the genocide in Gaza.

Although they have not been convicted in any court, the three EU and one US citizens have been ordered to leave Germany by April 21. Otherwise, they will be forcibly deported. Despite the deportation of one of the Berlin4 being temporarily suspended by a recent court decision, they are still in danger.

We are publishing here the speech that Katja Rippert gave on behalf of the IYSSE at the rally.

Dear fellow students, comrades and friends,

We, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, have called for this rally today to mobilise broad and international support for the Berlin4, the four activists and opponents of genocide, and to prevent their impending deportation.

The attack on Shane O'Brien, Roberta Murray, Kasia Właszczyk and Cooper Longbottom is an attack on all of us!

What is the alleged crime for which they are being criminalised?

All four protested against the genocide in Gaza, which, according to official figures, has claimed over 50,000 lives. Just a few days ago, the Israeli army once again bombed a hospital in Gaza City. According to the UN, around 500,000 people—half a million—have been displaced in the Gaza Strip.

Here in Germany, of all places, people are now to be deported again because they took to the streets to protest against genocide.

With baseless accusations and unprecedented proceedings normally reserved for serious criminals, the four activists are being deprived of their democratic rights.

This repression of the opponents of war at universities and at Gaza protests is only the beginning. An example is to be made of the Berlin4 in order to suppress any political opposition in the future.

Their persecution is directed against the entire working class and youth. First, they go after protesting students, immigrants, refugees. Who is next? Striking workers? Those who refuse to do military service?

This is also part of the comprehensive attacks on migrants and refugees in Germany. The coalition agreement between the Christian

Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) to form the next government heralds a drastic tightening of asylum policy. Refugees from Gaza are already being targeted. German authorities have suspended asylum proceedings for Palestinian asylum seekers from Gaza—with the cynical justification that the situation on the ground is “unclear.”

Yesterday, the Federal Administrative Court allowed the deportation of two refugees to Greece, even though they face inhumane treatment, detention and catastrophic conditions there. This has implications for thousands of asylum cases.

We must fight back against these attacks: Stop the deportation of all refugees! No to the anti-migrant agitation! Defend your immigrant colleagues and fellow students against deportation!

The case of the Berlin4 goes far beyond the borders of Berlin. It is part of an international development. The trade war is escalating worldwide. With his new tariffs, Trump is preparing for a world war. Domestically, he is establishing the framework for a dictatorship and destroying all social programmes.

At universities in the United States, students like Mahmoud Khalil, who peacefully demonstrated against genocide, are being arrested and imprisoned.

The ruling class in America, just like here in Germany, is reviving the dictatorial methods and arbitrary criminalisation of the Nazis. We must not allow this to happen!

We are standing today at a historic site. In April 1933, the Nazis began to forcibly bring the universities into line with their ideology. On May 10, 1933, across the street here—on what is now Bebelplatz—cheering Nazi students burned books by Jewish and Marxist authors: the works of Marx and Engels, the novels and poems of Heinrich Heine, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig and Erich Maria Remarque.

The book burning of 1933 is not just a grim reminder of the past—it is a highly contemporary warning.

Today, we are witnessing the establishment of a police state designed to criminalise and silence opponents of war, socialists, refugees and migrants. Freedom of expression is being trampled underfoot and protests against genocide are being beaten down.

Eighty years after the Second World War, the German government is supporting genocide and rearming on a scale not seen since Hitler. The Bundestag and Bundesrat [lower and upper house of parliament] have approved over a trillion euros in war loans.

Chancellor-designate Friedrich Merz wants to supply Ukraine with German Taurus cruise missiles. This threat against Russia is reckless

and extremely dangerous.

The Putin regime could interpret the delivery and use of the Taurus weapon as a declaration of war. Who can guarantee that Moscow will not respond with attacks on German targets?

The same politicians and journalists who justify every war crime committed by Israel by citing Germany's responsibility for the Holocaust have no qualms about waging war against Russia for the third time.

At the same time, they promote the rewriting of history and the relativisation of Nazi crimes. Here at Humboldt University, the teaching of right-wing extremist professor Jörg Baberowski trivialises Hitler and justifies the Nazis' war of extermination against the Soviet Union.

The IYSSE fights for the principle: Scholarship instead of war propaganda! No trivialisation of Nazism and no arms research at our universities!

The federal government and all the capitalist parties, as well as the trade union leaderships, are accomplices in this pro-war policy.

In the Bundesrat, the Left Party has also approved rearmament, it defends the Israeli genocide and rigorously deports refugees in all the state governments in which it is involved.

Here in Berlin, many young people voted for the Left Party because it presented itself as an opponent of fascism, social inequality and war. Now, some are disappointed and confused. Why does the Left Party support genocide? Why does it vote for horrendous war expenditures?

It is time to dispel all illusions about the Left Party. There is nothing left-wing about the Left Party except its name. It is a pro-capitalist party that sees its task as controlling and suppressing a real movement from below.

It has proven this time and again in the past. Here in Berlin, we know this all too well. Its Stalinist predecessors helped organise the reintroduction of capitalism in the German Democratic Republic [East Germany] and the liquidation of factories there during the transition.

In the SPD-Left Party Senate (Berlin state executive) from 2001 to 2011, the Left Party ruined the capital with its austerity measures. It is also closely involved in the return of German militarism. Like all the establishment parties, the Left Party has paved the way for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) with its anti-working-class austerity policies.

No, we cannot stop the genocide in Gaza and the deportation of the Berlin4 by appealing to these parties and those in power.

State repression and the escalation of war are not the result of the wrong policies of one politician or another. They follow a political logic—the logic of capitalism.

Worldwide, governments and financial elites can only maintain their power and wealth through authoritarian methods.

They are sitting on a powder keg. Anger is growing everywhere over the gulf between rich and poor. Social cuts and mass layoffs are imminent. The costs of war are to be passed on to the workers, and young people are to be sacrificed as cannon fodder.

The majority of the population rejects this pro-war policy. That is why those in power are increasingly attacking democratic rights. Their policy of repression is not an expression of strength, but of weakness. They are defending tooth and claw a social system that has failed and produces nothing but misery and war.

In Gaza, we see the descent of capitalism into barbarism every day, and millions of people are asking themselves: How can the escalation of war finally be stopped? How can deportations be prevented?

One thing is clear: not by putting pressure on governments and

university administrations or appealing to the capitalist parties! That is a dead end, because they are pursuing their own objective economic and geopolitical interests in the wars.

We say: Students must orient themselves towards the working class, the only revolutionary force in society. The struggle against genocide and war will not be decided here on campus, but in the factories, ports and other workplaces around the world.

The international working class is a powerful social force comprising 3.5 billion people—55 percent more than in 1991. In Germany, over 45 million people are employed.

Whether metalworkers or auto workers, bus drivers or nurses, parcel delivery drivers or childcare employees, the working class keeps society running every day and creates all of society's wealth. Many students also must work part-time to cope with rising rents and food prices.

The dangerous development of a third world war and the preparation of a dictatorship at home can be stopped if the working class is mobilised on the basis of revolutionary politics and the big banks and corporations are expropriated.

That this is possible is shown by a key event in history, which I would like to recall at the end of my contribution.

Exactly 108 years ago today, on April 17, 1917, the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin addressed the Petrograd Soviet with a speech that went down in history as the "April Theses." With this, Lenin, together with Leon Trotsky, paved the way for the working class to seize power a few months later, in October 1917.

The October Revolution ended the First World War. It proved that the workers were capable of stopping the bloody carnage.

However, the further course of the revolution also showed that first, the working class needed a revolutionary party like the Bolsheviks, which was politically prepared and led the mass movement. And second, that the revolution could only be defended if it was based on the programme of world revolution—and not on the nationalist politics that Stalin then promoted.

Today, we face the challenge of building such a revolutionary leadership in the working class throughout the world.

This is what we are fighting for in the International Youth and Students for Social Equality. As the youth and student organisation of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party), we are part of the Trotskyist world movement.

Leon Trotsky defended the perspective of internationalism against Stalin's reactionary nationalism. We must take up this struggle today!

We call on you to study Marxism and the lessons of history! Come to our book table and discuss these questions with us. Become active in the IYSSE, leave your contact details and, above all, support the defence campaign for the Berlin4!

Their fate depends on us building a revolutionary movement that fights against war and its root cause: capitalism.

As Rosa Luxemburg so aptly put it, we are faced today with the alternative: "Socialism or barbarism!"



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