

Solidarity with Serbian students protests

REVOLUTION delegation to Serbia, April 2025

Students in Serbia have been protesting for months. Universities are occupied, streets are blocked and the population is showing enormous solidarity. We went to see this by ourselves.

What is going on in Serbia?

The trigger for the current protests was the collapse of a train station canopy in Novi Sad on November 1, 2024, killing 15 people. This is part of a Chinese-led modernization project for Serbia's rail infrastructure. Since the documents for this are classified as sensitive, the movement accuses the government of corruption. Such and similar corruption is omnipresent in Serbian politics. Whether in elections, foreign investment or construction projects.

But why is that?

The government and its relatively directly subordinate authorities have no interest in the well-being of the population, but want to stuff money into their own pockets. This is not personal misbehaviour, but a logical result of Serbia's semi-colonial position in the capitalist world system. Since Serbian capitalists cannot compete with powers like Germany or China on their own, the Serbian economy is de facto dominated by them. Those in power themselves vie with each other to see how they can best divide the share that the imperialist corporations give to them.

Thus, Serbia's role as a semi-colony means that the Serbian government has to maneuver between the interests of the EU, China and Russia, and has to make concessions to each side. As a result, China enforces Chinese rather than Serbian law in its mines in Serbia, and the EU is buying lithium in Serbia's Jadar Valley to become less dependent on other world powers in the

future. The resulting corrupt system means that the lives of the people, who are exploited twice, by imperialist capital and by the corrupt Serbian bourgeoisie and their administrators, are confronted with numerous problems.

The health system is ailing, and corruption also reigns there. You can only get a doctor's appointment if you can pay money on the side. There are no pharmacies in rural areas, and due to the lack of adequate standards in the training of pharmacists, it is a matter of luck whether you get the right medication or not. The construction sector is just as corrupt, which is what led to the train crash in Novi Sad. Living costs are constantly rising, the education system is massively underfunded and, in schools, it primarily serves to propagate a Serbian nationalist ideology. Dissatisfaction is correspondingly high, especially among young people. **The movement certainly has its work cut out.**

And they are tackling it: almost every university in the big cities is occupied, and every day there are plenary sessions in which students discuss actions and much more. There is strong support among the population: older people are also collecting donations for the universities. There are road blockades and even marches and bicycle tours from city to city, taking the protests to the countryside. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in a large demonstration in Belgrade on March 15! The government tried to appease the movement by resigning Prime Minister Vučević and making other concessions. But the movement insists on its demands and wants to build even more pressure! They are currently beginning to network with various trade unions for a general strike. The movement is a threat to the government and potentially to the entire Serbian system. That is why there have been arrests and attacks on the protests by members of the government from the SNS party and other right-wingers.

The movement is one of the largest in Europe's recent history and has been paralyzing the country for months. To avoid ending in failure, the movement must increase its pressure, as with the general strike, and build countervailing power structures. There are already attempts at this, with students organizing their own improvised television channel.

The movement is very radical in its practice, and this must be reflected in its demands! Their demands for the investigation of the station canopy collapse in Novi Sad are not enough to end corruption. They must expose the economic origin of corruption and fight nationalism in their own ranks. So far, Serbian nationalist bourgeois forces have taken up a lot of space, and left-wing forces are very weakly represented, partly due to the limited freedom of organization. They must network with workers, because only they can bring the government to its knees economically. Furthermore, the bourgeois opposition and the capital interests of China and the EU must be exposed! A system without corruption and without exploitation can only be achieved through the power of workers, youth and their organized structures!

How can we support the movement here?

We have to expose the interests of the EU, German and Austrian capital in Serbia: Austria, for example, benefits from Serbian migrants, who can be exploited to the full because the standard of living in Serbia is significantly lower and they still earn more with poor wages in Austria than with mediocre wages in Serbia. Erste Bank and Co. as well as, to an even greater extent, the capital of the imperialist great power Germany are making profits in Serbia. We have to attack that! **The main enemy is in our own countries!**

And we can also learn from the students in Serbia for our struggles in Austria and Germany! They confirm the strength of what we at REVOLUTION have been politically proposing for a long time, but which is hardly present in the left: that it is politically correct and necessary to organize where you are anyway, where your own place in the system is, and to start the fight there. That's exactly what the Serbian students are doing, occupying their faculties and making demands according to their respective professions. On this basis, they organize the protests and the students of all faculties are in solidarity with each other. A movement with a similar structure, fighting at school, university and workplace, making its demands for school, university and workplace and winning the masses locally on this basis, can also get hundreds of thousands onto the streets of Vienna and Berlin, thereby putting

Stocker and Merz under great pressure!

We therefore demand:

- Imperialist powers: Get out of Serbia!
- Down with Vucic! For a transitional government made up of student and worker structures and a constituent assembly!
- Long live international solidarity! The struggle of Serbian students is our struggle too! Let's take it to our universities, schools, colleges and workplaces too!