From youth protests to class struggle! Prepare a European general strike!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Germany)
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A mass movement is developing across Europe on a scale not seen since 1968. In France, 1.6 million people took to the streets last week in a one-day general strike. On Wednesday, 11 million people went on strike in Spain. Protests and strikes are shaking governments in Greece, Italy, Portugal, Albania and Serbia.

The protests in Germany are part of this development. ***On October 31, more than 120,000 young people demonstrated here too, in over 30 cities.*** Everywhere the same demands are being raised: Stop the attacks on education and social services! No to war and militarism! Millions of people are being politicised and are entering into struggle for the first time.

If we want to prevent our movement from running into the sand or being strangled, we must clarify what perspective is needed to stop the militarisation of society and the social catastrophe. So join our WhatsApp group to discuss the following orientation:

1. Our protests must be independent and anti-capitalist!

Governments throughout Europe, of whichever party, are responding to the youth revolt with brutal repression and making clear that they are not prepared to make any concessions. This is not simply malice. It is an expression of the deep crisis of capitalism, which has nothing left to offer us but misery and war. Rents are rising, wages are falling and conscription is being reintroduced. That is why our movement must be independent of all capitalist parties and be directed against the root of the problems—capitalism.

2. Our movement must be international!

It is no accident that the protests have developed internationally from the outset. Everywhere we confront the same problems and are exploited by the same global corporations. Out of this simultaneous wave of protests, a genuinely international movement must emerge, one that discusses, decides and acts together. We must oppose growing nationalism and the drive to war with conscious international unity.

3. We must orient ourselves to the working class!

We cannot defeat the war policy and the power of the banks and corporations on our own. The only social force that can really overcome capitalism is the working class—the factory workers, nurses, teachers and millions of others who keep society running every day and who are meant to bear the full burden of war and crisis. This force is beginning to move and to intervene. What is decisive is to free it from the paralysing influence of the capitalist parties and trade unions and to arm it with a socialist perspective.

To put this orientation into practice, we call for the building of rank-and-file action committees, democratically elected in workplaces, schools, universities and neighbourhoods and acting independently of the trade union bureaucracy. They

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must unite internationally and prepare a European general strike that poses the question of power: in whose interests is society organised? In the interests of the super-rich oligarchs, who once again want to send us to be slaughtered as cannon fodder on the world's battlefields, or in the interests of the great majority?

We therefore call on school and university students to go with us to the factory gates and fight for this perspective among workers. Action committees have already been formed in the auto industry, in education and in local public transport.

But the self-proclaimed organisers of the Gen Z protests, who run the website genz-regelt.de ("Gen Z sorts things out") or widely followed Instagram accounts, are hostile to such a perspective. Although they are in part at odds with one another, they are organising no debate on the central tasks of our movement. Instead, they want to orient the protests towards making a few pleas to the government or subordinate them to particular capitalist parties.

We must not allow this. That is why we set up our WhatsApp group to discuss these political questions. It would be absurd to believe our movement could succeed by begging the government for a few improvements. We are not simply confronted with a handful of bad decisions but with the bankruptcy of an entire social system.

This is shown most clearly on the question of war. The government supports the methods of genocide in Gaza. It is rearming on a scale not seen since Hitler, and it declares in all seriousness that it wants to be capable within three years of militarily defeating Russia, a nuclear power. It will not be diverted from its course by a few demonstrations. The government is already relentlessly escalating the war against Russia in Ukraine in order to assert its own geostrategic interests in Eastern Europe. We are supposed to pay for this through cuts in education and wages, and ultimately with our lives.

This course is supported by all the capitalist parties. Die Linke (Left Party) feigns solidarity with the protests, but in the Berlin state legislature it is currently preparing to join a coalition that intends to build up the apparatus of repression, attack democratic rights and impose cuts in social services. In the Bundesrat, the upper house of parliament representing the federal states, the party also voted for the massive rearmament programme that is now being used to justify cuts at federal, state and municipal level. The Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and Die Linke support the war policy because they defend capitalism.

As in the 20th century, it is the capitalist crisis that is once again leading to barbarism, fascism and war. In 1914 and 1939 too, the only way to stop the madness of war was the independent mobilisation of the international working class. During the First World War, Rosa Luxemburg summed it up as "Socialism or barbarism."

If the ruling class is reviving its militarist and inhuman traditions, then we must take up the socialist traditions of the working class. We are not begging the government for alms; we are organising a rebellion. Not as a young generation but as a class. The youth protests must be developed into a movement of class struggle. The confrontation now developing—between the government, state and corporations on the one side and masses of young people and workers on the other—must be transformed into a conscious struggle over the question of whose interest society is organised to serve.

The resources squandered on rearmament and the enrichment of the financial oligarchy must be placed under democratic control and used to meet social needs. This requires the expropriation of the big banks and corporations—that is, socialism. This is the perspective we fight for in the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organisation of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) and of the Fourth International, which was founded by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition to defend socialist principles against social democracy and Stalinism.

We want to discuss these decisive questions for our movement with everyone who is interested. Join our WhatsApp group—And come to our meeting at Humboldt University in Berlin on November 23!

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