German autoworkers support Maruti Suzuki workers

Our correspondents
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Opel workers at the plant in Rüsselsheim, Germany expressed their solidarity with the framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers in India in comments to the *World Socialist Web Site* last week. Many read an information leaflet, distributed by supporters of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP-Socialist Equality Party), during their shift and spoke with the WSWS as they left work.

Last month, a judge in the northern Indian state of Haryana condemned 13 Maruti Suzuki workers to life in prison. This was a brutal act of retribution against autoworkers who have waged a years-long struggle against poverty wages and sweatshop conditions that prevail in India's factories and special economic zones.

The International Committee of the Fourth International is mounting an international campaign and online petition to demand the immediate release of these workers.

General Motors recently sold off its Opel and Vauxhall divisions to French carmaker Peugeot in a move that threatens the jobs of autoworkers in Germany, UK, France and other countries. The SGP campaigners spoke with workers even as the Opel works council and IG Metall union officials were meeting with Peugeot executives to map out future job cuts and concessions.

Rüsselsheim workers expressed support for uniting autoworkers internationally against the assault on jobs and living standards. Some workers immediately drew parallels to their own situation.

Tobias H., an Opel worker, who has worked at Rüsselsheim for 27 years, described the treatment of the Indian workers as a "scandal". "Yes, I have read the flyer," Tobias said. "It is a conspiracy where the judiciary judges solely on behalf of the bosses. They must be defended. It should be: 'One for all, and all for one.'"

Referring to the Opel works council and union, Tobias said, "The works council and IG Metall can no longer be relied upon. We have gone through a lot in the last few years. For example, we do not receive any reliable information, only afterwards, when everything has been checked and decided. I did not know, for example, that they met today in Berlin with [Peugeot boss] Tavares."

"In my opinion this meeting in Berlin is a big conspiracy between IG Metall and the bosses," added Giovanni, who has been working for Opel for 40 years. "Why didn't they tell us about it at the last factory meeting? On Friday, we had a meeting and then it was interrupted without anybody telling us why."

A Polish colleague said he was glad to work in Rüsselsheim and not in Polish Gliwice or Tychy, where the workers earn much less. "They play us off against one another. This means we can do nothing."

Two Moroccan workers said they had read that the Maruti Suzuki workers had been sentenced to life imprisonment. "That's a very bad thing," one of them said. The workers said they had to be cautious because "Anybody who sticks their neck out here is immediately out of a job. We all have families. One can only hope that such methods are not applied here."

Heiner K., a worker with almost 20 years of experience on the production line in Rüsselsheim, also declared he had "no more confidence in IG Metall", although he was still a member. But in the last few years it was just too much to take. "Pressure keeps coming and there is bullying in the factory. We're all fed up. The works council sits in the same boat as the company board."

On the imprisonment of the Maruti Suzuki workers, Heiner said: "This is despicable, a real stitch up against

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these colleagues. I will sign the online petition."

A worker took the handout and promised to sign. Then he asked, "What do you think about the boycott against Russia? They are preparing war; Germany wants a new war." The SGP campaigners agreed while saying only an international anti-war movement, based on the working class and fighting for socialism, could stop the drive to World War III. The fight to defend the Maruti Suzuki workers was part of the struggle to unite the international working class, they said.

"The petition is just the right response", his colleague responded. "It's filthy, what they are doing to these Indian workers."

Fatih, a 40-year-old Opel worker of Turkish origin, said, "I will definitely sign the petition. I think it's a good thing to carry out this campaign."

René works in a production department and moves parts to the production lines. He also read the Maruti Suzuki handout and said, "This is definitely out of the ordinary. It seems to me like a judicial conspiracy. I think every worker has to be able to fight for his rights without being put in jail." He promised to sign the petition.

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