

# School strike in Vienna: a strong signal against education cuts

REVOLUTION/Austria Tue, 17/12/2013 - 15:13

REVOLUTION/Austria

We were there, we were loud and we were many: on December 12, a school strike in Vienna brought at least 5000 school students onto the streets. Under its central slogan "money for education not for banks!" the demonstration loudly attacked not only the weaknesses and failures of the Zentralmatura (that is the proposed new centralised and standardised school leaving exam and qualification for university - Ed) but also the new contract for teachers and the many inadequacies of the education system and, indeed, the capitalism that stands behind them. However, even though the strike was bigger and more militant than anyone had expected and was even able to force representatives of the Education Ministry into a dialogue, it poses more urgently than ever the question, how is the struggle to go forward so that we can achieve our goals?

The first demonstrations of the day were already underway by 8 o'clock, some 300 students together with activists from the socialist youth group Revolution marched from Hegelgasse to Parliament where they were joined by marches from other schools taking part in the action. The size of the crowd, the loud and coordinated chanting of the demands organised by the students themselves made it clear that this is a movement that will not let itself be nipped in the bud. As an activist from REVOLUTION made clear in a speech in front of the Chancellor's office, "neither the empty promises of the federal school students representatives nor the threats of the Institute for Education and Development can stop us from striking!"

After a short, noisy and politically militant march, the demonstration came to an end at the Ballhaus Platz where it met with provocation from the police. Because some activists had thrown eggs at the Chancellor's office, in which at the time the negotiations for a new coalition government were taking place, the police "had" to force their way through with shields and helmets and general aggression to position themselves before the main doors to the building. It quickly became clear that the students were not going to let them through so easily and plastic bottles and fruit began flying in the direction of the police. They then retaliated by breaking up the demonstration with dogs and special forces from the Vienna Alarm Commando Unit, seizing people at random and threatening the demonstrators with charges. REVOLUTION condemns this obvious attempt to criminalise the protest and to divide our ranks and demands the dropping of all charges against the demonstrators! Throwing eggs at a building may not be the most effective form of protest but the anger and resistance of the school students against the police provocations were understandable.

Even the representatives of the Education Ministry could not quell the determination of the demonstrators and in the end they invited representatives of the different organisations, but no student representatives, to a discussion. This was a farce in which the representatives of the government had nothing to offer apart from a worthless compromise. Members of REVOLUTION and of the LSP (Austrian section CWI) demanded of all those taking part that any discussions should take place with elected representatives of the school students and be carried live on the Internet and nobody should agree to any proposal without it

first being voted on by the school students.

If the numerous demands are to be implemented through a transparent and democratically controlled negotiation, then two things are necessary.

First, all the students and activists who are not happy with the Zentralmatura should develop and formulate their demands in action committees. We need a common organisational structure based on elected and recallable delegates within which the organisations taking part can meet and decide on the demands. If an agreement is offered, there should be a ballot in the schools to decide whether to accept it. Only in this way can we prevent the reversals and retreats that have been made in the past by the those elected to the BSV, the national school students' representatives.

Secondly, however, we must keep up the pressure and link up the struggles. The awful Zentralmatura, the worsening of conditions with the new teachers' contracts, all the shortcomings in our education, from lack of participation in decision-making, the question of dilapidated school buildings and social selection within schools, are all problems against which we must fight and we can do that together. On Monday at 6 PM we should demonstrate together with the teachers for better education and against the new contract. With a strong, noisy school student block in solidarity with the teachers and trainee teachers we can draw in their support for our demands.

Teachers ? Students ? Solidarity!

---

**Source URL:** <https://fifthinternational.org/content/school-strike-vienna-strong-signal-against-education-cuts>