

French workers support growing mass strikes in Germany

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Yesterday, WSWS reporters went to speak to immigrant workers in Paris about the growing metal and auto workers strikes in Germany. The workers declared their solidarity for the strike, which is demanding significant wage increases and has also disrupted the German ruling elite's attempts to form an unpopular, militaristic Grand Coalition government between the social-democrat and conservative parties.

Raja, a shop worker, said: "I am telling the German workers that I support their struggle, we all face the same problems. I have friends in Germany, they say life in Germany is not like it was ten years ago. It is like for us here, the immigrants' lives are very hard and dangerous. We have to fight for our salary, for our rights. Really, I am supporting them."

Workers were in a militant mood, enthusiastic about both the step forward taken by the German metal workers and the possibility of a common, European struggle for wage increases in the face of the rising wealth of the super-rich and increasing exploitation of the working class.

Thinesh said, "I support the German workers. We and they, all of us can only live if we do work. For example, I am working in a restaurant. If one worker is absent, we have to do his work, also. It then takes much more time than to finish what we have to do. However, we do not get any increase in our salary."

He said that the emergence of mass workers struggles in the heart of the European economy, though it is being blacked out in the French media, had great significance. "For me, this is a big event, what you are explaining. I did not see it in the media."

"Tell me if you organize any demonstration in support of the German workers," he said. "I will participate. Also, I will inform my co-workers."

Workers in particular supported the notion of a

common political struggle of the working class against French President Macron, who aims to closely coordinate his military and austerity policies with a Grand Coalition in Berlin, should it emerge.

The German metal and auto workers are entering into struggle as anger mounts among French workers at Macron's social attacks at home. He has announced mass job cuts in auto and the public service, created conditions for the signing of contracts paid below the minimum wage in the oil industry, and called for deep cuts to pensions and health care spending by the end of his term. Macron is working closely with the trade union bureaucracy, but outside the political establishment, in the working class, there is rising opposition.

Chandran, an unemployed worker, told the WSWS: "Now that you have explained it to me, my sympathy goes always to the striking workers in Germany. We are also living in a very difficult situation. Since I lost my job, every day I have to do day labor, working several different jobs. Otherwise, my children cannot eat and sleep in the apartment in winter time. The German workers have families, their struggle is legitimate."

He added that workers in France should support the German strike, so that German workers would then support them against Macron. He said, "Everywhere, we are confronting the same problems. Under the Macron government, our living conditions will really get worse. I think that if we support the German workers' struggle today, they will support our struggle tomorrow."

WSWS reporters also spoke to Florian, a high school student whose father works as a guard for an apartment complex in Paris.

"I am in support of the German workers' action,"

Florian said. He criticized the wealthy who are the main beneficiaries of the policies of the European Union and said there should be a broad movement of workers struggles against them: “They are bloodsuckers, what they are doing is not fair. We should organize meetings, we have to get together on how to act, we should go on strike.”

He stressed that there should be solidarity between workers in the two countries: “The two countries, Germany and France, it’s the same, we are in Europe.” He bitterly criticized Macron: “Macron, since he became president, has not done anything for us at all. France has not changed, none of the improvements he promised us before becoming president have showed up at all.”

Florian also warned that workers should place no trust in the trade unions, who have repeatedly sold out strikes and protests in France in talks with state officials and the business federations. He said, “They say that they will give us everything, but in the end they do nothing. It’s like they were getting together among themselves, behind our backs, the trade unions and the rest of them. And at the end of the day, we are left with nothing at all.”

He also strongly opposed the militarist plans of both Macron and the Grand Coalition parties in Berlin. While Macron has called for a return to the draft and pledged to boost spending on nuclear weapons and aircraft carriers, Berlin has over the last four years launched a vast program to re-militarize its foreign policy for the first time since the defeat of the Nazi regime in World War II. Berlin and Paris intend to take the tens of billions of euros required to fund their militaristic policies out of the hides of the workers, with stepped-up social cuts.

Florian said European youth should not be drafted to go fight in NATO wars in Africa or Asia: “Going to kill people in Mali, who are really struggling now because of the poverty, killing people is not what we need now. ... These are wars for money.”



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