# VW Action Committee proposes a fighting programme for autoworkers in Germany: Defend every job, break with the union apparatus, no war production

**Volkswagen Action Committee**
**21 September 2026**

*IG Metall staged its "day of action" on September 21, with nationwide, plant-level protests in the auto and supplier industries. The VW Action Committee issued the following fighting programme for auto and supplier workers, starting from the fact that IG Metall representatives voted through a further 50,000 job cuts at Volkswagen on September 3.*

The auto plants in Germany are seething. Opposition and anger over the shameless sell-out of our jobs, and over the close collaboration between IG Metall union officials and corporate management, are growing by the day. Recently, in an open letter, IG Metall shop stewards and works council members at Mercedes warned the union executive board of growing resistance to the sell-out.

The impression should be avoided that the union was "only protesting with the handbrake on," wrote the Mercedes shop stewards in August, calling for resistance "up to and including strike action." But such appeals are useless, or serve only as an alibi, unless they are coupled with wresting the initiative from the IG Metall executive and organising genuine industrial action.

Which side the IG Metall leadership and its bureaucratic apparatus stand on is not an open question. Everyone knows they crossed over to the other side of the barricades long ago. They sit on company supervisory boards, call themselves and act as "co-managers," and are handsomely paid for it—not to say bribed. They agree with corporate management that cutbacks, layoffs and rationalisation measures are unavoidable, and enforce them with brute force.

They are not protesting "with the handbrake on." Rather, any protests are staged as part of a rigged game—meant to let off steam while the union bureaucracy agrees to further mass layoffs, wage cuts and social cutbacks.

The answer from IG Metall HQ to the open letter from the Mercedes shop stewards' committee came promptly.

At the beginning of September, the VW supervisory board approved the destruction of a further 50,000 jobs at a secret overnight meeting—without any discussion with us, the workforce. The so-called "employee representatives," led by IG Metall Chairwoman Christiane Benner and works council chairwoman Daniela Cavallo, together with the Lower Saxony state government led by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), hold a majority on the supervisory board and could have blocked every plan. Instead, they agreed in full to the diktats of the billionaire Porsche-Piëch clan who hold a controlling stake in VW. Together with the cuts already agreed, the job cuts at Volkswagen in Germany alone now total 75,000.

The crisis in the auto industry, with its massive impact on many other branches of industry, has reached the point at which a fight becomes unavoidable. Waiting is not an option! Further mass layoffs, plant closures, wage cuts and the conversion of parts of industry to arms production are already well under way.

The central question is who decides the future of jobs—we, the workers, or the owners and their representatives in corporate management, in the government and in the union apparatus?

We propose the following fighting programme:

**1. Defend every job!**

The right to work and to a decent wage takes precedence over the right of shareholders, the owners and financial investors to profit and make maximum returns.

We, the workers, create society's wealth. Our labour produces the vehicles, machines, components and services that are needed and on which society depends.

The question is therefore not how many jobs a corporation can still "afford" under current profit conditions, but how production must be developed in the interests of the workers and of society as a whole.

When the billionaires claim that mass layoffs, wage cuts and plant closures are indispensable to save their profit system, they are declaring only one thing, namely that capitalism has reached its end and is no longer compatible with the vital interests of the population. If there is something society can no longer afford, it is not jobs, decent wages and social benefits—it is the super-rich owners of capital and the billionaire oligarchs.

This is particularly evident at VW. The fortune of the Porsche and Piëch families—an estimated €40 billion—rests on Nazi terror, on expropriated trade union assets and on the exploitation of forced labourers. In the 1930s, Ferdinand Porsche and Anton Piëch collaborated with Hitler; VW's founding capital came from the assets of the trade unions banned in 1933. This wealth was generated by generations of workers. The situation is similar at BMW with the Quandt family, who hold about half of the company's voting shares.

**2. Break the control of the IG Metall apparatus! Instead of submission—expropriation and workers' control over production!**

IG Metall and the works councils stand exposed as accomplices and co-conspirators of the billionaires. They are responding to pressure from

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below with authoritarian measures and restrictions on union democracy. They stand completely on the side of management and are the organisers of the slash-and-burn policy.

That is why the union apparatus must have its mandate withdrawn. The workforce must take matters into its own hands. At all sites, production must be placed under workers' control. All of society's resources must serve the social needs of the working class rather than the profit interests of the rich.

As an immediate measure, all secret negotiations between the IG Metall leadership, the works council barons and corporate management must be halted—that is, placed under the control of trusted colleagues. No agreement to deals and contracts without prior discussion and a vote by the rank-and-file.

Instead of layoffs, shorter working hours with no loss of pay. That also means no further speed-ups and no further wage sacrifices.

**3. No war production! The fight against job cuts and the fight against rearmament belong together**

The crisis in the auto industry is not a temporary cyclical downturn that will calm down in the foreseeable future. Nor is it a structural or transformation crisis brought about by the switch to e-mobility, which will be overcome once the new technology succeeds.

Rather, the crisis in auto is a consequence of the historic crisis of the capitalist system on a world scale. The close international integration and globalisation of production has meant that in no country is there any longer a "national" car—or any other purely national product. It has enormously intensified the contradiction between international production and the outdated nation-state system on which capitalism is based.

Every country is now fighting for raw materials, energy sources and markets, and the international trade war is becoming the prelude to a world war. In the last century, this historic crisis of capitalism already produced fascist dictatorships and two world wars.

Today, too, the fight against war is once again moving to the centre of the class struggle. The German government is pursuing the largest rearmament programme since Hitler and is financing it with massive social cuts affecting the unemployed, pensioners, schools and the healthcare system.

The conversion to arms production is an essential part of this war policy. For the VW plant in Osnabrück, a sale agreement with the Israeli arms company Rafael is already imminent; components for the "Iron Dome" defence system are to be manufactured there in future.

Workers' control over production therefore also means drawing up and discussing plans for how the fight against mass layoffs can be linked with the mobilisation against war and rearmament.

**4. Build independent rank-and-file action committees! Counter the nationalist "defence of individual plants" with the international unity of the working class!**

The dictatorship of the IG Metall apparatus can and must be overcome. The great class battles of the past, in which workers won the eight-hour day, sick pay and other social and political rights, were not in vain. Today, too, major class struggles are inevitable.

We demand preparations for coordinated strikes at all sites—and further industrial action up to and including the occupation of plants and departments threatened with closure.

But this requires a new organisational structure—independent action committees elected by the workers themselves, accountable to the workforce and free of full-time union officials and works council barons. These committees must overcome the isolation of individual plants imposed by IG Metall and unite workforces across sites, industries and borders.

The fight against global corporations that pursue an international strategy cannot be won within a national framework. Every concession by the unions in one country encourages the corporations to intensify their attacks worldwide. That is why we counter the nationalism of "defending individual plants"—with which the union bureaucrats play workers in one country off against their colleagues in other countries—with the international unity of the working class. Workers have no country—not in war and not in trade war.

We have begun building the VW Action Committee as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), and we call on you to do the same in every plant. We need this new, grassroots-democratic organisational structure to coordinate workers struggles in different plants, industries and countries. Only in this way can we break the paralysing pressure of the IG Metall apparatus, which reduces us to supplicants and beggars while stuffing its own pockets.

The building of action committees is the opening of a global counteroffensive of the working class and will transform the situation and mood in every plant from bewilderment to confidence.

Our model in this struggle is the campaign of American autoworker Will Lehman, who works at Mack Trucks in Pennsylvania. He is a socialist and an internationalist and is running for president of the US autoworkers' union, the UAW. Lehman is demonstrating how a principled struggle must be waged. It is not about "reforming" the bureaucracy but about mobilising the broadest layers of autoworkers to abolish the bureaucracy, transfer power to the rank and file and win back the union's resources for us workers.

**Fellow auto workers, act now!**

Waiting is not an option. Nothing will change until we change it. Get in touch with us via the contact form or by sending a WhatsApp message to +49 163 3378340.

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