IYSSE video statements at GenZ protests in Germany

From youth protests to international class struggle: What perspective is necessary?

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The following statements were delivered by representatives of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in various cities during the Gen Z protests last Saturday.

Tamino Wilck

Here in Berlin, thousands of school students, university students and young workers are taking to the streets today—against social cuts, dilapidated schools, rising living costs and the reintroduction of conscription. They are part of a nationwide and Europe-wide movement against war and austerity.

This opposition to the policies of the Merz-Klingbeil government is more than justified. We, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, support these protests.

But we must ask ourselves the decisive question: How can a government be stopped that spends hundreds of billions of euros on rearmament and war while destroying education, healthcare and social security—and preparing young people to die on the battlefields of future wars?

Our answer is clear: The fight for better schools, affordable housing, secure jobs and a future without war requires the independent mobilization of the working class—the vast majority who create all the wealth and are expected to bear the entire burden of war and crisis.

The protests must not be confined to appeals to the government. They must become the starting point for a broad movement against capitalism, militarism and dictatorship. This requires a socialist program: The major banks and corporations must be expropriated and placed under democratic control. For it is capitalism that is once again leading to barbarism and war.

Clemens Huber

Here in Erfurt, several thousand young people are taking to the streets today to protest against the madness of war and the social catastrophe. And they are not alone. They are part of growing youth protests across the continent and beyond. In Spain, masses are demonstrating against unaffordable housing; in Greece, school students, teachers and doctors are protesting against social cuts; and in Italy and Portugal, workers and young people are fighting against declining living standards and militarism.

The problems are the same everywhere because the cause is the same: capitalism. Everywhere, schools are deteriorating, teachers are in short supply, and families can barely afford their rent—while a tiny layer of billionaires accumulates unimaginable wealth.

School and university students cannot defeat the war policies and the power of the financial oligarchy on their own. We are not an isolated group with special interests. We are the next generation of the working class. Our parents, our older siblings, our neighbors—they work in factories, hospitals, logistics centers and schools. They are the ones who produce all of society’s wealth. Without their labor, production comes to a standstill. This power is the only force that can genuinely challenge capitalism.

That is why we call for the building of rank-and-file action committees in schools, universities, workplaces and neighborhoods—democratically elected and controlled, independent of the capitalist parties and trade union bureaucracies. These committees must unite across national borders in the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Their aim must be to mobilize workers in Germany and throughout Europe for a common struggle and the preparation of a Europe-wide general strike.

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Florian Hasek

Here in Stuttgart, thousands of school students and young workers have gathered to protest against the destruction of education and the policies of war. These are not separate developments. They arise from the same capitalist crisis and the interests of the same financial oligarchy.

While schools are deteriorating and families can barely afford their rent, hundreds of billions of euros are being mobilized in Germany for the largest military buildup since the Second World War. The Bundeswehr is to be massively expanded and prepared for a direct war against Russia. The reintroduction of conscription is a central component of these war preparations.

The German government is already driving forward the international escalation of war. Germany is Kyiv's largest European supporter and is fuelling the war against Russia with ever more weapons deliveries. At the same time, the German government is providing political and military support to Israel in its horrific genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza.

More than eight decades after Germany's war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and the Holocaust, the German ruling class is thus demonstrating that it is once again prepared to commit the worst crimes to enforce its imperialist interests.

That is why the movement must oppose the madness of war. The war preparations against Russia, the genocide in Gaza and the military buildup are expressions of the same crisis as the social attacks. Anyone fighting against social cuts must also fight against war—and vice versa. Both can only be defeated together, through the international mobilization of the working class against capitalism.

Joshua Seubert

Here on Kornmarkt in Nuremberg, hundreds of people have gathered to fight for their legitimate interests. But the repression by the state is enormous. Even before our protests began, politicians from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) warned of allegedly impending outbreaks of violence. The police and domestic intelligence service prepared extensive operations. The Young Union in Berlin-Mitte even demanded that the Bundeswehr be called upon to provide "administrative assistance" and that the protests be prevented.

In France, we can see what governments are prepared to do. Macron has responded to the protests with brutal police violence. More than 10,000 people have been arrested and numerous young people seriously injured. Police weapons have torn off young people's hands and destroyed their eyes. And yet the movement continues to grow.

This repression follows a clear logic. It shows that the rulers are not prepared to make concessions. They resort to violence because they want to impose the demands of the financial markets and the enormous costs of rearmament against our resistance.

This is also demonstrated by the fact that all capitalist parties support the war policies and austerity measures. Although the Left Party declares its solidarity with the protests, it is itself responsible for severe social cuts and voted in favor of the trillion-euro war credits in the Bundesrat. It only wants to lead our movement into a dead end!

We face the same question that Rosa Luxemburg posed more than a century ago: Socialism or barbarism. Capitalism has nothing left to offer but war, fascism and misery. Everywhere, the ruling classes are preparing to suppress growing opposition through authoritarian and dictatorial measures.

But the alternative is real. The same crisis that drives the ruling classes toward rearmament, war and dictatorship is bringing millions of workers and young people into struggle. The decisive question is whether this resistance will be united with a conscious socialist program.

We call on all young people who want to fight against war, social inequality and oppression to study the program of the IYSSE and the Socialist Equality Party and take up the struggle for international socialism.

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