“No nation can stop the pandemic alone, everyone has to work as a team”

SGP members campaign among Gorillas delivery and Amazon workers in Leipzig

SGP Leipzig
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As part of the German federal election campaign of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), members of the SGP and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Leipzig have been conducting interviews with workers and youth to discuss the situation of workers in delivery branches, the pandemic and the re-opening of schools as well as the ever-increasing social inequality and the need for an international movement of the working class.

The discussions have highlighted the growing anger and opposition regarding working conditions as well as rising concern about the spread of delta and the complete lack of security measures for the population.

At the Gorillas branches in Leipzig, many workers had heard of the Berlin strike and expressed support for their colleagues.

Franco said, “I am also from Argentina like Santiago [a sacked Gorillas worker]. There should have been another measure taken before firing him, I think it was very drastic. What happened is very bad. I agree with their [Berlin Gorillas] strike, I think it is for a good cause and I support them.”

Gorillas worker Carlos, his name changed for anonymity, spoke about the working conditions in Leipzig.

“The working conditions here are so bad. There are so many accidents. The roads are fine, but the alleys are stone-paved so the bike will often skid while driving and there’s nothing we can do about it. Their slogan is ‘ten minutes,‘ but what they do now, as they don’t have enough riders, they force you to take two or three orders at a time, which means the last person who gets the order gets it late, but they make more money that way.

“We carry heavy loads on our backs and we are constantly exposed to the elements, to traffic, we have to drive close to trams, as quick as possible. It wears you down psychologically. We don’t have any rain gear, many riders are drenched and ride with their shoes full of water. We don’t get any training. They just ask us if we can ride a bike and that’s it. They are really putting our lives at stake. Once I was riding down a street with someone behind me, he slipped because it was raining and hurt his knee, he was bleeding. When accidents happen, we are just told to ride carefully, not to hurry.

“Even though we work the most, we are payed very little,“ he continued. “What I liked about your flyer is that you did some research about the company and how much money they make. Their excuse for paying us minimum wage is that we get tips, but getting tips depends on the person, we can’t force anyone to give us tips. Even on their website they acknowledge how hard the work is, they don’t deny it, but we are not being treated accordingly. I really would like to ask the managers of this company to try doing what we do. What they expect from us is impossible.”

Asked about their opinion regarding the SGP’s perspective of rank-and-file committees independent of the unions to raise demands and organize strikes, he responded, “I think it is good. But many riders don’t have as many grievances because they know they will have to move on, as most of them are on a working visa

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and can't stay with one employer. Many people I know will leave within the next month. Also, it is very difficult to discuss among colleagues, as we are constantly being watched. If I gave you an interview in front of Gorillas, I might get fired."

Our reporters were indeed interrupted by a manager on one occasion, who intimidated the workers they were speaking to and warned them not to divulge any information.

At the Amazon plant in Leipzig, SGP campaigners spoke to workers about the Dana auto parts workers strike in the United States. When Paul heard about their struggle against their current unsafe and grueling working conditions, he said "I want to send my greetings to the workers and tell them I support their struggle. They shouldn't let themselves be exploited, they should fight, there's no question. Eighty-four hours a week? That's slavery, that's insanity!"

Asked about the unions in Germany and the recent Amazon strike in Bad Hersfeld, Paul commented: "The strategy of the unions makes no sense at all, why split up the strikes? No one [from the union] was able to explain that to us."

"No one wants to explain that to us," his colleague interjected.

Asked about the conditions during the pandemic, Paul explained that they only received a two Euros pay rise for three months, which was then abolished without explanation. The number of employees allowed to work together has also been increased again.

In the city center, SGP campaigners met Mahabur, an architect from Bangladesh and a former Amazon employee.

"I lost my job during the pandemic. I was working in historic preservation, but all the museums closed. I'm still looking for a job and thinking about other options to survive. I know that this winter, the pandemic will get worse again."

Asked about the re-opening of schools and public life as a whole and the role of the governments worldwide in stopping the pandemic, Mahabur said, "No nation can stop the pandemic alone, everyone has to work as a team. I also agree with the fact that the corporations profited a lot from this pandemic. The formula for the vaccine should not be profitable, it should be accessible to all.

"The pandemic is still going on, the risk has not diminished. When I was working at Amazon and other warehouses last year, there were not enough security measures, not enough disinfection. They canceled our [COVID] bonus after three months and many who started working a bit later were not even eligible. I am worried because Delta is becoming the dominant strain."

Our reporter insisted that only the working class, which is the biggest social force and which has the most interest in stopping the pandemic, can impose the measures to actually eradicate the virus. That is the combination of a global, thorough lockdown with full compensation for workers, contact- tracing and a rigorous vaccination program combined with an educational campaign. This is only possible through the mobilization of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program, which puts lives above capitalist profit interests.

To organize a fight to stop the pandemic and improve workers' living conditions, we support the formation of rank-and-file committees in schools, factories and all workplaces. These committees must be established by workers independently of the unions, politicians and government apparatus. Contact us here to form a rank-and-file committee or report on the working conditions at Amazon, Gorillas and other delivery services. In order to support the SGP's election campaign, fill out this form.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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