SGP campaign in the Berlin elections

Germany’s capital is being transformed into a centre for arms production—and workers must pay the bill

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The following speech was delivered by SGP candidate Tamino Wilck in the party’s first video for the Berlin Senate elections. More information on the SGP’s election campaign, manifesto and candidates can be found here.

We are standing candidates in Berlin against the current war frenzy, because this is where the consequences of war are concentrated. Here, as if through a magnifying glass, we can see what the officially announced “turning point” (“Wende”) really means: Berlin is being transformed into a capital of weapons production, and workers are being made to foot the bill. The ruling class is preparing for war at our expense—and literally on our doorstep.

In Berlin’s Wedding district, in the heart of a densely populated working-class neighborhood, at Scheringstrasse 2—right next to residential blocks, a park, a playground, a school and an outdoor swimming pool—the German company Rheinmetall plans to produce artillery ammunition. The former auto components factory, Pierburg, is being converted into an ammunition factory where 350 workers will produce shell casings for 155-millimetre artillery. It is the first arms production company in a Berlin residential area since the end of the Second World War.

And that is just the start. In December 2025, the Berlin Senate, led by Kai Wegner and Franziska Giffey, approved a comprehensive programme to promote the arms industry. 130 companies in Berlin are already working directly in the security and defence sector. They employ 26,000 people and have an annual turnover of eight billion euros. A further 430 firms are conducting research into so-called dual-use technologies—that is, they are developing technologies that can be used for both civilian and military purposes.

Start-ups that were originally founded for civilian applications of AI and robotics are now switching to combat drones. Quantum Systems supplies drones to Ukraine. The Stark company is developing kamikaze drones. Germandrones has sent over 500 reconnaissance drones to Ukraine from its site at the former Tegel Airport.

In March, the Senate held a cabinet meeting at the Ministry of Defence—the first state government to do so. Governing Mayor Wegner has signed a cooperation agreement with Israel Aerospace Industries—a corporation whose weapon systems play a central role in the genocide of the Palestinian population in Gaza.

This is the reality of the so-called “new era”. Whilst hospitals and schools are falling into disrepair, 600 million euros are being cut from public transport, rents are skyrocketing and social infrastructure is collapsing, billions are being poured into rearmament.

To make Germany “fit for war”, to enable it to wage war against Russia, every area of policy must be subordinated to the war effort.

This includes the city’s universities. Berlin’s senator for education, Günther-Wünsch, has signed a cooperation agreement with the Bundeswehr granting youth officers privileged access to classrooms. The Bundeswehr operates a “Cyber Innovation Hub” in Charlottenburg with an annual budget of 40 million euros. It identifies start-ups for military applications.

At the same time, the ideological justification for the war policy is being promoted at universities. At Berlin’s Humboldt University, Jörg Baberowski, professor of eastern European history, trivialises the crimes of National Socialism. He has publicly stated that Hitler was

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“not cruel” and openly seeks to rehabilitate the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte. In his latest book, he argues in favour of bringing the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the federal government.

For these views, Baberowski is shielded by the university administration, and no professor has publicly opposed him. As in the First and Second World Wars, the universities are aligning themselves to pave the way for war and authoritarian rule. They are an essential part of the preparations for war.

This militarisation of all areas of society is being driven not only by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)–Social democratic Party (SPD) government, but by the entire political establishment. In view of these insane preparations for war, one would expect a party that calls itself “left-wing” to be fighting on the front line against the militarisation of the capital.

But the Left Party is far from being a left-wing party. It has deliberately chosen to keep the issues of war and militarisation out of its election campaign and focus entirely on the issue of affordable housing. The reason behind this is easy to explain—the party supports the war policy and has approved the rearmament programme, costing trillions, in Germany’s second governing chamber, the Bundesrat.

As for the meagre social demands it puts forward in the election campaign, they are not worth the paper they are written on. For 16 years—from 2002 to 2011 in a coalition with the SPD, and from 2016 to 2023 in a coalition with the SPD and Green Party—it orchestrated a social catastrophe that continues to shape the lives of millions to this day. Under its shared responsibility, Berlin became a nationwide testing ground for social cuts: tens of thousands of public-sector jobs were cut, wages were slashed, collective agreement standards were undermined, and social and cultural institutions were closed.

It actively pursued and justified the sell-off of state-owned flats to financial investors and hedge funds. As early as the 2002 coalition agreement, the “sale of a housing association or housing stock” was declared “inevitable.” As a result, around 200,000 council flats were sold off—including, in 2004, GSW, with over 65,700 flats—to the investment funds Whitehall (Goldman Sachs) and Cerberus for a paltry 405 million euros.

These flats were later transferred to the companies Deutsche Wohnen and Vonovia, which raked in billions in profits whilst rents skyrocketed. Rents for existing tenancies have tripled since 2005, whilst rents for newly available properties rose from 8.52 to 17.64 euros per square metre between 2015 and 2024—the highest figure of any major German city. The number of social housing units fell from 397,000 to around 90,000 over the same period.

This is the direct consequence of political decisions which the Left Party supported and helped to pass. The fact that it now portrays itself as a champion of “affordable housing” could scarcely be more cynical. It is attempting to conceal the fact that it itself is the cause—and not the solution—to the problem.

The Left Party’s lead candidate, Elif Eralp, openly supports Israel and its genocidal war against the Palestinians. Significantly, she cites New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani as her role model—a man who was elected as a supposed socialist and opponent of Trump, yet who held a “productive” meeting with Trump at the White House soon after his election.

This, too, is part of the political DNA of the Left Party: grandiose promises during the election campaign, betrayal the day after. Despite its name, it is not a left-wing or even socialist party that one could “push further to the left.” It is a bourgeois party that represents the interests of the affluent middle classes and the state apparatus. Its function is to capitalise on public outrage during the election campaign, only to continue implementing the same policies after the election.

We must draw the necessary conclusions: the struggle against militarism, social cuts and high rents cannot be left to any of the capitalist parties. A party must be built that represents the interests of the working class, fights for its mobilisation and provides it with political leadership.

The Socialist Equality Party is standing in the Senate election to represent precisely this perspective: socialism instead of war.

We do not seek posts or a share in government with the pro-war parties. We are using the election campaign to build an international movement against war and its root cause, capitalism. We will use every seat we win in the House of Representatives as a platform for this struggle.

Support this struggle and help build the Socialist Equality Party.

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