

The climate crisis requires a socialist response

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) and IYSSE
23 September 2021

On Friday, hundreds of thousands around the world are once again participating in the Global Climate Strike protest. In Germany alone, Fridays for Future has called for demonstrations in more than 400 cities. The largest will take place in front of the Bundestag (federal parliament) in Berlin.

Young people in particular have realized that the world is hurtling toward disaster. Devastating hurricanes; deadly floods in China, Germany, Turkey and the US; blistering heat and widespread forest fires in the Mediterranean, Siberia, North and South America have underscored the dramatic nature of the situation in recent months.

And that is just the beginning. Scientific studies warn that rising sea levels and changing climate patterns will make the Earth uninhabitable for hundreds of millions of people unless drastic countermeasures are taken now. In addition, global warming is taking on a life of its own and will be almost impossible to stop if the thawing of permafrost releases large quantities of environmentally harmful methane.

Immediate action is therefore imperative. But how can it be achieved?

The organizers of the Global Climate Strike demonstrations want to put pressure on politicians. They have deliberately timed the protest, which they have been preparing for weeks, for the Friday before Germany's federal election. "We are certain: when the Bundestag is elected this year, it will decide the future of all of us," the strike call states. "There must not be another election period marked by corruption, climate killers and failing politicians."

But does anyone seriously believe that the parties that govern in the federal and state governments will behave any differently after the election than they did before?

The measures they promise in their election programmes do not even achieve the completely inadequate climate targets they themselves have

decided on, as the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) has calculated. Yet everyone knows that election promises and government policy are two completely different things.

The Greens, who co-govern eleven German states, have repeatedly sacrificed environmental protection to corporate interests. Winfried Kretschmann, the first Green state premier, has become the darling of the auto industry. On their election posters, the Greens promise to reconcile the environment and the economy, climate protection and profit interests. But that is impossible.

The climate issue, like all major social issues—social inequality, the coronavirus pandemic, right-wing extremism, refugee policy and war—is a class issue. It requires an international, social response. Such an answer is not compatible with capitalism, which is based on profit maximization and competition between nation states.

The federal election—completely independent of its outcome—will not open a new phase of climate protection, but a new stage of class struggle.

Social inequality is greater than ever. In the pandemic year 2020, the global number of billionaires rose to more than 3,000, with their wealth amounting to \$10 trillion, 5.7 percent more than the previous year. On the other hand, 255 million full-time jobs were lost and workers suffered \$3.7 trillion in lost income.

Yet all the major parties are determined to recoup the vast sums they have thrown down the throats of the rich at the expense of working people. Not one proposes to touch the obscene wealth at the top of society.

Global arms spending is exploding. The US alone spent \$778 billion on the military last year, a sizeable portion of it on nuclear warhead modernization. After thirty years of bombing Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and other countries, it is now preparing for a great power conflict with nuclear power China.

Europe and Germany are also frenetically rearming,

with the Greens at the forefront of this. They support the rearmament of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), demand more war missions and agitate against Russia and China. Yet even a “limited” nuclear war—to the extent that such a conflict is even possible—would mean hundreds of Chernobyls and Fukushimaes in one day and irrevocably destroy the global environment—not to mention the millions of deaths.

Social inequality and militarism are meeting widespread resistance. In Germany, train drivers, Berlin hospital nurses, Gorillas delivery riders and many others have gone on strike in recent days against intolerable working conditions. Siemens workers have protested against lay-offs. The class struggle is also intensifying in the US and numerous other countries around the world.

Participants in the climate strike must see themselves as part of this global class movement. They must be oriented toward the international working class and not toward the capitalist governments and parties. The destruction of the planet cannot be stopped by appealing to the ruling class.

The working class, which comprises the vast majority of humanity, is the most powerful social force. It is an international class and stands in irreconcilable opposition to the corporations, banks and speculators that are plundering the globe and destroying the environment. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) fights to organize and unite the working class internationally, independent of the bourgeois parties and the corporatist unions.

We stand on the position that not a single social problem can be resolved without expropriating the banks and corporations and placing them under the democratic control of the working class. Confiscating their profits and assets and reorganizing the world economy on the basis of a scientific and rational plan will create the conditions for solving the climate crisis.

On the other hand, if capitalist property relations remain untouched, the ruling classes everywhere will destroy the basis of humanity's existence rather than renounce their profits. That they are willing and able to do so has been demonstrated in two world wars in the past century and currently in the coronavirus pandemic.

Although scientists warned early on that only a consistent, internationally coordinated lockdown, combined with other measures, could prevent millions

of coronavirus victims, the capitalist ruling elite placed their profits ahead of saving human lives. As a result, 230 million people have been infected worldwide, and nearly five million have died, with no end to the pandemic in sight. All the major parties in Germany—from the Left Party to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD)—have supported this inhumane policy. They are displaying the same ruthlessness in climate policy.

We call on all participants of the climate strike: Do not waste a vote on Sunday! Vote for a socialist programme and vote for the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP), the German section of the Fourth International.

Study our election programme and read the World Socialist Web Site, the daily online publication of the International Committee of the Fourth International, which appears in twenty languages.

Become a member of the SGP and its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact