



Fridays for Future: System change - not climate change!

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Worldwide, hundreds of thousands of students are striking and demonstrating, Friday after Friday, against the threatening, catastrophic consequences of climate change. On March 15 alone, the biggest international day of action to date, over a million young people in more than 100 countries took part. In Germany, around 300,000 young people had better things to do than go to school. In numerous European capitals, tens of thousands were on their feet: 50,000 in Paris, 30,000 in Brussels, 25,000 in Berlin.

The dynamism and strengths of the movement, its incredible potential, are obvious. First, it addresses a real human problem, one of the major survival issues of the 21st century. Secondly, the movement acts internationally, it is a cross-border force.

Origin

"Fridays for Future" was created around activist Greta Thunberg, who has spoken out very effectively against climate change in the media and regularly calls on politicians to take decisive action. Her initiative met with a worldwide response on a scale that was certainly surprising for many. It has been growing steadily for months reaching a highpoint on March 15. Further national and international action days are planned, the next on 26 April. Longer term, a worldwide general strike (Earth Strike) against climate change is under discussion for September 27.

In Germany, the movement is already bigger than the education strike movement a few years ago, which mobilised 200,000 to 300,000 pupils and students at its peak.

The big protests are characterised by both a heightened interest and a will to change the world, in the knowledge that it could soon be too late. It thus offers unbelievable potential, above all because the leading bourgeois politicians are in a dilemma. On the one hand, the fears of the Fridays for Future movement are well-founded. Only fanatical and fantasising right wingers like Trump or the Alternative for Germany, AfD, can dismiss them as "climate swindles" or scaremongering, and when they do they simply underline what a threat they themselves pose to humanity's future.

The mainstream of bourgeois politics, on the other hand, has recognised that the movement is broadly based, so that it cannot simply be defamed. The Chancellor, Angela Merkel, or the Environment Minister, Svenja Schulze, try to play a double game. On the one hand they see themselves forced to refer positively to the movement, on the other hand, however, they want to ensure that it does not force any changes. After all, climate protection should not endanger the sacred profits of the German energy and car industries. For them, the costs of the climate catastrophe and any offsetting measures should be paid not by the corporations but by the masses of the population. In bourgeois "environmental policy", the main burden should be shouldered by the workers and peasants and the countries of the so-called "Third World", not by the imperialist powers that are the main causes of the environmental problems.

A matter for professionals?

So, politicians like Angela Merkel or Wolfgang Lindner are torn in two directions. They solve the problem as follows: While they speak out in favour of the movement's aims, they criticise the absence from school and try to delegitimise the protest by diverting attention to secondary matters. Thus, according to Lindner, the Chair of the Free Democratic Party, FDP: "But one cannot expect children and young people to already see all the global connections, the technically meaningful and the economically feasible, that is a matter for professionals".

A thing for professionals, then, Mr Lindner? And what have these "professionals" achieved in terms of climate protection over the last 50 years? Nothing! These professionals are either unable or unwilling to change anything and we have no more time to wait for VW to realise that no one will be buying cars on a destroyed planet. We could give three-year-olds responsibility for solving the problem and they would not do any worse than the experts and professionals of Mr. Lindner!

Every revolutionary has to defend Fridays for Future against such patronising and belittling statements!

The media hype about "school truancy" actually makes it very clear that the school strike was the right decision. What are a few hours out of school as compared to the threatened flooding and devastation of a large part of the earth's surface? Even a Lindner should be able to understand that. Or is it in the end not about that at all, but about the question of economic interests? Let us look at his statement again. What exactly is this "economic feasibility" he wants? It would be economically feasible, for example, to tax the rich, industry, wholesalers and financial capital, that is, the main perpetrators of the imminent climate catastrophe, in order to finance the expansion of local public transport and long-distance rail transport and to make their use free of charge.

Massive taxation of the big corporations and the owners of huge capital assets would make billions and billions available. Such measures, which are directed against capital, are of course regarded by Mr Lindner, a diligent lobbyist on behalf of the better off, as "economically not feasible". He is no smarter than the students who take to the streets every Friday. Rather, he and the entire bourgeois elite represent quite different interests, the interests of all those who benefit from an economic system that destroys people's natural livelihoods and allows man-made climate change to progress at a frightening pace.

The Coal Commission and corporate interests

Even just a brief look at the so-called Coal Commission makes it clear that, for the German government, the interests of big business are more important than the question of the environment. Its terms of reference alone make it clear which way the wind is blowing. The following criteria are applied here, side by side: "Environmental compatibility, security of supply, economic efficiency (affordability, competitiveness, energy infrastructure, planning and legal certainty)".

But here's the thing: Of course, the general population has a fundamental interest in security of supply, energy infrastructure and a certain degree of planning and legal certainty. De facto, however, these are all paraphrases for the question of profitability from the point of view of corporations. The electricity supply of the population would not be endangered if the electricity consumption of the corporations were made more expensive, if subsidies were abolished, especially not by a planned and targeted phase-out of environmentally harmful energy production (coal, nuclear power). On the contrary, it is competitiveness, increasing competition within a market economy and the struggle for profits that lead to greater insecurity of supply and, at the same time, to greater environmental incompatibility.

In concrete terms, the Coal Commission agreed to "stretch" the phasing-out of lignite-fired power stations over two decades, generously compensating the energy companies, and it had the approval not only of all government parties, but also of the Greens, the FDP and nature conservation organisations such as the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union and BUND, the German Friends of the Earth!

What is needed?

All these examples make clear that the environmental question raises the question of the organisation of the economy. Nobody can deny that the rescue of the environment must take place internationally, no national economic policy, however green, could be successful. It also raises the question of what interests and concerns need to be taken into account. For the German government, these are obviously the profits of large corporations.

This shows above all one thing: even if many on "the left" have said goodbye to class politics, the government has not! And a movement, which wants to stop the climate catastrophe, must base itself therefore on class politics. Those responsible will not respond to appeals, requests or the like. Climate protection must be fought for - or it will not

happen!

For this, Fridays for Future and other environmental movements need to make a common cause with the trade unions. In order to break the power of the corporations and to enforce a rational policy oriented to the interests of the masses of the population, not only demonstrations and temporary strikes at schools and universities are needed. We need political mass strikes to enforce the uncompensated expropriation of energy corporations, big industry, transport and other central parts of the economy under workers' control. Only in this way can a sustainable plan to reorganise production in the interests of humanity and the environment be implemented.

At the same time, effective climate protection can only take place if alternatives are created. An expanded public transport system, free of charge, the relocation of production according to the principle of shortening transport routes, the disclosure of trade secrets and patents are necessary measures to guarantee this. Capitalism, with its patents and the competition for technology, market share and profits, is an obstacle, especially in the question of environmentally friendly production, which prevents worldwide production from taking place under the best technical and most environmentally friendly conditions.

There is no doubt that reforms, first steps and immediate measures must be fought for under capitalism, but a final solution can only be found in a democratically organised world economy.

What does Fridays for Future demand?

When it comes to the question of capitalism, the root cause of environmental problems, the weaknesses of Fridays for Future, which we want and need to overcome, become apparent.

At the moment, we see little recognition of this in the movement. Many of the actions and demonstrations are limited to appeals to "the politicians", parliaments, governments and international institutions like EU, UNO. From a political point of view, this corresponds to the policy of the Greens!

The decisions in Fridays for Future are mainly made by members of the Greens, BUND, NaBu, Greenpeace or other NGOs. An alliance with the trade unions, or even a reference to the working class, is not what these forces are striving for and the leadership of Fridays for Future tries to keep control over the movement by banning leaflets and giving preferential treatment to NGO members at local group meetings.

Many activists are very unhappy with this undemocratic and exclusionary policy. So that this does not fizzle out, we stand for democratic structures for all supporters of Fridays for Future, for an open political discussion about the strategy and future of the movement.

At present, the movement is led by left of centre bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces. But it doesn't have to be like this. In recent years, the Greens have repeatedly proven that their environmental policy should be above all capital-friendly. Today, they see the movement as a means of winning as many votes as possible in the EU elections and present themselves as supporters of the movement. But it was only yesterday that they agreed to the coal compromise. After the end of the Grand Coalition in the federal government, they may form the next government with CDU/CSU. Such forces must not be allowed to decide who can carry which flags on the demonstrations or what political direction the movement should take.

The Greens and NGOs gave up any interest in a fight against capitalism long ago. Their policy is ultimately contrary to the interests of millions of active young people. Therefore, we call for a class struggle, anti-capitalist perspective and carry that into the movement. All forces that want this should join together to democratise Fridays for Future, to build basic structures in schools and to actively seek alliances with the trade unions. In countries like Belgium and France, trade unions have called for strikes, we need that in Germany too! If we really want to stop climate change, we must not only fight its effects, we must tackle its cause - and that is called capitalism!

Demands

System change instead of climate change!

- * Expropriation without compensation and nationalisation of the energy companies and their networks under workers' control!
 - * Organised phasing out of electricity generation by means of traditional nuclear fission and fossil fuels! Continued employment of power plant workers at equal wages and conditions!
 - * Uniform tariff for all employees in this sector (coal, nuclear, wind energy, etc.)!
 - * Workers' control over operations, planning and research with the involvement of experts who enjoy the confidence of the class!
 - * Disclosure of trade secrets, not only economic, but also technical (patents...) and thus elimination of competition!
 - * Away with the recipes of "green" capitalism and the EEG patchwork (certificates, eco-tax, EEG levy, electricity tax)! Finance the phase-out of coal through progressive taxes on income, assets and profits instead of indirect mass taxes such as VAT!
 - * Energy turnaround means: an integrated plan that also includes transport, agriculture and industry, not just the electricity sector!
 - * For a research programme paid from company profits to solve the renewable energy storage problem!
 - * For a rational transport plan! Expansion of public transport instead of the dead end of electric cars! Preferential transport by rail for goods and people!
 - * Worldwide plan for the repair of environmental damage and equalisation of living conditions!
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