

Jobs massacre in Germany: Establish independent action committees!

Dietmar Gaisenkersting
15 September 2025

A wave of job destruction is sweeping across Germany. The trade unions, led by IG Metall, are closing ranks with corporations and the government. The working class is to pay for the profits of the rich and the corporations—not only in Germany, but worldwide.

On June 30, 5.42 million people were employed in German industry, 114,000 fewer than 12 months earlier. In the six weeks since, German corporations announced the elimination of more than 125,000 jobs. Germany's largest steel corporation, Thyssenkrupp, is cutting every second to third job, a total of 11,000. Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) plans to cut 30,000 jobs, and its subsidiary Cargo to cut 5,000. SAP is reducing its workforce in Germany by 3,500 and worldwide by 10,000. Deutsche Post is cutting 8,000 jobs and Commerzbank 3,900.

Auto manufacturers and their suppliers had already announced massive job cuts: VW, 35,000; Mercedes, 40,000; Ford, 2,900; Audi, 7,500; Daimler Truck, 5,000; ZF, 14,000; and Bosch, Continental and Schaeffler, a total of 7,000. Over 51,000 jobs have already been destroyed in the auto industry in the last 12 months.

The apparatus of the trade unions—especially the two largest, IG Metall and the Verdi (United Services Union)—have made it their mission to implement these cuts. The term “trade union” is misleading. They no longer have anything in common with the organisations that were once built to defend workers’ interests. Instead, they serve as an extension of the corporations and act as company police—the Ford workers in Saarlouis spoke of a “mafia”—blocking and sabotaging every struggle.

The union’s “future contracts,” “job security agreements” and “social collective agreements” are the opposite of what their names promise. At Thyssenkrupp Steel, under the banner “Securing jobs for the future,” 11,000 of 27,000 jobs are being cut and wages reduced by 8 percent. One more such “employment security” measure will be the death blow for Thyssenkrupp Steel.

The trade unions are not only on the side of the corporations on the home front, but also in the global

economic, customs and trade war. IG Metall immediately welcomed meetings for the auto and steel industries announced by Chancellor Friedrich Merz (Christian Democratic Union, CDU). Christiane Benner, chairperson of IG Metall, is calling on employers to finally end the relocation debate and work together with employees to build a strong, innovative auto industry. While US President Donald Trump bleats “America First,” IG Metall responds with “Germany First,” and euphemistically calls for an “end to the relocation debate.”

Shawn Fain, president of the UAW, the American auto workers’ union, and the president of the American trade union federation AFL-CIO, Liz Shuler, have openly backed Trump’s tariffs. Tariffs have “always” been considered our “trade policy instruments,” according to Shuler. Jürgen Kerner, deputy chairman of IG Metall, argues along the same lines when he calls for “effective EU tariff regulations against dumped steel from China and Russia.”

The trade war goes hand in hand with rearmament and war. In his first government statement, Chancellor Merz announced the goal of making Germany the home of the largest and most powerful army in Europe. The federal government is supplying Israel with weapons for the genocide in Gaza. Federal Economics Minister Lars Klingbeil (Social Democratic Party, SPD) has announced he will arm Ukraine with €9 billion annually in order to intensify NATO’s proxy war against nuclear power Russia, even without US backing.

The trillions for armament, war and trade war are to be paid for by a general attack on all remaining social gains.

Citizens’ income is to be cut by €5 billion annually. Funds for refugees have already fallen below subsistence level. The attack on the weakest members of society is paving the way for the dismantling of the entire social system. On September 1, the FAZ newspaper complained that the welfare state was stifling economic growth with “the misguided citizen’s income, the ever-promoted sense of entitlement and high social security contributions.” “Beloved” things must be given up “so that the economy

can pick up speed again.”

Everything workers have fought for over the last 150 years is under attack: continued payment of wages in the event of illness, medical care, care in old age, the eight-hour day, retirement at 67. If the ruling class and the CDU-SPD coalition government have their way, all this will soon be a thing of the past.

Federal Labour Minister Bärbel Bas (SPD), who described Merz’s attack on the welfare state as “bullshit” to the young careerists in the youth organisation of the SPD (Jusos), endorsed this bullshit just a few days later.

If there is one thing workers can no longer afford, it is not the welfare state, but rather the rich. Social inequality in Germany has never been greater than it is today. The richest 10 percent own over 60 percent of total wealth, while the poorer half owns only 3 percent. The top 1 percent of the population owns around €3.2 trillion, about 35 percent of total wealth. There are around 2.8 million millionaires and at least 250 billionaires in Germany.

The same ruling class that is calling for austerity measures is enriching itself as never before and spending trillions on armament and war. German imperialism is striving for world power for the third time.

This policy is also supported by all opposition parties in the Bundestag. The Greens are the most furious advocates of war against Russia and supporters of the Israeli genocide of Palestinians. The Left Party approved war credits amounting to €1 trillion in the Bundesrat and facilitated Friedrich Merz’s election as chancellor through its support. It, too, stands firmly on the side of Israel and Ukraine.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) wants to dismantle the welfare state even further and rearm the Bundeswehr even faster than all other parties. That is why it is being deliberately promoted while its anti-migrant policies are being implemented by the other parties at federal and state level.

The attacks being prepared on jobs, wages, pensions and the welfare state cannot be implemented by democratic means. Anyone who has seen the Berlin police beating up opponents of the genocide in Gaza knows what is in store for workers, the unemployed, students and pensioners who protest against the attacks on their livelihoods.

The trade union apparatus cannot be reformed. Anyone who claims otherwise is a fraud, a fool, or at best naive. With their six-figure incomes, trade union officials belong to the wealthy middle class, who have tied their personal fortunes to the capitalist profit system. The apparatchiks must be expelled from the labour movement and their bureaucratic structures dismantled.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) call on

workers to take the initiative in forming action committees that function independently of the trade union apparatus. We assure you of our full support in this endeavour. Every factory, every workplace and every working class neighbourhood must be transformed into a centre of coordinated struggle.

The IWA-RFC is organised internationally, which corresponds to the objective unity of the international working class in the face of globalisation. In every country, workers face the same attacks, to which the nationalist trade unions have no progressive answer.

This is particularly evident in neighbouring France. Following the vote of no confidence against Prime Minister François Bayrou, President Emmanuel Macron appointed his minister of war, Sébastien Lecornu, as his successor. Lecornu is supposed to complete what Bayrou failed to do: cut at least €44 billion in social spending to secure the profits of the rich and finance massive military spending. In the background, the fascist Rassemblement National (RN) is prepared to cut not just €44 billion in social spending, but €100 billion.

In France, too, the trade unions are sabotaging the resistance or leading it astray. After the call for protests on September 20, “Bloquons tout” (Let’s block everything), met with a positive response, the trade unions chose September 18 for symbolic strikes in order to divide and control the movement. Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s La France insoumise party supports the blockades with radical rhetoric but strictly rejects a socialist perspective for overthrowing capitalism.

To cope with the changes in global production, workers need a global orientation and new forms of organisation that transcend national borders.

The working class has immense social power. It is capable of paralysing production, bringing the entire economy to a standstill and overthrowing the ruling class. However, it can only fully develop this power if it organises independently and is clear about its political tasks. What is needed is a socialist perspective that puts the needs and interests of the working class above the profit interests of corporations and the super-rich.

Contact the IWA-RFC via WhatsApp at +491633378340 or using the form below. Decide today to start an action committee in your workplace or neighbourhood!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact