

How the Verdi union wants to prevent an indefinite all-out transport strike in Germany

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Since the beginning of the week, local public transport workers in various German federal states have once again been on strike for better working conditions and, in some cases, better wage agreements. This is already the second warning strike in local public transport in February. On February 2, a limited strike in more than 80 cities and around 40 districts temporarily paralysed local public transport.

At the same time, the Verdi service sector union is once again organising to sabotage the strikes.

In Berlin, underground trains and trams are on strike Thursday and Friday until 2 p.m. The buses on the lines operated by private companies on behalf of Berlin local transit (BVG) are not on strike, or are on strike on other days. The S-Bahn (local rail) and regional transport services are not on strike and are operating normally.

The “concerted strikes” organised by Verdi are in reality a fragmentation of industrial action. At the beginning of February, Verdi’s main concern was that the upcoming transport workers’ wage disputes could coincide with the strike of 25,000 airport workers, the wage disputes of train drivers and the militant protests by farmers.

There is great anger and a willingness to fight among workers over their low wages and the intolerable working conditions at the transport companies. Many are calling for an indefinite all-out strike. This determination to fight is part of a swelling wave of strikes and protests against rapid price rises and the ever-increasing loss of real wages. Added to this are long working hours, short breaks and enormous work pressure, which leads to many workers falling ill or quitting their jobs, further exacerbating the work stress.

Verdi bureaucrats are responding to this growing social catastrophe and increasing willingness to fight by deploying the entire union apparatus to restrict and

fragment the strikes. In this way they want to keep the resistance under control and suppress it.

Although everyone knows that transport workers could unleash enormous power with an indefinite all-out strike and quickly achieve their demands in full, Verdi is doing everything it can to prevent such a struggle. On-and-off strikes do not develop and increase workers’ strength and fighting power, as Verdi claims, but on the contrary sabotage them and spread frustration.

Verdi’s refusal to organise an indefinite all-out strike is meeting with growing resistance from workers and many union members. Verdi officials are therefore looking for allies and have agreed to cooperate with the Friday for Future movement (FFF).

The figurehead of the German FFF movement, Luise Neubauer, will speak at the strike rally on Friday in front of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Economics in Berlin. She is a member of the Green Party and supports its right-wing policy as part of the coalition government with the Social Democrats (SPD) and Liberal Democrats (FDP).

Neubauer emphasises that she stands for “an alliance of Fridays for Future and local transport workers with their trade union Verdi” for “good work and climate-friendly mobility for all.” The Verdi-FFF rally on Friday will be held under the motto #WirFahrenZusammen (#WeTravelTogether), which can only be described as cynical in view of Verdi’s systematic division of all the labour disputes and suppression of an indefinite all-out strike.

The alliance with Neubauer and the German FFF movement is part of a right-wing offensive with which the Verdi leadership wants to defend itself against the growing pressure from below and from workplaces. In particular, the aim is to justify the government’s pro-

war policy, which is the cause of cuts in wages and social spending.

In recent weeks, Neubauer and other self-appointed spokespersons for FFF-Germany have been mainly busy agitating against Greta Thunberg. The Swedish initiator of the climate movement has condemned the Israeli crimes in Gaza in numerous statements and speeches at mass demonstrations at the end of last year.

“Today we are striking in solidarity with Palestine and Gaza. The world must raise its voice and demand an immediate ceasefire, justice and freedom for the Palestinians and all affected civilians,” declared Thunberg at a large rally in November.

The German FFF leadership around Neubauer and her cousin Carla Reemtsma—both from the millionaire Reemtsma family—reacted angrily and declared their support for the government’s policies in defence of Israel’s genocide in Gaza. Neubauer sided with the media agitation against Thunberg, accused her of antisemitism and enforced a strict disassociation from the international FFF umbrella organisation.

Neubauer also supports military rearmament and is in favour of arms deliveries to Ukraine. At the beginning of the war, she told the Green’s house organ *taz* it was “logical that military spending should also be discussed.” Climate protection measures “also make sense from the logic of war,” Neubauer told broadcaster ntv, adding that “the political will to say we are investing €100 billion in the military” was there. However, “the political will to say that we are now properly upgrading our energy systems” was just as necessary—after all, both “turning away from fossil fuels” and [spending more on] armaments were “ultimately a security policy issue.”

The Greens, many of whom are also active in the FFF movement, are already deeply discredited and hated by the majority of transport workers and the working class as a whole. Together with the other parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament), they are converting their anti-worker economic policy into an open war economy. For the working class, this means in concrete terms that the costs of arming the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), including arms deliveries to war zones and future military deployments, are to be passed on to working people. The cuts in real wages in the public sector serve the direct purpose of financing rearmament.

It is therefore necessary to combine the collective struggle for better working conditions and higher wages with the fight against war and military rearmament.

The warning strikes must therefore be used to discuss a fundamental reorientation and reorganisation of the labour movement. It is important to build independent rank-and-file action committees that are democratically organised and in which a perspective is discussed that focuses on the fundamental defence of workers’ interests. This means that the rights and needs of workers and their families must take precedence over the profit interests of the corporations, shareholders and speculators and the pro-war policy of the German government.

Part of such a reorientation must be close international cooperation. Today, all problems take on an international form. Workers all over the world face the same or similar problems and can only solve them through international cooperation and the coordination of cross-border struggles.

What the Rail Action Committee declared in a resolution also applies to public transport workers: “Our allies are neither the trade union apparatuses nor the parliamentary parties. Our allies are the workers of all sectors in all countries.”

We call on all workers in public transport and beyond: Build independent action committees in your workplaces with trusted colleagues. Get in touch with the transport workers’ action committee in Berlin. Send a WhatsApp message to +491633378340 or fill out the form below.



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