

Goodyear-Dunlop plans 1,100 job cuts in Germany

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The jobs massacre in Goodyear-Dunlop's tire factories is continuing, with 1,100 job cuts planned at its facilities in Hanau and Fulda in the German state of Hesse. Goodyear-Dunlop shut two plants down over recent years, in Amiens, France, in 2014, and Philippsburg, Germany, in 2017.

As Goodyear-Dunlop Tires Germany Ltd. announced on March 19, 490 job cuts will take place at its Fulda tire factory and 610 at its headquarters in Hanau by 2022. Both factories currently employ around 2,900 workers, meaning the latest measure will cut more than a third of the workforce. The one-time largest producer of tires in the world currently employs 60,000 workers in 22 countries.

Company management, the works council, and local politicians are now engaged in damage control to prevent a rebellion among the workers. Business manager Jürgen Titz has insisted that the job cuts will be carried out in a socially responsible manner. This simply means that restructuring, including the job cuts, will take place in consultation with the works councils.

For their part, the works council and Industrial, Mining, Chemical, and Energy Union (IG BCE) support the plans, and want to "try and find the best possible solutions for the workers," said Ines Sauer, chair of the works council at the Fulda factory. In Hanau, works council chair Herbert Sandner claimed he was "shocked," and called for a social plan for those impacted.

According to the Goodyear-Dunlop board, the company will invest €106 million in the two plants in parallel with the job cuts. Management also announced that in order to improve competitiveness, production in future will focus on larger tires no less than 17 inches in size.

The IG BCE welcomed this move in particular.

Osman Olusoy, deputy leader of the union in Hesse, merely complained that the restructuring had come too late and that the job cuts were the result of a "chain of errors" by management in tire production.

In order to quell opposition among the workers, Hanau mayor Claus Kaminsky (SPD) sought to pose as their ally, stating that he "trusts that Goodyear will remain an important actor in our local economy over the long-term." After a meeting with the board, which was also attended by Sandner, Kaminsky said that the positive thing is "that management and the works council are working hand-in-hand."

Kaminsky's claim that management and the works council are working hand-in-hand is correct, but their goal is to strangle any opposition among the workers. Their claim that the job cuts will secure the factories for the long-term is a flat-out lie.

The entire global auto industry is being restructured. A jobs massacre is under way at Ford, VW, Opel, Audi, and at practically all supplier plants. Under conditions of global trade war, General Motors and Ford are in the process of winding down their European operations. In addition, there is the impact of Brexit and the transition to electric cars. The companies are exploiting this to boost their profits at the expense of the workers, and slash hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The layoffs at Goodyear began five years ago, when in January 2014 the company's plant in Amiens was closed with the loss of 1,200 jobs. The workers, who responded by spontaneously occupying the plant, were isolated by the trade unions, especially by the IG BCE. Two workers were subsequently hauled before the courts for allegedly kidnapping the factory manager and were handed prison sentences.

Then in 2017, the Philippsburg factory in Baden-Württemberg, once the largest Goodyear factory

outside of the United States, was shut down. Since then, some 2,000 jobs have been cut at German Goodyear plants.

The experience of the workers at Philippsburg is worth reviewing. It showed once again how bankrupt the union's policy of isolating each plant actually is. The argument "We will accept job cuts to save the plant" served to divide the workforce and pave the way for the shuttering of the entire factory.

Even as the closure of Philippsburg was in progress, Goodyear outsourced the jobs of around 900 workers in Wittlich to a subsidiary, Goodyear-Dunlop Tires manufacturing. Their collective bargaining rights and wages are guaranteed only until 2022. In Hanau and Fulda, production plans also only run for the coming two and a half years, and much of the work is already done by contract workers who have virtually no rights.

If they are to defend their jobs, Goodyear workers must reject the lies and intimidation of Goodyear management, the bourgeois politicians, works councils, and IG BCE. They must organise themselves independently in rank-and-file action committees to make contact with workers at other Goodyear plants and throughout the entire global auto industry in order to take the defence of jobs into their own hands on the basis of a socialist programme.

The WSWS *Autoworker Newsletter* calls on all workers seeking to wage a principled struggle against job cuts and plant shutdowns to contact us.



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