IYSSE speeches at the GenZ protests: “Socialism or Barbarism”

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The following speech was delivered by IYSSE representatives Florian Hasek in Stuttgart and Clemens Huber in Erfurt at protests organized by Gen Z against the madness of war and social misery. Both spoke from the main stage.

We are standing here today because we have had enough. We are fed up with our schools falling apart while hundreds of billions of euros are poured into rearmament and war. We are fed up with rents and food prices skyrocketing while the Merz-Klingbeil government protects the rich. And we are fed up with attempts to turn us into cannon fodder through the reintroduction of conscription, preparing us for a war against Russia that the NATO powers themselves are provoking.

The fact that we are taking to the streets in more than 20 cities today sends a powerful signal. And the government’s reaction shows how seriously it takes us: It is mobilizing the domestic intelligence service, the police and the media to smear us as violent and extremist. The Young Union even called on the Bundeswehr to provide “administrative assistance” against us. In France, the police have already arrested more than 10,000 young people, torn off the hand of a 15-year-old and blinded other young people.

This repression follows a clear logic. It shows that the ruling elites 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 cannot win this struggle on our 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 must turn to the working class. The demands we are raising today—decent schools, affordable housing, secure jobs, higher wages and an end to conscription—are not demands of young people alone. They are demands and vital concerns of the entire working class. They stand in direct opposition to the interests of the banks, corporations and financial oligarchy.

In Ukraine, the Western governments are providing billions to a government that erects monuments to fascists and imprisons socialist opponents of war such as 27-year-old Bogdan Syrotiuk because he opposes the war, NATO and the oligarchs of both countries!

And in Gaza, 80 years after the Holocaust, the German government is once again supporting genocide

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as a means of achieving its objectives. Against growing nationalism and the drive to war, our struggle must be international!

Look around you: In France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Albania and Serbia, young people and workers are taking to the streets everywhere. Everywhere, we are being made to pay for the same crisis, the same rearmament and the same war.

That is why we need a conscious, international political movement of the working class and youth. Not a movement that allows the Left Party and pseudo-left groups to turn our protests into appeals to the very government we are protesting against. The Left Party is currently negotiating participation in a Berlin government—with a spending cap on social services and additional billions for the police who beat demonstrators. It is not an ally; it is part of the problem.

Instead, we need democratically organized rank-and-file action committees—in schools, universities, workplaces and neighborhoods. Committees that we elect and control ourselves, independently of all capitalist parties and trade union apparatuses. And these committees must unite across national borders—in the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. Our goal must be a Europe-wide general strike against war, dictatorship and social devastation.

Build this movement! Join the IYSSE! Socialism or capitalist barbarism!

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