

Joint declaration of the Postal and Public Service Action Committees in Germany

Link the struggle against wage cuts and social cuts with the struggle against war! Join our rank-and-file action committees!

20 June 2023

The following resolution was agreed at a joint meeting of the Postal and Public Service Action Committees in Germany.

As postal and public service workers, we call on all colleagues to draw the conclusion from our wages disputes this year and join us. We will only defend and improve our wages and working conditions if we free ourselves from the stranglehold of the Verdi union.

At last week's meeting of the action committees, we discussed the link between Verdi's sellout and the growing threat of war. The renewed cuts in real wages pushed through by the union apparatus are part of the austerity measures to finance the military build-up and arms deliveries to Ukraine.

The danger of a large-scale NATO war against Russia is growing from day to day. That is why we link the struggle against wage cuts and the constant deterioration of working conditions with the struggle against war and military rearmament. We must prevent NATO's war against Russia from escalating into a Third World War, otherwise not only our wages but the survival of humanity is threatened.

In the past months of wage disputes it became clear how strong we are and what power we can unleash. If we organise ourselves independently of the Verdi apparatus, we can develop and use this strength in a targeted way: against wage theft, social cuts and war.

We have already proved that we can and want to fight. At Deutsche Post, 86 percent of Verdi members voted for strike action. But Verdi ignored this vote, openly acted as a strike breaker, and pushed through huge cuts in real wages.

In recent years, Verdi already agreed on real wage cuts with the employers in the public sector and Deutsche Post. But now things are becoming really bad. Because of the low salaries of most of us, we have to spend almost all our money on the immediate costs of living (food, energy, housing). Neither the "inflation compensation" payment

during more than a year of no pay rise nor the subsequent paltry pay increases compensate us for the massive price hikes. As a result, we will have lost up to half of our purchasing power in the five years from 2020 to 2024.

Many of us are extremely angry, and rightly so. But anger alone will not change our situation.

In order to successfully assert our interests and break Verdi's dictatorship, we have to face reality and not fool ourselves. Those who claim that it is enough to change one or two corrupt union officials completely underestimate the situation.

We are dealing with a trade union whose entire apparatus backs the government and supports its pro-war policies. The German government under Olaf Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) is currently pushing the Ukrainian regime under Volodymyr Zelensky to hurl German tanks and weapons systems into the offensive. In doing so, the coalition government, which includes the Greens, is accepting the deaths of hundreds of thousands more soldiers and civilians on both sides. And is deliberately risking a nuclear world war that would wipe out all of humanity.

This insane war is not about "freedom" or "democracy," but about geopolitical and economic interests, just like the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. The goals of the war against Russia are, firstly, control over the vast mineral resources of the huge country. Secondly, the defeat of Russia so as to lay the groundwork for military action against the largest economic competitor of the NATO states—China. In this situation, Berlin once again wants to act as a political and military world power.

This is the real reason for arming Ukraine and the massive rearmament of Germany's Bundeswehr (Armed Forces). The federal government and the trade unions are openly acting as representatives of big business in Germany, which does not wish to stand on the sidelines in America's new division of the world but wants to have its say on an equal

footing and “eye-to eye.”

We, the workers, employed in factories and administration, are supposed to pay for this—with the loss of our wages and salaries, the deterioration of our working conditions and the dismantling of our social gains. Our standard of living is to be turned back a hundred years to the level of our great grandparents.

Verdi—and all trade unions—have started to push this through with the help of their apparatus. They are linked to the federal government by a thousand threads. The trade union bureaucrats are members of the government parties, they sit with them and the representatives of capital on the supervisory boards of the big corporations and above all are united by their pro-capitalist nationalist programme, including the policy of war and rearmament.

We oppose this!

The formation of our action committees at Deutsche Post and in the public sector is a first important step. Now it is key to further develop and push forward this initiative. The action committees must be brought into all factories and offices, independent of Verdi and the other trade unions.

Verdi and the other unions presume to speak and decide things for all workers, although their workplace influence is continuously waning. In 2021, only about 13 percent of all workers in Germany were members of a trade union. Verdi itself lost about 1 million members between 2001 and 2022 (from 2.8 million to less than 1.9 million).

As was the case at Deutsche Post, we will no longer accept that a few dozen Verdi functionaries in the contract bargaining commission and the federal executive board brush aside decisions to strike by tens and hundreds of thousands of members. The action committees we are now building will unite all workers who are ready to fight for their interests. The committees are for action, that is, for understanding, agreeing and organising struggles, not for preventing them. Therefore, corrupt officials, bureaucrats and their lackeys are not welcome.

We consciously address our call to both permanent and temporary workers, colleagues of all nationalities and regardless of whether they are members of a trade union or not. Because we will not be divided! For us, international collaboration and coordination of cross-border struggles is of utmost importance.

We welcome the foundation of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) which many action committees have already joined. The corporations operate internationally because war is a global threat. The internationally united working class, which creates all the wealth and keeps society running, is the only force that can stop war and prevent disaster.

We are not alone. All over the world, action committees

are currently emerging to break free from the trade union apparatuses. In Europe too, workers are proving their growing willingness to fight against the erosion of wages, the deterioration of working conditions and the abolition of social benefits. These workers are our allies.

The old slogan of the labour movement, “United we stand, divided we fall!” is now regaining great relevance and appeal. The joint warning strike in the public sector and at the national rail operator Deutsche Bahn at the end of March, in which 150,000 took part, showed the power we have when we unite across industrial sectors. This power must be mobilised to link the struggle for our wages and working conditions with the struggle against war.

At the same time, the action committees create a framework for discussion about the necessary political conclusions to draw on how the struggle against capitalist exploitation must be conducted. The capitalist system is sick and dysfunctional—not to say bankrupt—and this is shown every day. It knows only one principle: profit and personal enrichment. For this, the ruling class is prepared to walk over corpses, organise wars and establish dictatorship and fascism. Capitalism must be replaced, otherwise it will lead to disaster.

Therefore, we call on all workers to become active. The next struggles are approaching. In September, the contract for workers in the federal states will expire, then teachers, those in clinics and hospitals will also be affected. At Deutsche Post, Verdi is negotiating almost continuously with management. At the end of this month, for example, the contract that excludes outsourcing letter delivery expires; last month, Verdi agreed a contract for the DHL subsidiary at Leipzig/Halle airport.

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