

The struggle against the flood catastrophe in Germany requires a socialist programme

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The horrendous flooding that hit parts of the German states of Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), and Belgium last week, killing over 200 people, was not simply an unavoidable natural disaster.

The fact that the severe storms and heavy rain claimed so many lives and caused devastating damage to houses, roads, bridges and all basic infrastructure is the responsibility of the federal and state governments and their capitalist policy, which, as in the pandemic, placed profits before lives.

The provisioning of people in the areas affected continues to be catastrophic. Around 20 doctors' practices in the area of Rhineland-Palatinate hit by the storms are out of operation, according to the head of the Marburger Bund in Rhineland-Palatinate and NRW, Hans-Albert Gehle.

Hundreds of thousands of people were cut off from power and drinking water, and many remain so. Mobile phone networks are still not working in some parts of the region.

Almost one week after the flooding along the Ahr river in Rhineland-Palatinate, some of those affected report that they have seen no sign of a centrally-coordinated aid programme to deal with the damage and provision the population. People generally help themselves or each other, or are assisted by private volunteers from other parts of Germany.

Many people, who were only able to save their lives at the last minute, have lost everything. Residences, factories, workshops, businesses, doctors' practices, restaurants and hotels have been destroyed or severely damaged.

People around the world are horrified at the devastation caused by the floods. In the areas affected and on social media, anger is mounting towards those

politically responsible, who failed to warn the population and evacuate people—even though they received warnings from meteorologists and scientists about precisely such an outcome.

The bodies of people who were swept away by the mass of water in their homes, in cellars, or on the street continue to be recovered. It remains unclear how many people were carried away by the floods.

Representatives of the federal and state governments who have travelled to the affected areas state hypocritically how deeply affected they have been by the floods. They seek to wash their hands of any responsibility for the events and assert that nobody could have forecast such a disaster. The claims have been exposed as lies by internationally renowned scientists.

The warnings about severe flooding were simply not provided to the population by the responsible governments, authorities and media outlets. Virtually no mitigation or prevention measures were taken, and no evacuations of the most affected areas were ordered.

The high number of deaths is the direct product of the criminal inaction by federal and state governments. Although they were warned ahead of time, they did nothing to alert the population and save lives.

The flooding catastrophe exposes the capitalist system and its political representatives in several ways.

Firstly, it was a direct result of the climate crisis, which has been caused by the capitalist profit system. It is producing an increased number of extreme weather events, which scientists have warned about for decades.

The consequences of climate change have long been well documented. Many studies showed that global warming increases the regularity of floods and droughts, and ultimately threatens the survival of our planet and humanity. But the ruling class is incapable

and unwilling to adopt serious measures to combat climate change, because this would undermine its drive for profit and its geostrategic interests.

Secondly, the deadly effects of climate change are a result of the decades of neglected and broken infrastructure—including a flood alert system, a well-equipped and effective disaster protection unit, and necessary flood defences.

The shortcomings in these areas are the direct product of the decades-long austerity policy and the neglect of infrastructure. Sirens were dismantled or cut back, as well as many other necessary measures for the protection and provisioning of the population in an emergency.

The inaction of the politicians from all established parties and their claim that such a catastrophe could not be foreseen show the indifference, arrogance and hostility of the ruling elite towards working people. It is an expression of the bankruptcy of the capitalist profit system.

As in the pandemic, which has already claimed the lives of over 4 million people worldwide and over 91,000 in Germany, the governments are following the slogan “profits before lives.” While the banks and major corporations receive bailouts of hundreds of billions of euros with no strings attached and the military receives tens of billions in additional spending, there is allegedly no money available for the social needs and protection of the health and lives of the working class, the vast majority of the population.

The emergency help of €400 million proposed by the federal and provincial governments is far too low to secure the survival and supply of those seriously-impacted by the floods. It is not even a fraction of the funds mobilised by the state when the issue is “saving” the banks and major corporations, or rearming the German military.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei demands billions of euros for the immediate support of the flood victims so that they can rebuild their destroyed houses and businesses. All families and workers affected, as well as small and mid-sized businesses, must be fully compensated.

Additional billions must be invested in the modernisation and securing of the destroyed infrastructure and comprehensive protection measures. The necessary resources must be made available to

immediately reestablish the water and power supplies.

The implementation of these demands requires the mobilisation of the international working class fighting for a socialist programme. The major corporations, banks and the super-rich, who have become even richer during the pandemic, must be expropriated without compensation so the billions in wealth can be used to satisfy the social needs of the population and to tackle climate change.

Only through the socialist transformation of society can the struggle against climate change and for a safe and just life be won.



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