

Great interest in Berlin meeting “Where is America Heading? Socialism or Barbarism?”, to be addressed by American Trotskyist David North

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Members and supporters of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) have distributed thousands of leaflets and put up 1,500 posters to promote the event with David North, “Where is America Heading? Socialism or Barbarism?”, to be held today, Tuesday, at Berlin’s Humboldt University. The event is also being promoted on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and X.

The politics of the oligarchic government of President Donald Trump are being discussed intensely at workplaces, universities, and in Berlin’s neighbourhoods. It quickly becomes clear in the numerous conversations that the establishment of a presidential dictatorship in the United States is not a development limited to America. The US-backed genocide in Gaza, the proxy war in Ukraine, the preparations for war against Venezuela, and the global trade war waged by the most powerful imperialist country affect the entire world.

Berliners are following with concern the raids by the ICE Gestapo in major American cities, as well as the Trump administration’s attacks on democratic rights and the remaining social programmes on which millions depend. The socialist and internationalist perspective that North will discuss at the event is attracting great interest.

Universities

On the campuses of Berlin’s three major universities, the genocide in Gaza and the fight against the far right are the most frequently discussed issues. University administrations have been cracking down hard on opponents of genocide for over two years, having pro-Palestinian protests forcibly dispersed—also with the help of the police.

Katja Rippert of the Sozialistischen Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) addressed this directly in a video for Tuesday’s event:

“Trump’s supposed ‘peace plan’ for Gaza is not a plan for peace but for the continuation of genocide. The colonial subjugation of the Palestinian population is to be cemented, and the ongoing genocide given a veneer of legality. Backed by Israel and assisted by the corrupt Arab regimes, the United States is seeking to secure its imperialist dominance in the resource-rich Middle East.”

IYSSE members spoke with three geography students at Humboldt University’s Adlershof campus. Regarding the United States, they said: “A similar development is coming here in Germany.” They agreed that the cause of the crisis lies in capitalism and said they plan to attend the event.

Two other students came to the IYSSE table to talk about the war

policy of imperialism. “The powers are all competing for resources and influence; it’s really like earlier wars,” said one of them. He had followed the Gaza protests and was angry that accusations of antisemitism were being used as a blunt weapon against anyone criticising the Netanyahu regime. His fellow student was concerned about the many raids on workers and migrants taking place in America. He pointed to the event flyer showing protesters from the No-Kings movement holding a sign reading “ICE = Gestapo,” and said: “That’s not just happening in the US.” Democratic rights were also being eroded here under the Merz government, he said, and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) was being strengthened.

The university group “Students Against the Far Right” experienced this repression first-hand. They had announced events for last Wednesday at all three major Berlin universities, at which, among other topics, the fight against the AfD and the founding of its youth organisation “Generation Germany” were to be discussed. The Free University (FU) banned the previously approved event just hours before it was set to begin. The reason given was that it supposedly violated the university’s “neutrality requirement” because it opposed a specific political party. The IYSSE immediately responded by calling on all students to protest to the FU president and defend the “Students Against the Far Right”! Tamino Wilck, IYSSE spokesperson at HU, immediately posted a video about the ban.

Workplaces

SGP members had many conversations with workers at Tesla in Grünheide, just outside Berlin. Nearly 12,000 workers from around the world are employed at the plant, many with Arab, African, or Asian backgrounds. After German workers, the largest European group is Polish. Only recently, Tesla shareholders approved granting Elon Musk an astronomical \$1 trillion compensation package. Meanwhile, the wages of Tesla workers who produce this vast wealth are far below the German average. Their pay is being used as a benchmark to push down wages across Germany’s auto industry—if corporations and the IG Metall union apparatus have their way.

In this context, Trump and Musk—as well as the immense gap between workers and the super-rich—were dominant topics of conversation. A Tesla worker of Turkish background commented on the oligarchy in the US and Germany: “Those at the top are nothing without us; they only exist because we work all the time and keep everything running.” He was born and raised in Germany but cannot

vote because he was a Turkish citizen and so is denied any political influence, he said. “There shouldn’t be different rights or distinctions between nationalities. Here at Tesla, we all get along very well.”

Another worker of Indian background spontaneously supported the idea of international working-class unity: “That would be very good.” He wanted to know how exactly this could be organised. Dietmar Gaisenkersting, deputy chair of the SGP, explained to him the significance of building independent rank-and-file action committees.

Another worker said immediately: “Against Trump and the oligarchs? Count me in.” He plans to attend the event on Tuesday.

IYSSE and SGP representatives also promoted the event at Mercedes plants in Ludwigsfelde and Marienfelde, and at the BMW motorcycle plant in Berlin-Spandau.

At the Berlin public transit company BVG, bus driver Andy Niklaus personally invited workers to attend, and recorded a video addressing his colleagues and fellow employees in the public sector.

In his video, Max, a nurse, explained the working conditions in healthcare and stressed the importance of international working-class unity.

Neighbourhoods

At Leopoldplatz in Wedding, campaigners spoke with a painter who works on call. He is constantly searching for better jobs because wages are falling and rents are skyrocketing. He can still just about support his family, but “for how much longer?” he asked. He expressed great understanding for the growing hunger among American workers when “wages are no longer enough to live.”

Another worker sharply criticised the Merz government, the Berlin state executive, the Social Democrats (SPD), and everyone supporting genocide. Asked what the war in Ukraine was about, he replied: “It’s about the fight for resources by the great powers like the US.” Everyone wanted to participate, “and the population pays the price.” “Trump is a gangster and a criminal, but he’s not lying when he says he wants to make the rich richer.”

He said he came from a generation that had lived through the Iraq War, the Syria War, and the genocide in Gaza and had only ever known war. “And it’s not stopping—it’s escalating, now against Russia.”

A secondary-school student approached the team and raised the topic of military conscription, which is being debated intensely at his school. “What is the government planning with this reintroduction? There are no winners in war anymore,” he said. “Most of us don’t want to join the Bundeswehr [Armed Forces]; we don’t want war.” How could this be stopped? IYSSE members answered: “By building an anti-war movement in the working class. That requires independent organisations—rank-and-file action committees in factories, workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods—to prepare and wage this struggle.”

A 90-year-old pensioner approached the information table saying, “Yes, we must fight against Trump here as well,” and said she planned to attend the event. Young people needed to be shaken awake, she said: “so that they read more about what those up there are planning again.” The news had become terrible: “Nothing but war, the Bundeswehr, conscription again, and less and less healthcare, education and a decent life for everyone.”

IYSSE and SGP members also distributed thousands of flyers in the working-class and heavily migrant neighbourhood of Neukölln, and held many intensive discussions with workers, young people and interested passers-by. At a rally on Hermannplatz, both the event and the SGP’s socialist perspective against fascism and war met with

great interest and support.

Fridays for Future

IYSSE and SGP supporters handed out flyers at a small Fridays for Future climate protest at the Brandenburg Gate. While the organisers from Green Youth chanted, “Keep Your Promises” and made futile appeals to governments, the campaign team discussed with participants why the climate crisis can only be resolved if the oligarchy is expropriated and capitalism abolished.

Two protesters who were interested in Tuesday’s event agreed that the power of the oligarchy was the central problem. When they learned that an American socialist was coming to Berlin, they asked: “Another Mamdani?” Saying the election of New York mayor Zohran Mamdani had been “at least a bright spot.” Our supporters explained why Mamdani is not a socialist but fosters illusions in reforming capitalism. David North, however, as chair of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, represents a genuine socialist perspective, fighting to build an international revolutionary movement of the working class.

Another protester expressed shock at the politics of the US Democratic Party. Although supposedly the official opposition, they were doing nothing to oppose Trump. He had followed the No-Kings protests: “But that was mainly a movement from below. The Democratic Party didn’t do much.” IYSSE members pointed to the leaflet, which states “that neither the Democratic Party nor the trade unions are organising serious resistance. They fear a movement from below more than they fear Trump because they represent the same oligarchy.” He replied: “Yes, that’s probably the only way to understand why they do nothing.”

Invitation

We invite everyone who does not want to passively watch the growing danger of world war, genocide, and fascism to join us on Tuesday at 18:30 at Humboldt University to discuss with David North and the IYSSE how the descent into barbarism can be halted and how a society free of violence, poverty and misery can be built.

On Saturday, November 22 at 2pm, North will be speaking in London at a meeting titled, “The American Volcano: Towards fascism or socialism?”



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