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German Fridays for Future protesters discuss overthrowing capitalism

Tens of thousands of young people once again took to the streets across Germany on Friday to protest against climate change. Demonstrations took place in a total of 200 cities, including Hamburg, Freiburg, Leipzig, Munich and Cologne. In Berlin alone, more than 10,000 students and pupils demonstrated their opposition to the government and capitalism.

The organisers of the protests sought to limit the protests to climate change, but it quickly became clear that many young people were also motivated to participate by a number of other reasons. Members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) distributed a statement that linked the issue of environmental decay to the threat of war and stated that only the overthrow of capitalism could prevent a catastrophe. The leaflet also called for a vote for the Socialist Equality Party on Sunday in the European elections. The statement met with a very positive response.

In front of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate IYSSE members spoke with striking students about a socialist perspective against climate change, war and capitalism.

Veronika, a student in Berlin, told us why she joined the school strike: "I'm on strike because I want to live in a world that provides opportunities. Why should I go to school or college when we adolescents have no future anyway, if things do not change?"

Simone also studies in Berlin and participated in the Fridays For Future demonstrations. She explained: "Especially in the context of the European elections, it is important to set

an example for climate protection. People fleeing war and climate change should not be allowed to drown at sea. They have to be taken in and a solution found that benefits all.”

She continued: “Of course I am for world peace. We have to fight for a globally united society and overcome the nation-state system. But in war, it’s all about money in the final analysis. Taking care of the environment is also simply unattractive from the standpoint of this economic system! As for the future, I am confident. We are facing big challenges, that’s right, but much can change for the better in the next period. Movements and demonstrations like these give me hope and courage: pupils, students, older people—everybody coming together for a better society.”

Ole, who has a job at a university, regarded the struggle by youth against climate change as part of a broader political picture: “I believe that the capitalist system is incapable of protecting the climate. If things continue as they are, then instead of thousands of war and climate change casualties dying in the Mediterranean, we may have 10,000 deaths per month.”

Johannes, bearing his own self-made poster, is studying energy and process engineering at the Technical University in Berlin. He forcefully denounced the current situation: “I am here today because I regard the whole ruling policy to be completely wrong. The government seems unwilling to even reach the ridiculous climate targets it set for itself in Paris.”

He continued, “I am a technician, not an economist. But I think the system has been complete mismanaged. The necessary technology to solve the environmental crisis has long existed but it is not used because the government does not represent the interests of the majority of the population.”

He then reported: “Some time ago, I saw a documentary film showing that Exxon’s own climate scientists were aware of the consequences of expected climate change back in the 1980s, but the management just said: ‘Well, after all, profits for the next 30 years are secured.’ The result of such decisions is that we now face a global catastrophe and possibly a new ice age. It is really menacing. Big business policies are made at the expense of humanity as a whole. Meanwhile, of course, it is always said there is no money for the climate—but apparently enough for the military.”

When asked about the US war threats against Iran and Venezuela, Johannes said, “The drive towards war is terrifying. A war against Iran must not happen! It’s all about the exploitation of the country’s resources anyway. Wikileaks and Julian Assange uncovered

such things. The fact that they want to hand him over to the US now is criminal. They have nothing on him, of course not.”

Johannes expressed considerable interest in the international socialist perspective of the IYSSE: “I understand very well why you say capitalism must be overthrown. I recently saw your Assange posters in Berlin.”

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