

Stellantis and its European Opel car plants—closure by installments

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Stellantis is responding to declining sales figures with attacks on its production workers. At the Opel plant in Eisenach, where the Grandland SUV is built, the assembly lines came to a standstill again two weeks ago. For the second time in a month, 1,100 employees were forced to take compulsory days off in October.

They are not the only ones: Eisenach is one of six European plants where management halted production temporarily this autumn. In Poissy near Paris, assembly of models such as the Opel Mokka, DS2 and DS3 was suspended for more than two weeks; assembly lines also stopped in Zaragoza (seven days), Tychy in Poland (nine days), Madrid (14 days) and Pomigliano d’Arco near Naples (two weeks).

Over a year ago, in October 2024, the then Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares told leading French financial daily *Les Echos* that Stellantis was explicitly not ruling out plant closures. The CEO—since replaced by Antonio Filosa—stated in the interview that, because of an intensifying tariff and trade war in Europe, up to seven plants could be affected. This could mean the destruction of up to 25,000 jobs, 10 percent of the group’s global workforce.

Since then, Stellantis workers in Italy, France, Spain, Germany and Britain have been acutely threatened by job cuts and plant closures. Meanwhile, the well-paid trade union officials, who falsely claim to represent workers’ interests, are enforcing these attacks while managers and shareholders enrich themselves.

When the Opel plants were transferred from General Motors to PSA in 2017, the WSWs warned:

IG Metall and its works council reps play a central role in enforcing cost-cutting measures. They have been involved in the restructuring process from the beginning. Their aim is to prepare the newly created group for the upheavals in the European car market. In times of trade war, the unions support mergers and acquisitions that allow “their” companies to retain

only the profitable parts of production and cut tens of thousands of “excess capacities.”

Two years later in 2019, PSA merged with Fiat Chrysler to form Stellantis, now the world’s fourth-largest and Europe’s second-largest carmaker (after VW), which includes Opel, as well as Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Citroën, DS Automobiles, Dodge, Fiat, Jeep, Lancia, Maserati, Peugeot and Vauxhall. Since then, the WSWs warning has been completely confirmed.

The strategy of IG Metall and the other unions in Europe—to subordinate workers’ interests to “competitiveness” and a protectionist nationalist policy—has in no way slowed the decline. On the contrary. Year after year, employees have given up wage increases, Christmas bonuses, and holiday pay. Nevertheless, thousands of jobs have been destroyed and entire plants closed, such as the Opel plant in Aspern in July 2024 and the Vauxhall plant in Luton in March 2025.

The threat of closure now hangs over Opel’s Rüsselsheim headquarters in Germany as well. The toolmaking and vehicle development departments have already been shut down. The Rodgau-Dudenhofen test track near Rüsselsheim, which operated for almost 60 years and was widely known across Europe, ceased operations at the end of October. Its 70 kilometres of specialised test tracks were operated most recently by the supplier Segula, which had taken over Opel’s ITEC technical development centre that once employed 7,000 researchers and engineers. Segula itself is now insolvent.

In December 2024, production in Rüsselsheim was cut from two shifts to one. Where once 40,000 employees worked around the clock in three shifts, there are now about 1,500 production workers assembling the Astra and DS4—and nearly half of them are temporary employees, who can be dismissed from one day to the next. There are repeated forced shutdowns with short-time work, followed by overtime and Saturday shifts.

In Rüsselsheim, everyone is asking the anxious question: How much longer before the plant closes? In July, the works council and IG Metall agreed to an aggressive programme of “voluntary” severance packages to implement further job cuts. All measures are carried out explicitly “in consultation with IG Metall and the Opel works council.”

The strategy of IG Metall and the works council has proven disastrous: The bureaucrats have neither opposed the creeping decline nor even slowed it—rather, they have actively organised it. At the same time, IG Metall is preventing any effective struggle by dividing workers into permanent and temporary employees, and into those still employed and those already dismissed.

Particularly destructive is the division and pitting of workers of plant against plant and across borders at a time when a Europe-wide, joint fight for every job is urgently necessary. Works council reps and union bureaucrats do not represent workers’ interests but those of management, shareholders, big business and the government. IG Metall in Germany now openly supports the pro-war policy of the governing coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Social Democrats (SPD) in Berlin.

While new cars pile up unsold and Stellantis complains of an 8 percent drop in European sales, Opel workers can no longer afford the cars they build. Now, they are also expected to shoulder the costs of the global tariff war and competition from East Asia, while the government pushes through a war budget.

Stellantis workers in Canada and the United States recently committed themselves to fighting together, across borders, to defend jobs and wages. Opposing the sellout by their union leaders—who are just as nationalist as IG Metall—these workers are building independent rank-and-file action committees and joining the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC).

These autoworkers face the reactionary MAGA policies of the Trump administration, which United Auto Workers leader Shawn Fain also supports. On October 14, Stellantis announced it would abandon its plan to produce a Jeep model in Canada due to Trump’s tariff policy and instead revive production at a closed US plant in Belvidere, Illinois. This puts workers in both countries under pressure.

Neither the UAW nor its Canadian counterpart Unifor did anything to stop the layoffs. Like IG Metall, these unions act as industrial police to enforce the economic war on behalf of the financial oligarchy. For example, UAW President Fain praised Trump’s tariffs because they had supposedly “brought thousands of good union jobs back to the USA.”

Mack Trucks worker Will Lehman, a member of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), has clearly rejected this. He has

called on Canadian and American workers alike to unite in defence of every job.

Lehman explained: “Our greatest strength is our international unity. The only way to defend our jobs is through cross-border solidarity in struggle.” He urged all workers to build action committees in every workplace, “controlled democratically by workers themselves. This can only succeed if it is independent of the UAW bureaucracy and the two parties of big business, which offer only poverty, war and dictatorship.”

Independent action committees must also be built in Rüsselsheim, Eisenach and at all Stellantis plants. In Germany—once the “export world champion”—the entire automotive and supplier industry is severely affected, which means Stellantis workers will find thousands of allies. The corporations have only one answer to the crisis: job cuts. Of the remaining 716,000 employees in this sector, one in four jobs is threatened. At Volkswagen, Mercedes, Ford, Audi, Bosch, ZF, Schaeffler and elsewhere, managers rely on IG Metall to implement the layoffs.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) is fighting to build a new organisational structure of independent action committees that can give effect to the enormous strength of the working class. This strength consists of the many millions of workers who create the entirety of society’s wealth.

Only in this way will it be possible to stop and reverse the disastrous decline, to link the struggle against mass layoffs and wage cuts with the fight against war, based on the principle espoused by Karl Marx: “Workers of all countries, unite!”



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