

Mayday in Vienna/Austria: a successful internationalist demonstration

Mon, 02/05/2005 - 22:00

Mayday 2005 was different from the last years. To be precise it was very different. Usually the huge social democratic rally is followed by a left-wing demonstration controlled by the Communist Party. The CP apparatus controls the speakers' list and the whole profile of the demonstration. In the last few years this demonstration has declined to a few hundreds. Traditionally it was followed by separate march by the Turkish left.

However the Austrian CP has been moving to the right and, as a consequence rapidly declining in its size. It now has people within its leadership who actually support the occupation of Iraq. It has, as a result purged its ranks of a number of oppositional elements.

In spring ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt (ASt, the Austrian section of the LFI) and the Communist Initiative (KI, a group of former CP oppositionists) took the initiative to launch a broad united front for the Mayday demonstration. Our goal was to organise a militant demonstration organised on a democratic basis. This included the right of the various organisations to speak at the demonstration. Another important aim was to unite the Austrian and Turkish demonstrations, promoting a true internationalist spirit.

We invited the CP to participate. They didn't even feel it necessary to reply. Nevertheless a number of organisations responded positively: among them sectors in the CP milieu, groups from the social democratic youth and the Anti-imperialist Committee. In addition the Turkish organisations actually agreed to the fusion of the demonstrations.

Characteristically the centrists (CWI (Taafites), CMI (Grantites), IST (Cliffites) etc.) fearing a battle with the CP-apparatus decided to remain at the sideline. Two weeks before the demonstration the ASt and the KI issued an open letter to the CP asking them again for negotiations for a common demonstration. Again the CP - puffed up with the arrogance learned in former days, grossly overestimating its own strength behaviour - resolutely ignored the appeal..

In the days immediately preceding May Day the CP-leadership lost its nerve and published three declarations slandering the organisers of our demonstration. They claimed that we had manipulated the list of signatures, that some of our supporters are already deserting us etc. A leader of the CP even wrote a letter denouncing us as 'fascists' because we support the military resistance in Iraq and Palestine against the occupation! Plainly no lie was too idiotic for these scared apparatchiks

But it didn't help them. Mayday was pay back day. Everyone on the street could see on whose side the various organisations and activists were. Our demonstration had more than 1.500 participants and the 'Ringstrasse' (the wide main boulevard in the centre of Vienna) was full of red flags, banners with anti-imperialist and revolutionary slogans militant and militant chants. Thousands of participants from the social democratic march - which was already over at that time - stood at the sidelines and greeted our march.

Not a single organisation disaffiliated from our demonstration but the most important ally of the CP - the Turkish DIDF - when it saw the size and militancy of our march - deserted the CP one and joined ours. As a result the CP apparatus led a small demonstration of 2-300 people, many of them old pensioners. Moreover after the demonstration a number of these older came to us and congratulated us for our work.

The common contingent of the Austrian LFI section and the youth organisation REVOLUTION was one of the most liveliest and youthful one. Speakers from REVOLUTION - Rebecca Sternberg and Patrick Berger (both 15-years old school students) - stressed the necessity of a revolutionary road to overthrow capitalism: ?

"We are convinced that the road of international solidarity, the road of revolution is the only one which can lead us to a socialist society.?"

The speaker of the Austrian LFI section, Roman Birke, explained in his speech the need for a long-term strategy:

"Our struggle must not be limited to Mayday. It must become a permanent struggle. It is our task the link the struggles of today with the perspective of socialist revolution - the overthrow of capitalism. So we will organise together with other groups an antifascist mobilisation against a right-wing rally on 8th May. So we organise together with other groups a school student strike on 20th May against cuts in education. This is why we see our task in building a revolutionary party worldwide. And this is why I am and we are part of the League of the 5th International!"

Mayday 2005 was a real success for us. It showed that revolutionaries can successfully utilise the united front tactic to mobilise real militant forces in struggle, attracting youth in substantial numbers. It show that there is no need to fear the once powerful CP apparatus, let alone capitulate to its bureaucratic control. Putting the reformists to the test of action, exposing their grossly undemocratic practices, refusing to be silent about their right-wing pro-imperialist policies, that is the only road to build a revolutionary party And, however modest, Mayday showed that the LFI and Revolution are making steps forward in this task.

(The speeches of REVO and ASt members - in German - and a number of photos can be viewed on our website homepage:

<http://www.arbeiterInnenstandpunkt.net> ^[1]

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