

Protest marches against the far-right AfD in Berlin: “Capitalism is the biggest problem”

Our reporters
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On Saturday, September 12, thousands marched through Berlin to the Rotes Rathaus (Berlin’s city hall) to protest against the rightward shift in politics. Shortly beforehand, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) had won almost 44 percent of the vote in the Saxony-Anhalt state election. Now, just a week before the Berlin state election, many wanted to participate in order to send a signal against war, fascism and social inequality.

The “star march,” which started from seven different locations, was organised by an alliance of almost 100 organisations, including the Berlin DGB (German Trade Union Confederation), service-sector union Verdi and the GEW (education workers’ union), Fridays for Future, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), Omas gegen Rechts (Grannies Against the Right), several queer-community and climate-protection initiatives, and many others besides. Hundreds of young people spontaneously joined the star march along the way, many of them only visiting Berlin, in order to demonstrate against the AfD.

In seven thematic demonstrations, they marched under the slogan “It’s time things changed” to the central closing rally at the Rotes Rathaus. According to the organisers, 32,000 people took part in the star march; according to the police, 18,000—though even this figure appears to be on the high side. The WSW’s own reporters estimated that around 10,000 people had gathered in front of the Rotes Rathaus for the closing rally.

Many carried hand-painted signs with slogans such as “Abolish billionaires,” “Time to strike” or “End discrimination.” In the “Social Participation” march there was a whole contingent of young midwives demonstrating for better conditions and pay in maternity care, while other participants protested against the privatisation of the postal service, the railways and all state-owned enterprises, which, as a young postal worker told the

WSWS, “only enrich shareholders while making basic services worse and more expensive.”

Nick, a working student and aspiring writer from Nuremberg who had spontaneously joined the demonstration, said, “We have to focus on the social question if we want to achieve anything. With all this media propaganda about immigrants or other minorities, people are just looking for scapegoats, and soon we’ll be back where we were in the 1930s with the Nazis. But if you solve the social questions, eliminate social inequality, then people could actually live.”

Helena, who was visiting Berlin with a group of young girls from Bavaria and thought the city was “cool” because it was so international, had spontaneously joined the star march against the AfD with the whole group. “We have to show that the AfD is lying,” she said. “We’ve seen AfD election posters here that say, ‘Housing for Berliners,’ as if they wanted to make sure all Berliners have good housing. In reality, what they mean is that foreigners shouldn’t have any housing at all.”

Erkan, a young Berliner of Turkish origin, said, “All the parties support the war policy and the arms trade, which you can see clearly in the example of Gaza. But if you ask ordinary people, no one is in favour of war.”

An IT specialist from Colombia, who was there with three friends from South America, said he had come to Germany with his family to build a better life and to escape the dictatorial regimes back home. Now, he said, he was appalled by the growth of the far right in Germany. “It is economic issues that set in motion the people who are suffering from financial hardship,” he said. And he stressed how important it was for workers to unite internationally, so that the simple but false “answers” offered by the right could not take hold.

Several teams from the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), which is standing its own candidates in the Berlin state election on September 20,

distributed the statement “How to stop the far-right Alternative for Germany,” discussed it with hundreds of participants, and drew their attention to the book *Why Are They Back? Historical falsification, political conspiracy and the return of fascism in Germany*.

SGP members urged participants to take up the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotiuk, the young Trotskyist in Ukraine whom the Zelensky regime has sentenced to 15 years in prison for campaigning against the war and for the international unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers and young people.

Many of those our reporters spoke to were troubled by the danger of war and shocked by the AfD’s election victory, and most agreed with the statement in the SGP flyer: “The AfD can only be stopped by an independent offensive of the working class directed against war, social cuts and their underlying social cause, capitalism.”

Ava, a 20-year-old Berliner, told the WWS, “Capitalism is the biggest problem—It’s why people are so dissatisfied, why so many people are doing so badly, why the AfD can grow so strong and why there are so many problems in our society.” Ava agreed that the SPD, the Greens, the CDU and the Left Party played an important role in the AfD’s rise, and said it was “definitely a big problem that these parties have adopted so many right-wing talking points and don’t really want to distance themselves from the AfD. Their policies are precisely what contributes to people’s dissatisfaction.”

Noah, a 16-year-old pupil who marched against the AfD with three classmates, reported, “We talk about the AfD in class, and we’re also going to hold a mock election in our class. When I filled out the Wahl-O-Mat [an online voting-advice tool], my answers to the questions were very close to those of your party. Until then, I’d never heard of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei.”

The organisers of the “star march,” however, many of them from circles close to the Berlin Social Democratic Party (SPD), Greens and Die Linke (Left Party), stood for an entirely different programme. In their speeches, they repeatedly emphasised the “unity of all democrats” and promoted the “democratic parties” as a bulwark against the AfD.

In reality, the governing parties at the federal and state levels have themselves paved the way for the AfD with their antisocial, undemocratic policies of cuts and war, and they will not hesitate to work with the AfD to enforce the interests of the oligarchs against working people. It is impossible to stop the AfD through an alliance of the very parties that helped create the conditions for its rise. Such a

policy would not weaken the AfD but strengthen it further.

The many strong voices against war and savage cuts and for an international socialist policy that could be heard in Berlin on Saturday clearly showed that the objective conditions for a working-class offensive are maturing rapidly. What is missing is an independent socialist perspective and leadership. The flyer distributed by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, which is standing in the Berlin state elections on September 20 to fight for precisely such a perspective, states that the SGP “makes no hollow appeals to the warmongers, but is organising resistance to layoffs, wage cuts and social cuts.” It continues:

It defends the rights of migrants and refugees, fights for the expropriation of the major corporations and large fortunes and for the reorganisation of the economy according to the needs of society rather than the profit interests of the corporations. Together with its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), it is building a worldwide movement against war and capitalism.

This is the perspective with which the AfD can be defeated. It requires a fight against all the capitalist parties that support the policy of war and pave the way for the fascists.



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