

The back-to-work campaign in Germany and the resurgence of the far right

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The following speech was delivered by Christoph Vandreier, the deputy national secretary of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei to the 2020 International May Day Online Rally held by the World Socialist Web Site and the International Committee of the Fourth International on May 2.

On behalf of the German section of the ICFI, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, I would like to send revolutionary greetings to this May Day rally.

In hardly any other country is the return to work organised as comprehensively and systematically as in Germany. On Thursday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced further easing of restrictions on the economy, justifying this with the words: "We have managed to reduce the spread of the virus".

These are deliberate false reports. In Germany, too, the number of infections and deaths is increasing daily. Yesterday the number of reported deaths rose to over 6,700 and the total number of infections to more than 164,000.

Shortly before Merkel's press conference, even the official Robert Koch Institute had to admit that these figures are still far too low and that the excess mortality caused by the virus is much higher than previously recorded.

And yet, contrary to all scientific warnings, schools and shops are opening and production in the car industry is being ramped up. Even in companies where hundreds of employees have been proven to be infected, workers are still being forced to work on the assembly lines.

With the coronavirus pandemic, the brutal class politics of recent years are revealed and intensified.

While the German government provided 600 billion euros in state funds to the large banks and corporations in March, workers are left with nothing. Many

companies are using the crisis to push through long-planned mass redundancies. The number of unemployed rose by 308,000 to 2.6 million in April. Ten million more workers are on short-time work.

With its criminal back-to-work campaign, the German government is accepting the deaths of millions of workers in order to secure the profits of the rich and continue the bonanza in the financial markets.

At the same time, the ruling class is using the crisis to position itself against its imperialist rivals. "What we need now are pragmatic and targeted measures for a Europe that emerges stronger from the crisis," said for example the deputy leader of the CDU parliamentary group in the Bundestag. At the expense of workers' lives, the German elites want to dominate Europe in order to assert their economic interests in world politics.

While nurses who risk their lives every day in the fight against the virus were denied a pitiful bonus of 1,500 euros, which was cancelled, the Ministry of Defence announced the purchase of 138 new fighter planes for a total of 20 billion euros in the midst of the pandemic. This is far in excess of the German health ministry's budget for an entire year.

With its war against the working class, aggressive imperialism and extreme militarism, the ruling class in Germany is once again tying in with Nazi policies.

Entirely in keeping with Hitler's "aristocratic principle of nature", the avoidable death of the old and weak is again transfigured in major German newspapers as a "natural process" that "makes room for new life". The "principle of equality" is openly denounced because it stands for the protection of all human lives.

The second-highest official of the German state, Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble, even attacked

the constitutionally-protected right to human dignity, declaring this did not include the right to life.

But if seriously ill people are denied essential respiration and then suffocate miserably in order to protect the profits of the rich, then this right, spelled out in Article 1 of the Basic Law on the basis of the experience of the crimes of Nazism, is being shredded.

Schäuble's fascist demand for human sacrifices for the rich was supported by representatives of all parties in the Bundestag. Also the return to work and billions in gifts to the corporations is supported by an all-party coalition from the fascistic Alternative for Germany to the Left Party and is also vehemently promoted by the trade unions.

As we have shown in the last years, extreme right-wing and fascist tendencies like AfD and Pegida are consciously built and promoted by the ruling class in order to push through their reactionary agenda.

75 years after the end of the Second World War, all the unresolved problems of capitalism, which led to fascism, war of annihilation and the Holocaust, are reappearing all over the world.

Fascism means the “compulsory concentration of all forces and resources of the people in the interests of imperialism,” Trotsky declared in his brilliant essay “What is National Socialism?” in June 1933.

Even today the imperialist conflicts are growing and the great powers are preparing for world war. It is not only the German bourgeoisie that is returning to its inhumane traditions. Trump in the USA, Macron in France and Bolsonaro in Brazil also rely on authoritarian and ultimately fascist methods.

But unlike in 1933, the ruling class does not have at its disposal a fascist mass movement. On the contrary, the vast majority rejects the politics of militarism and social inequality as well as the back-to-work campaign now being propagated everywhere.

Surveys show that an overwhelming majority opposes the current easing of confinement measures and is not prepared to risk its life for the rich. On social media, workers are intensively discussing strikes against inadequate security measures and protests against the deadly internment of refugees are taking place daily.

Today, the experiences of workers internationally objectively raise the need for socialist transformation of society. Without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and fighting for a workers' government, a

new socio-economic and health catastrophe for millions of workers cannot be averted.

That is why the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution, is gaining growing support among workers.

The readership of the *World Socialist Web Site* has grown enormously in recent months. A total of over three million individuals have already accessed the website this year. In Germany the readership has tripled. The most widely-read articles were those condemning the policies of the German government and developing our international socialist perspective.

The central task is to build the Socialist Equality Party and the International Committee as the revolutionary leadership of the working class and to counter the barbarism of capitalism with world socialist revolution.



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