

Berlin transport workers issue call for an unlimited strike!

Transport Workers Action Committee
23 March 2025

Brothers and sisters,

Berlin transport workers have recently been taking limited, token strike action in connection with the current wage negotiation. The Transport Workers Action Committee calls upon you to turn the token strikes into the start of a full-scale rebellion against the Verdi union's stalling tactics and carry out an unlimited strike. For the Verdi leadership the limited strike action is part of a pre-arranged plan that will end with a deal that has nothing to do with our original demands. A sell-out like that has to be prevented!

Our wages battle has taken on a new significance in recent weeks. In the face of rapid political changes, the wage struggle is developing into a power struggle.

Germany's governing parties—both the outgoing and incoming—have responded to Donald Trump's second term as US president and his drastic trade war measures with a gigantic military build-up. They have already approved war loans—euphemistically called "special funds"—amounting to 1 trillion euros. To this, they reconvened the old Bundestag, which has been voted out of office, because they lack the necessary two-thirds majority in the new Bundestag.

They have packaged this insane rearmament programme in two parts: a directly military part for the Bundeswehr (German military) and an indirect military "infrastructure package" to gear all spheres of society for waging war. This second package serves to present the trillion-euro armament programme as a programme for social reform. In fact, it will impose the costs on the population through massive social cuts and real wage reductions.

Under these conditions, every effort is being made to block our demand for a broad income increase of 750 euros [US\$815] per month over 12 months from being met.

Above all, every effort is being made to prevent us from conducting an unlimited strike to enforce this demand. The Berlin Senate and the federal government, which are behind the BVG [Berlin Transport Company] board, fear that such a principled industrial action would be the prelude to a broad mobilisation of all transport and public service workers, as well as the entire working class, against falling real wages and the government's war policy.

In this situation, we must make full use of our strength and strike power. This is important for two reasons. First, after many years of real wage cuts, our demand for a general wage increase of 750 euros per month is the minimum to combat the ever-increasing cost of living. Second, an unlimited strike would be a clear signal that we are not willing to bear the costs of rearmament and the financing of the great power politics of German imperialism, which already led to global catastrophes two times in the last century.

That is why the sellout planned by Verdi must be stopped. The Verdi leadership is closely linked to the SPD [Social Democratic Party], the governing party in the Berlin Senate and the federal government. The same applies to their negotiating commission, headed by Jeremy Arndt, deputy chairman of the BVG supervisory board.

Arndt and his colleagues have faithfully repeated management's argument that there is no money to fulfil our demands. The federal government has now refuted this lie and made clear that there is plenty of money when it comes to weapons, war and destruction.

After the fifth round of negotiations on Wednesday last week, Arndt spoke of progress. But a closer look shows the opposite. Although the duration of the contract was reduced from 30 to 24 months and the wage increase was raised from 225 to 240 euros per

month, the Christmas bonus was reduced and working hours were extended. As a result, the fifth negotiation round failed to bring any improvement.

Arndt reported that the negotiations were “sluggish” and complained about the intransigence of management on key issues. In reality, management’s arrogant attitude is a direct reaction to Verdi’s unwillingness to organise an unlimited strike.

Verdi’s refusal is directly related to its support for the government and its war programme. In an interview on the “special fund” on the Verdi homepage, Verdi chairman Frank Werneke plays down and justifies the war loans, saying: “The US promise of protection for Europe has become shaky. Against this background, discussions about higher defence spending in Germany and Europe are understandable. Europe must be able to defend itself, the Bundeswehr must be able to function.”

At the last regular Verdi national congress in September 2023, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) gave the opening speech and justified arms deliveries to Ukraine and the 100-billion-euro special fund for the Bundeswehr. At that time, Werneke was not satisfied. He doubted whether the money was enough and made it clear even then that he advocated even higher military spending.

To break the control of Verdi and organise an unlimited strike, it is necessary to systematically build up the Transport Workers Action Committee. This is now of the greatest importance.

In the staff council election campaign in November, we wrote:

We are standing in these elections to build new structures of struggle that will enable us workers to intervene directly in workplace disputes.

Our goal is to develop the great strength and power that we have as workers. We seek to strengthen our self-confidence, after all, we are the ones who keep the city and the country moving. We are not supplicants and beggars, we have rights! And we know that a joint struggle of all transport workers would paralyse the capital in the shortest possible time and would receive great support from the population.

The formation of the transport workers’ working group is the first important step toward taking the preparation of an all-out strike to enforce our demands into our own hands.

Since the beginning of our wage struggle in January, much has changed. The government, which determines the behaviour of the BVG board, is openly pursuing a policy of war, both externally and internally. This turning point also applies to us. We are no longer willing to accept Verdi’s stalling tactics of a token strike and pre-arranged negotiations. We counter the military build-up and enrichment of the rich with the socialist principle of the labour movement: our needs as workers and the needs of the entire population are more important than the profit interests of investors, speculators and warmongers.

Stop the planned Verdi sell-out!

Come to the next online meeting of the Transport Workers Action Committee!

Prepare an indefinite strike!

Write a Whatsapp message to +01748402566 to get in touch and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok. Come to this site at 7 p.m. on 27 March and take part in our online meeting.



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