

Germany: At Bosch, Stalinist MLPD attacks opposition to IG Metall union apparatus

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Faced with mass layoffs and wage cuts in almost all major industrial companies, workers are looking for ways to fight back. In doing so, they inevitably come into conflict with the trade union apparatus, which works closely with corporate management and enforces the cuts against the workers. In upcoming works council elections, this is expressed in the fact that opposition slates are forming everywhere to challenge the supremacy of IG Metall (IGM).

In this situation, the arch-Stalinists of the “Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany” (MLPD) play the role of henchmen for the trade union mafia: they intimidate workers who want to defend themselves and employ the vilest lies and slanders to defend the bureaucracy.

In its online publication *Rote Fahne News* (Red Flag News), the MLPD recently attacked Mustafa Simsek, who has set up an opposition list for the works council elections at Bosch in Schwäbisch Gmünd. As a works council member, Simsek had opposed the secret agreements on massive job cuts between IG Metall and corporate management and had therefore come under fire from the bureaucrats. “When a union loses its voice, the employees must raise their own,” he concluded and founded the “Free Metalworkers” slate.

The MLPD accuses Simsek, of all things, of “careerism and addiction to self-promotion” because he tangled with the powerful works council members and the company. They expressly support the non-admission of his slate by the IGM-controlled election committee. Simsek had supposedly “disqualified himself” because he had renamed and reshuffled the slate several times. As if that were an argument to ban a slate of 89 rank-and-file workers!

The attack dogs of the union have reacted particularly aggressively to the defence of Simsek by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP). The SGP defended Simsek against the attacks of IG Metall and demanded the admission of his slate to the works council elections. This was not about whether Simsek agrees with the political goals of the SGP, but about defending the right of workers to challenge the union apparatus and cast off its straitjacket.

The Stalinists of the MLPD are hyperventilating over this. They become particularly nervous when the WSWs reveals what the trade union bureaucrats have perpetrated in recent years. They quote the following sentence from our statement: “Since 2017, IG Metall and the works council agreed to reduce the number of employees in Schwäbisch Gmünd to 2,850 posts by the end of

2026.”

Every worker in Schwäbisch Gmünd knows that this is true. All previous cuts bear not only the signature of company management but also of the IG Metall works council representatives. They were negotiated in secret talks, as Simsek recently wanted to uncover.

But for the MLPD, this is sacrilege. No one may criticise the bureaucrats for their shameful deeds or even call them by name! They accuse the SGP of supposedly engaging in “division” and providing “support to the monopolies” when it calls for a fight against the union apparatus.

That is absurd. One might just as well declare that a strike divides because it endangers unity with strikebreakers! For the unions have long since ceased to be workers’ organisations, let alone fighting bodies. Rather, they confront the workforces as a company mafia that ensures law and order in the factory while implementing the attacks and brutally suppressing opposition to them—in the interest of the corporations and their shareholders.

It was 1984 when IG Metall organised the last real industry-wide strike, over 40 years ago! Back then, it concerned the introduction of the 35-hour week, which the union procured by agreeing to the flexibilisation of working hours. Since then, the union has limited itself to so-called “warning strikes,” which have no economic impact whatsoever and are agreed upon in the long term with the companies. This is supplemented by toothless noisy protests and coffins being dragged through cities when a plant is closed again.

Such actions do not serve to develop workers’ fighting power but to prevent real strikes and let off steam. Only in this way was it possible for companies to drive the harshest attacks in the last 40 years without organised resistance occurring. The unions were involved in these attacks right down to working out the details.

When SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder massively expanded temporary work from 2003 onwards, and thus smashed apart the collective bargaining structure of German industry, the unions worked closely with him. It was only possible for companies to pay temporary workers sometimes only half the wage for the same job because the DGB (German Trade Union Confederation) and IG Metall concluded a separate contract with the temporary employment agencies.

The low wages and the Hartz laws—named after the IG Metall member and VW personnel director Peter Hartz—were then used to grind down the wages and working conditions of the core workforces. In the last 20 years, employees have had to accept severe cuts in real wages.

Now the IG Metall apparatus is reacting to the intensification of the global trade and economic war with the preparation of more fundamental attacks. At Volkswagen, IG Metall and the works council under Daniela Cavallo have agreed with corporate management on the cutting of 35,000 jobs, more than one in four, as well as wage cuts of up to 20 percent. At Bosch, 22,000 jobs are to be destroyed.

A few days ago, IG Metall Chairwoman Christiane Benner announced her complete support for the war course of the German government under Friedrich Merz (Christian Democratic Union, CDU). She shares this with union leaders all over the world, who all support “their” corporations and “their” governments in trade war and war.

When workers try to break out of the straitjacket of these organisations, this has nothing to do with “division.” On the contrary, it is the beginning of a serious, mutual struggle to defend their rights and their jobs.

It is not combative workers who divide, but the trade union bureaucrats! They have divided the workforce into temporary workers and permanent employees, as well as into new and old employees. They divide the workers at different locations, isolate them from one another and organise the job massacre individually at each location instead of organising joint resistance and an all-out strike. Thus, each location dies on its own. The workforce in Schwäbisch Gmünd should know nothing about the situation in Feuerbach and vice versa.

Above all, they divide workers from their brothers and sisters in other countries. Almost 130,000 people work at Bosch in Germany; worldwide there are another almost 300,000. They, too, are affected by the cuts. But IG Metall does not organise the joint resistance that could quickly force the corporation to its knees but plays off the employees of the different countries against each other. This leads to layoffs and wage cuts at all locations.

The MLPD stands behind the union’s policy of division and claims that the SGP is providing “support to the monopolies” when it does not defend Germany as a business location against other locations, such as Hungary, since with the relocation to such countries, the company is banking on the fact “that unions are weak and workers’ rights are suppressed,” it says. In other words: workers should kindly swallow the cuts that IG Metall prescribes for them in Germany because otherwise the company will relocate production to Hungary.

Against this policy in the interest of the corporation, the SGP proposes the building of action committees that are committed only to the rank and file and are completely independent of the union apparatus. The action committees must unite permanent employees and temporary workers, IG Metall members and non-members, across locations, sectors and national borders.

The only ones who must be kept out of the action committees are the IG Metall officials and their works council reps, i.e., those who have organised the job cuts in recent years and are doing so now.

That is what makes the MLPD so nervous. It is not the cutting of 22,000 jobs at Bosch that disconcerts them, but the fact that the bureaucratic apparatus, in which the MLPD is up to its neck, is being challenged by the workforce.

They even go so far as to claim that the SGP supports the fascists

of Zentrum Automobil because they also stand slates against IG Metall. The MLPD write: “With their call to ‘consciously develop the fight against IG Metall,’ they [the SPG] even play into the hands of the fascist ‘Zentrum,’ which has set itself the goal of halving the influence of IG Metall in the works council elections.”

With this argument, one could also ban any criticism of the federal government, which is also attacked by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), even if it implements their programme of rearmament and deportations daily. In fact, it is exactly the opposite: the fascists become stronger because the union apparatus suppresses every serious labour dispute and themselves spread the stinking nationalism of defending Germany as a business location (*Standortnationalismus*).

“Support for the monopolies,” “support for fascists” and “division”: with these disgusting lies and slanders, the MLPD attacks rebellious workers and socialists who want to offer real resistance against the trade union bureaucrats.

Such attacks come straight from the moth-eaten politics of Stalinism. The MLPD, which emerged in 1982 from the “Communist Workers’ League of Germany” (KABD), openly defends the crimes of Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong. In the Soviet Union, Stalin, as a representative of the growing bureaucracy, initiated the counter-revolution and murdered hundreds of thousands of communists.

The Stalinist parties in other countries were sworn to uphold the course of ensuring the Soviet Union’s “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism, through cooperation with the capitalists. Therefore, the Stalinists suppressed every independent stirring of the working class using the vilest methods, and defended capitalism. The Maoists played the same role in the 70s with regard to China.

The MLPD stands in this tradition, only that neither Stalin’s Soviet Union nor Mao’s China exist anymore. Instead, the MLPD now orients itself to the trade union bureaucrats and offers them its experience in the suppression of workers.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei stands in the opposite tradition. It is the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which was founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky to defend socialist principles against Stalinism. In particular, this has meant the independence of the working class from all capitalist parties and the defence of internationalism against Stalin’s propaganda of “socialism in one country.”

These principles are now of the utmost importance because workers cannot take a step forward in the defence of their jobs without breaking with the union apparatus, organising themselves independently and uniting internationally.

We call on workers, whether union members or not, at Bosch and beyond, to contact us. Let us plan together the next step in the rebellion against the teetering supremacy of IG Metall. Send a WhatsApp message to +491633378340 and register immediately via the following form.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact