

Defend every job at VW!

Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
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Volkswagen is preparing the next round of mass job cuts. Plants in Emden and Zwickau, the commercial vehicle plant in Hanover and the Audi plant in Neckarsulm face closure. All together, 40,000 people work at these plants.

According to a report by *Manager Magazin*, this emerges from a 180-page corporate plan that CEO Oliver Blume presented to the supervisory board at the end of April. Finance daily *Handelsblatt* previously reported on the plan.

The plans go far beyond the previous agreement to cut 35,000 jobs at the core VW brand and a further 15,000 in the overall corporation, which the IG Metall union and the works council had signed at the end of 2024. At that time, they justified their agreement to the job cuts and severe wage cuts with the claim that plant closures were thereby moved off the table. But now the executive board is planning exactly that.

Audi boss Gernot Döllner is even threatening the closure of the entire German car industry. He is quoted in an employee information bulletin as saying: "It has long since ceased to be about a single model or about market shares here or there. It is about the continued existence of the German automobile industry." Some 720,000 people currently work in the car and supplier industries. In addition, there are up to 1.8 million jobs that depend on this directly or indirectly.

The corporate plans make clear that if VW workers do not take up the struggle against this madness, the cuts will know no bounds. Forgoing wages and accepting dismissals do not secure plants, but prepare for their closure. Management wants to cut jobs en masse and enormously increase the exploitation of the remaining workers in order to boost profits, position the corporation for the escalating trade war and convert the German economy to war.

In addition to the main production plants, component plants in Braunschweig, Salzgitter, and Baunatal are in management's crosshairs. The internal employee information bulletin quotes the head of technology and components, Thomas Schmall, as saying: "Now further steps must follow at Group Components to be able to operate competitively in the future." Overall, CEO Blume wants to reduce production capacity in Europe by one million cars.

The significance of these mass cuts goes far beyond VW. The flagship of the German auto industry shapes the entire sector. Dismissals at VW not only immediately destroy thousands of additional jobs in the supplier industry, they also set the pace for other corporations. The defence of jobs and wages at VW is therefore of the greatest importance for the entire working class in Germany and internationally.

But how can this struggle be waged? To answer this question, one must understand what is behind the attack. It is not about losses caused by management mistakes that are now to be recovered. Rather, German industry is to be fundamentally restructured according to the criteria of profit maximisation and war preparation.

VW has a special significance here. In no other German corporation is the collaboration between the owners, the state and the trade unions as close; no other corporation shapes the entire world of work so strongly. The state of Lower Saxony holds 20 percent of the voting rights, and the IG Metall union is involved at all levels of management. On this basis, an

example is being made of VW that the whole car industry is to follow.

Yet the problem is not that VW is no longer selling cars. The corporation's turnover has risen from €254 billion in 2020 to €322 billion in 2025. "VW continues to sell many cars, but earns significantly less money from them," said Lazar Backovic, mobility lead at *Handelsblatt*.

The aim of the restructuring is therefore not to build better and more cars, but to exploit auto workers more intensively in order to increase the profit margin per vehicle. Wage cuts, job cuts and plant closures serve this purpose.

Payouts to shareholders rose from €2.4 to €4.5 billion between 2020 and 2023. The fact that these record payouts fell to €3.2 billion in 2024 and €2.6 billion in 2025 now serves as justification for the cuts. The executive board is aiming for an increase in the return on sales from 2.8 percent to 5.5 percent. By 2030, it is then to rise to 8 to 10 percent.

Workers and their families are supposed to bleed, forgo wages and lose their employment in order to increase the return for shareholders. This principle is to be enforced as the new normal throughout the industry.

At the same time, production is to be converted to a war economy. For the plant in Osnabrück there is already said to be a letter of intent from an Israeli arms company to produce weapons beginning 2027. There have also been talks with major German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall.

VW workers are thus supposed to produce the weapons with which their children or they themselves are sent to war to kill workers of other countries and die for the interests of German imperialism. Volkswagen is returning to its original traditions. Founded in 1937, the company did not produce the previously announced "Peoples Car" (Volkswagen) during the war, but military vehicles for Hitler's war of annihilation. It exploited forced labourers for this.

Today's conversion to a war economy is part of comprehensive war preparations. With the government's new military strategy, Defence Minister Pistorius is planning an open war against the nuclear power Russia. To this end, trillions are being spent on the Bundeswehr to make it the largest armed force in Europe. This madness is financed by ruthless cuts to health, education and pensions.

The proxy war that Germany and the other NATO powers are waging against Russia in Ukraine has already had grave consequences for industry and workers' living standards. The attack on Iran, supported by Chancellor Merz, has further exacerbated this. High energy prices are driving up production costs and leading to further sackings. At the same time, real wages are melting away with rising inflation.

Now this is to be pushed even further to strengthen Germany's position in the global trade war and align society as a whole toward war. VW serves as the benchmark for this.

In the struggle to defend jobs, VW workers therefore face not only the owners and management, but also the government and the entire ruling class. They can win only if they oppose the logic of capitalist profit and warmongering and launch a common struggle with workers all over the world.

The biggest obstacle in this struggle is the IG Metall union. It works most closely with management and acts as a police force in the workplace to suppress any resistance to the mass cuts.

The latest cutbacks are supported by IG Metall. Its first reaction to the corporation's declaration of war on the workforce consisted of playing things down and denying the obvious, so that no resistance developed among the workers.

On 22 April, the union reacted to Blume's announcement to reduce plant capacity to 9 million vehicles with a long, convoluted statement. It declared newspaper headlines such as "VW boss plans mega-cuts" and "VW wants to produce one million fewer cars in Europe" to be "rubbish". This was "all nonsense," it said. "Nowhere" in Blume's remarks were there any indications of mass cuts, according to the union bureaucracy.

That is obviously a lie. The IG Metall union does not dispute the content of Blume's plans at all. Instead, it claims that these are not new and have long been agreed. Blume was "quite clearly providing a description of the situation, which incidentally is anything but new to those who know the corporation (internal as well as external)," explained the union. In other words, it admitted that it has long known about the plans and supports them.

The works council under Daniela Cavallo also stands behind VW's plans. The union statement quotes her as saying: "Overcapacities have simply been a fact across the industry and thus also for the Volkswagen corporation since the end of the pandemic. Oliver Blume's calculations for this are neither new nor has the employee side ever seen this fundamentally differently." For this reason, the "capacity reduction of 734,000 units in German plants is part of the collective agreement from December 2024."

This is a reference to the collective agreement in which the union signed off on the cutting of 35,000 jobs and wage cuts of up to 20 percent. Now, production capacity is to be reduced by a further million. Chief Financial Officer Arno Antlitz declares that the cost reductions planned so far are not sufficient—and the IG Metall describes statements about a further cull as "nonsense!" It is apparently terrified that the workforce will defend itself against these plans.

The union and the VW works council even support the conversion of car plants to war production. In a dpa interview at the beginning of March, works council head Cavallo declared that armament production was an option for the Osnabrück plant.

Support for corporate management's mass cuts and the moves to a war economy result from the logic of the so-called "social partnership," which exists at VW as at no other company. Trade union and works council reps are closely interwoven with management.

In the 1970s, workers could still fight for important rights as part of the system of "co-determination"—which provides so-called "employee representation" on company committees and boards—and compel high wages and good working conditions. But to the extent that globalisation has intensified international competition and fueled the pro-war policy, the role of "social partnership" as a straitjacket for the workers has fully emerged. It binds workers to the company's profit maximisation logic and the government's nationalist policy of making Germany an attractive production location, and serves to enforce the cuts against the employees. The universally known corruption of the IG Metall functionaries is only an expression of this deeper development.

In order to develop resistance against the cutback plans, employees must organise themselves completely independently of the IG Metall union and its works council reps, that is, in the VW Action Committee. This rank-and-file committee pursues the goal of uniting all those who wish to fight—production workers, salaried employees, core and temporary staff. Trade union functionaries have no place in it.

The action committee is organised democratically, i.e., the members have the say. It does not strive for well-paid posts in the co-determination bodies, which are committed to maintaining secrecy and industrial peace. It will, however, use all possibilities—including works council elections—to stand up for its aims.

The action committee defends all jobs at all locations as a matter of principle. It fundamentally rejects concessions on wages, pensions and working conditions. It is not the corporation's cash position, but the struggle that decides the preservation of jobs.

One of the most important tasks of the action committee is linking up with other production locations at home and abroad. It does not allow the corporation's various locations and brands to be played off against each other with the help of the trade unions, to drive a wedge between the workforces in Germany, China, Mexico, the US, the Czech Republic or Spain.

The VW Action Committee is part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which coordinates the growing resistance in workplaces across industries and worldwide.

We recommend VW workers follow the campaign of IWA-RFC member Will Lehman, who is running for the presidency of the American autoworkers union, the United Auto Workers (UAW). Lehman works at the Volvo subsidiary Mack Trucks in Pennsylvania. His goal is not to replace the current UAW apparatus with another, but to abolish the apparatus and hand control over to the members. His campaign is meeting with a strong response among US autoworkers.

When workers take up the struggle, they are inevitably confronted with political questions. The corruption of the trade unions, the jobs cull in industry and the development of war are not simply due to the actions of a few degenerate individuals. They are an expression of the deep crisis of the capitalist system, which has nothing to offer humanity other than poverty, dictatorship and war.

Karl Marx once compared capital to a vampire whose thirst for blood constantly grows. "Capital is dead labour, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks," he wrote. This vampire has grown into a global colossus. Securities, financial instruments and foreign exchange worth trillions circulate daily on the international stock exchanges. The concentration of wealth at the top of society has reached gigantic proportions. Elon Musk is on the verge of becoming the first dollar trillionaire in world history.

These massive concentrations of capital search all over the world for "living labour" they can suck in. They use every wage difference and every competitive advantage to increase profit margins. Technological advances that could raise the living standards of all humanity and make work easier—the international division of labour, e-mobility, robots and artificial intelligence—are used instead to destroy jobs, intensify levels of exploitation and increase profits.

Financial and economic crises are piling up. The bitter struggle for markets and raw materials has, as in the First and Second World Wars, once again taken the form of violent military conflicts. This is the reason for the wars that the US and the European powers are waging against Russia and against Iran, and for their war preparations against China. They want to control the energy resources of the Middle East and the raw materials of Russia in order to dominate the world economy and blackmail their rivals. The imperialist powers are fighting for a redivision of the world and are prepared to plunge all of humanity into a nuclear inferno for this purpose.

But globalisation has not only exacerbated the crisis of capitalism. It has also welded the international working class together into a powerful revolutionary force. Today, it encompasses billions worldwide who are closely connected to each other through the production process and social networks, and who come into open conflict with the globally operating corporations, the capitalist governments and their allies in the trade union apparatus.

The struggle to defend jobs must base itself on the international working class, and not on the "social partnership" with the VW owners of the Porsche-Piëch clan, the Emir of Qatar and other shareholders who rake in billions in dividends every year.

The struggle to defend jobs can be waged successfully only if it is guided by a perspective that places the social needs of the working class above the profit interests of the corporations, and becomes the starting point for an international struggle against capitalism and war:

- For the expropriation of VW under the democratic control of the workers.
- For a workers' government that does not submit to the dictates of the banks and business associations.
- For the reorganisation of society on a socialist basis.

The working class needs a party that represents its interests. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) has not done this for decades, and the Left Party, which goes back to the Stalinist state party in the former East Germany, has never done it.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, Socialist Equality Party), the German section of the Fourth International, stands in the tradition of Marx and Engels, August Bebel, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, Lenin and Trotsky. It has defended and further developed the perspective of international socialism.

We invite all VW employees: Get in touch with the SGP! Read the *World Socialist Web Site*. It analyses important events every day—in English, German and other languages—reports on international labour struggles and develops a perspective! Become a member of the SGP!

Get in touch with the VW Action Committee to become active now. Send a message via WhatsApp to +491633378340 and register via the form below.



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