

Strikes and protests at delivery platform Gorillas

Stop the slave labor! Build rank-and-file committees!

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Germany)
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For months, the drivers (riders) and workers of the delivery service Gorillas have been fighting against miserable working conditions, low wages, hire-and-fire policy, lack of health protection and a thuggish management. Through spontaneous strikes, demonstrations, protest rallies and gate blockades, they are protesting extreme exploitation and slave-like working conditions.

The significance of this struggle goes far beyond Berlin and the delivery industry. Thirty years ago, working conditions like those the Gorillas workers face today were simply illegal. At most, they existed in developing countries. But since then, all the barriers that stood in their way have been removed. Work contracts, temporary employment and other precarious forms of work are also spreading in industrial companies. Many companies have used the Corona pandemic as an opportunity to outsource parts of their business and rehire workers under much worse conditions.

That's why the labor dispute at Gorillas is receiving a lot of support in the social media. On the other hand, entrepreneurs and politicians fear that it will become the starting point for a broad mobilization. Because the miserable working conditions are no longer the exception, but are becoming the rule.

This makes it all the more important to have a clear conception of how the struggle can be continued and won. To achieve this, one must learn to distinguish between true and false friends.

All sorts of politicians and trade unionists are now discovering their heart for the Gorillas riders. Federal Labor Minister Hubertus Heil (SPD) wants to meet with them personally on Tuesday to 'talk about their

situation.' The office of SPD Member of Parliament Cansel Kiziltepe, who can make good use of publicity in the Bundestag election campaign, has invited him.

The trade unions, the Left Party, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation FAU and various pseudo-leftist groups are campaigning for the formation of a works council or "Betriebsrat".

But it was the SPD, the Greens, the Left Party and the trade unions that removed all obstacles to slave labor. A milestone were the so-called Hartz laws, of which Hartz IV is only the most notorious. Drawn up by IG Metall member and car manager Peter Hartz, they were supported by the unions and passed by the red-green federal government in 2003.

The Hartz laws have laid the foundations for a huge low-wage sector that did not exist in this form before. This low-wage sector has in turn served as a lever to smash regular wages and working conditions.

The result is an explosion of social inequality. In Germany, there were 136 billionaires in the Corona year 2020, 29 more than the previous year, and 542,000 millionaires, 35,000 more than the previous year. On the other hand, 40 percent of employees suffered a loss of income. 13 million people lived in poverty, the highest number since reunification.

The trade unions and their works councils have played the decisive role in this social assault. They do not represent the workers, but the employers - and they are paid very well for this. Hundreds of thousands of layoffs in the steel and metal industry bear the signatures of IG Metall and its works councils. The so-called employee representatives sit on the supervisory boards, collect large sums of money and work closely with the corporate management and the management.

Here in Berlin, the Verdi trade union – in close cooperation with the ruling parties in the red-red-green Senat (SPD, Left Party and Greens) – has decimated public service jobs, privatized clinics, outsourced services and lowered wages at the Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe (BVG).

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) is therefore against the establishment of a works council (Betriebsrat). It leads to a dead end.

Works councils are not allowed to call for industrial action and are obliged by law to work for the 'welfare of the enterprise,' to cooperate with the employer in a spirit of trust, and to keep all information secret.

The formation of a works council does not abolish slave labor at Gorillas, but regulates and cements it by contract. It also would make the organization of strikes more difficult, because during the term of collective bargaining agreements, there is a statutory peace obligation, i.e. a ban on strikes.

Works councils are used by the unions to suppress any kind of opposition. To put it bluntly, they are a kind of company police. This is precisely why the Bundestag passed a so-called Betriebsrätemodernisierungsgesetz (Works Council Modernization Act) last month, which is intended to make it easier to set up works councils.

We propose another way: The creation of a rank-and-file committee based on the tradition of workers' councils (Arbeiterräte).

Join together and elect trusted and respected colleagues to represent you and be accountable for their actions at all times.

Contact colleagues in other service, production and administrative areas, exchange information and plan joint actions. Connect with workers in other countries, not to make slave labor tolerable and 'humanize' it, but to abolish it.

The SGP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) took the initiative on May 1 to establish the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to create independent fighting organizations of workers in all industries and link them across borders.

Such a struggle against the appalling working conditions in logistics and other industries raises fundamental political questions. Just as the enrichment of shareholders is based on the exploitation of the

working class, this exploitation can only be ended by the expropriation of the big banks and corporations by the international working class.

'Workers of all countries must be united in a common political offensive to take power, expropriate the oligarchs, and establish a socialist society based on the rational, scientific and democratic control of production for the purpose of serving social need, not private profit,' insists our call to build the IWA-RFC.

We call on all Gorillas workers to contact us to form rank-and-file committees and organize an international struggle.



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