

# What is the struggle by workers at Deutsche Post about?

**Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei**  
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By March 30, German postal workers will finish voting on a contract that services union Verdi has agreed with Deutsche Post management. This contract contains the same severe wage cuts workers rejected two weeks ago when they voted by 86 percent in favour of strike action.

This open strikebreaking by the Verdi leadership has sparked a rebellion against the union bureaucracy. Tens of thousands of workers have rejected the devastating deal. Dozens have formed an independent rank-and-file action committee to take the strike into their own hands and link it with workers in the public sector and other industries.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) supports this initiative and calls on all workers to reject the fraudulent Verdi deal and join the Action Committee. During the worst inflation since German reunification in 1991, postal workers are to receive no pay increase at all this year, just a one-off payment. Then next year, there is to be a small increase totalling €340. A postal delivery worker would thus earn 20 percent less in real terms in 2025 than in 2010—and that with a constantly increasing workload.

The money robbed from workers ends up directly in the shareholders' accounts. Deutsche Post made a profit of €8.4 billion last year alone. But in the face of the capitalist crisis and the threat of a banking collapse, the capitalists still cannot satisfy their desire for profits. Like someone who quenches his thirst with salt water, the more they swallow, the thirstier they become.

Moreover, the great powers are arming themselves to assert their economic interests around the world militarily. NATO is determined to continue the war in Ukraine until Russia breaks apart, even if it costs hundreds of thousands of lives and billions of dollars. An even bigger war against China has long been in the pipeline. The German government is using Russia's reactionary invasion of Ukraine to organize the biggest rearmament since Hitler and is again sending German tanks against Russia. The billions that Deutsche Post extorts from workers through wage cuts flow directly into this machinery of murder through the federal government's shares in the company.

All over the world, workers are fighting back against ever worsening working conditions and ever lower wages that

finance the orgy of enrichment at the top of society and the politics of war. In Greece, Britain, Spain and Belgium, hundreds of thousands are taking to the streets. In France, a strike by millions is paralyzing the entire country.

The ruling class is responding to these protests with enormous brutality. President Macron has imposed his hated pension cuts by emergency decree against the vast majority of the French population and has arrested hundreds of striking workers and demonstrators. He is mobilizing the entire bourgeois state to impose the financial interests of the super-rich.

The dispute at Deutsche Post must be seen in this context. A strike at Deutsche Post would immediately encourage the 2.5 million federal and local government workers to do the same. It would be the prelude to a broad strike movement in Germany as well. In this struggle, workers are confronted not only with the state and federal governments and corporations, but also with the trade unions, which are increasingly acting openly as the police force of the corporations.

## The role of the unions

That the unions limit strikes, isolate them and reduce them to harmless protests is well known. Many workers have experienced this many times. But what is currently taking place in the Deutsche Post wage dispute has acquired a new dimension. Verdi is using its entire apparatus to suppress an indefinite strike that has already been agreed by the members—and with the express aim of imposing drastic cuts in real wages. Verdi is openly acting as a strikebreaker for the company, its shareholders and the government.

Verdi's actions refute all the charlatans and pseudo-left groups who claim it is possible to reform the union apparatus and force it to change course. Time and again all over the world, workers have experienced that union leaderships, under pressure from the workers, move not to the left but to the right.

The bureaucracy regards its main task as suppressing the class struggle.

The reason for this lies in the pro-capitalist character of the unions. Whereas in the past they were able to win some improvements for workers on this basis, the globalization of production means they have become open tools of the corporations. They do not defend the rights of the workers, but the nationally based business location at the expense of the workers.

That is why Verdi and the other unions have also backed the government's pro-war policies. Verdi leader Werneke has been a member of the Social Democrats (SPD) for 40 years and maintains close relations with the Chancellor's Office.

He is a member of the "Concerted Action" to which Chancellor Scholz (SPD) invited trade union leaders and business representatives immediately after the start of the Ukraine war in order to conclude a pact against the working class. At these talks in the Chancellery, it was agreed that the enormous costs of arms deliveries to Ukraine, the effects of the Russia sanctions and the costs of military build-up would be imposed on workers through continued cuts in real wages and social provisions.

Verdi is as closely tied to the corporations as it is to the government. The union was instrumental in the privatization of all areas of public services and supports the profit interests of the resulting companies.

Ten Verdi officials sit on the Deutsche Post supervisory board, where they are involved in all important corporate decisions and give their nod to the millions paid in salaries to the board of directors and to enrich the shareholders. In return, many millions of euros flow into the pockets of the union supervisory board members and into Verdi's coffers as bonuses. Several of these bought-and-paid bureaucrats sit on the Verdi negotiating committee and are now dictating wage cuts to the workers.

Given these close ties and Verdi's defence of capitalism, the bureaucracy fears a real movement of workers as much as the government and corporations do. At all costs, the union wants to prevent workers from taking up a fight against wage cuts and uniting with their colleagues in the public sector and across Europe.

### **Build the Postal Action Committee!**

This is why the formation of the independent Postal Action Committee is so significant. It was an important step in breaking the control of the union apparatus and fighting against the strikebreaking role of the Verdi leadership.

The committee represents two important principles. First, it fights for the interests and demands of the workers and refuses to subordinate these to the profit interests of the corporations and the pro-war policies of the government. It is not about

handouts: Workers have rights, and the right to a decent wage is a fundamental right.

Second, the Action Committee fights for international cooperation and seeks to engage workers in a common struggle. Workers in all countries have the same or similar problems and need to collaborate Europe-wide and internationally in the fight against the multinational corporations.

On Monday, the Action Committee released a statement outlining these principles and calling for the ballot on the fraudulent pay offer to be turned into a vote of no confidence in Verdi. This states:

The ballot, which runs until March 30, is about who calls the shots when it comes to our interests. Do we, the workers who generate the billions in profits for Deutsche Post, stand in first place? Or is it the Verdi officials who use our union dues to pay themselves six-figure salaries and sit on company supervisory boards where they pocket even more money?

This is an extremely important step that puts postal workers in touch, quite objectively, with public sector workers and workers across Europe. When workers organize independently of the unions and internationally, they are stronger than the union apparatuses, the companies and the government.

But in doing so, they must be clear about what they are up against. It is not just about the deal at Deutsche Post, important as that is, but about rejecting the all-out attacks being waged against the entire working class in the face of militarism and the capitalist crisis.

That is why the struggles in France, Britain, Greece and here in Germany must be linked to the struggle against war and its cause, capitalism. No social problem can be solved without breaking the power of the financial oligarchy. The enormous wealth of the super-rich must be expropriated, and the economy placed at the service of meeting social need instead of the satisfaction of the profit interests of the rich.

This requires the building of a revolutionary and international party of the working class, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its German section, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP). Register now to actively support our struggle and become a member of the SGP.



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