

Berlin Transit Workers Action Committee: Against war and social devastation! Vote for the SGP!

Berlin Transit Workers Action Committee
10 February 2023

Brothers and Sisters,

We, the members of the rank-and-file Berlin Transit Workers Action Committee, call on you to vote for the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) in the Berlin state election next Sunday (February 12).

Our colleague Andy Niklaus has been working at Berlin's local transit operator BVG for over 30 years and is standing for the SGP in the election for the House of Representatives (state legislature). Andy not only knows our problems on the ground, but he has also repeatedly emphasized that the miserable working conditions, low wages for new-hires, and the health-threatening coronavirus allowed to spread freely in the workplace require a political struggle for an international socialist program.

We workers need our own party, one that unites our struggles internationally and links the growing resistance against layoffs, social cuts and horrendous price and rent increases with the struggle against war and military rearmament.

The SGP calls for turning the Berlin election into the beginning of a rebellion against the policies of war and social devastation. We support this.

In Europe and around the world, millions of workers are on strike against poor working conditions and lousy pay. They are demanding wage increases above the rate of inflation and the horrendous price increases.

In France, millions of workers, students, and school children are striking and protesting against pension cuts and growing poverty. The resistance is directly against the Macron government and its war policies.

In the UK, half a million teachers and transport workers participated in a nationwide strike last week.

Nurses have been striking on and off for weeks. They are joined by workers taking industrial action on the railroads, on the docks, and in post and in telecommunications. A general strike movement is building up against the government, which wants to enforce new anti-strike laws.

A mass strike movement is also building in Belgium and Finland.

Here too in Germany, dozens of warning strikes and protests are taking place against layoffs, plant closures and wage cuts. Hundreds of thousands of public-sector workers, DHL and mail delivery workers, sanitation workers, teachers, bus drivers and industrial workers are determined to fight for more than the meagre handouts demanded by the unions.

Many are calling for an all-out strike to end the massive cuts in real wages of the past few years and finally achieve greater wage security, better working conditions and job protection.

The "red-green-red" Senate (state executive) of the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party has turned Berlin into the capital of poverty through its antisocial policies, with an army of low-wage workers, unaffordable rents, growing housing shortages, broken-down hospitals and emergency services and a run-down education system.

Last but not least, the pandemic and the ruthlessly enforced policy of allowing the coronavirus to rip through the population, supported by the state government, has drastically worsened working and living conditions for all workers and their families. Resistance is growing in all parts of the city.

In January, refuse collection workers and airport employees went on strike; on Monday, postal workers

went on strike; on Wednesday, teachers, social workers and school psychologists took strike action. This will be followed by warning strikes by health workers at the Vivantes and Charité hospitals and their subsidiaries, by workers at water utilities, the Berlin University of Applied Sciences and the Berlin student accommodation body, and again by the city sanitation department (BSR).

But Verdi, IG Metall and all the other unions have formed a pact with the government, which they call “Concerted Action.” The unions support the government’s war policy and play a key role in saddling us workers with the costs of military rearmament.

That is why Verdi is limiting the number of strikers to a minimum, and keeping all warning strikes strictly separate and isolated to prevent a joint movement by all workers.

We, the approximately 15,000 employees of BVG and our colleagues from the S-Bahn (regional rail), who are facing the further dismantling of their company and the imminent loss of their jobs, are also being isolated by the union bureaucracy so that no joint struggle takes place. This suppression of any serious fight by the unions encourages the employers to make ever sharper attacks.

As a result, the profits of the corporate bosses, supervisory board members and the state are soaring. The rich get richer and richer. Never before has the social division of society been as great as it is today, as the latest Oxfam report made clear.

We in the Action Committee have begun to organize independently to break the straitjacket of the union bureaucracy. This is an important step in developing international cooperation and the discussion of a socialist programme. Only in this way can serious fighting measures be prepared.

In the US—where union corruption is even worse than here—socialist Will Lehman challenged the leadership of the United Auto Workers union and won many thousands of votes. Since then, the building of independent rank-and-file committees and the discussion of a socialist programme has been growing in many workplaces around the world.

With the increasingly threatening news about the Ukraine war and NATO flooding Ukraine with weapons, the danger of a nuclear confrontation is

mounting by the day.

Therefore, we support the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei and its demand to combine the election campaign with the building of a strong anti-war movement in workplaces, schools, universities and residential areas.

We call on all transit workers and others, everyone who can no longer listen to the lies and war propaganda of all the establishment parties—from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the Left Party—and everyone who is no longer willing to accept the costs of military rearmament in the form of gigantic price increases and drastic austerity measures, to vote for the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei this coming Sunday. Every vote for the SGP is a vote against war and social devastation!



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