For an all-out strike in the public sector and beyond! Build independent rank-and-file committees

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
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Monday's unified strike by rail workers and in the public sector has shown the determination and the enormous fighting power of the working class. Without the employees in public transportation, refuse collection, the daycare centers and the hospitals, the country stands still. But in order to develop their fighting power, workers must understand the fundamental character of the conflict.

In the public sector and at the large, semi-state corporations Deutsch Post and Deutsche Bahn, the working conditions are unbearable after years of cuts and restructuring. At the same time, real wages have fallen. Postal workers ruin their health on arduous routes to earn little more than the minimum wage. Railway workers are being weighed down by an inhuman shift system and are taking on more and more tasks.

The nurses in the hospitals have had to shoulder the entire burden of the pandemic and the "profits before life" policy in the last three years in broken-down hospitals. Many have paid for it with their lives. The running of hospitals by the private sector and the hyper-exploitation of the employees have already resulted in a shortfall of at least 200,000 nurses. This shortage must be compensated by the workers who remain.

Now the federal and municipal governments, and corporate managements want to impose further severe wage cuts. While real inflation for workers is well above the official 10 percent, they want to enforce wage freezes on workers this year and raise wages only minimally next year. In the case of hospitals, the employer's offer even provides for possible nominal wage reductions. If inflation were to continue, this would amount to halving wages.

With these cuts, the government is directly financing the biggest rearmament programme since Hitler and the insane proxy war in Ukraine against the nuclear-armed power Russia. The war is not about peace and freedom, as the media and politicians incessantly claim, but, as 80 years ago, the geostrategic and economic interests of German capital. Every area of social life is subordinated to these goals.

A secret letter from the government to the parliamentary Budget Committee was recently leaked to the public. Behind the back of the population, the letter announced the fivefold increase in arms shipments to Ukraine to €15 billion. By way of comparison, even if the official Verdi trade union wage claim was fully implemented, it would not cost the federal government even half a billion euros. But the €15 billion that goes directly to the war against Russia is only a small part of the massive military spending.

More money is being mobilized to save the profits of banks and corporations. While schools are still not equipped with simple air filters, dozens of billions were handed over to the banks and corporations during the pandemic with no strings attached. The backing of the acquisition of Credit Suisse by UBS in Switzerland with more than €100 billion in taxpayers' money gives a foretaste of the multi-billion transfer with which the German government will also react to the impending banking crisis. For this purpose, the public employees and with them all public services are to be plundered.

As in the 1930s, the capitalist crisis is once again producing extreme social inequality, naked exploitation and war. In addition to attacks on public services, wages in the private sector are also being decimated. Mass layoffs are taking place at countless companies.

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Capitalism is a completely dysfunctional social system in which everything is subordinated to profit and the lives of the workers are worthless. This is evident in the banking crisis as well as in the pandemic and the insane war policy.

That is why fierce class struggles are developing throughout Europe and internationally. Workers in different countries are not simply confronted with similar problems, they are fighting the same battle. In France, millions of workers are on strike against Macron's pension cuts; in Britain, hundreds of thousands are resisting the curtailment of the right to strike and wage cuts. Violent class battles are also raging in Portugal, Spain, Belgium and many other countries.

What Rosa Luxemburg stated in 1905 with regard to the Russian Revolution also applies to France today: Workers in Germany must understand events there as "their own affair" and "a chapter of their own social and political history."

The French state is abandoning its democratic facade and presents itself as a naked dictatorship of capital. Macron ignores parliament and uses the police to enforce pension cuts that are rejected by an overwhelming majority. Anyone who protests against it will be handled with clubs and tear gas. The same is happening in Israel, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right government are establishing a dictatorship against massive resistance.

In Germany, the conditions are no different, the same explosive class contradictions are developing. The traffic light coalition is also determined to enforce the hated militarism and reduction of wages and social benefits with all-out force.

This is supported by all parties represented in the Bundestag and the media. The Left Party, too, is aggressively cutting budgets for wages, public services and social services wherever it is involved in the government. Workers are faced with a front of corporations, parties and trade unions and can only defend themselves against their attacks if they organize independently and take up a fight against the government.

The unions are trying to prevent this by all means. They are no longer labor organizations. They are closely associated with the government and companies and serve as company police forces. At Deutsche Post, Verdi immediately annulled the strike decision of 86 percent of its members and agreed with the top management to reduce real wages. In the public sector, the union is working along similar lines. If the unions call for a strike, they only do so to relieve pressure. They make every effort to divide the struggles by industries, countries and even regions, because they unreservedly support capitalism and war.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party) therefore calls on civil servants to form rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade unions, to take the strike into their own hands and to network with workers from other companies throughout Europe and internationally. Such rank-and-file committees must organize a real struggle and be built to counteract the institutions of the capitalist state.

The SGP and its sister organizations in the Fourth International have launched the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to unite workers in a common, global struggle and prevent them from being nationally divided and played off against each other, as the trade unions and capitalist governments do.

Public service workers must understand the confrontation with the government as what it is by its very nature: part of a European and international movement of the working class against capitalism and war. Because no social problem can be solved, and wages cannot be defended without breaking the power of the banks and corporations and putting them under democratic control. The fight against wage cuts must be directly linked to the fight against war.

The SGP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International around the world are fighting for such a socialist perspective. Register now for the establishment of action committees and become a member of the SGP. Send a Whatsapp message to +4015734683047 to get in touch with us.

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