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Europe's fascistic policy of mass infection: People will be “vaccinated, recovered or dead,” German health minister says

As the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic comes to a close, it is clear that governments across Europe and the world have no policy to halt mass infections or deaths. Despite vast scientific research on the virus, and the vaccination of two-thirds of the European Union's (EU) population, around 4,000 people are dying of COVID-19 every day in Europe as the virus surges.



A coronavirus patient breathes with an oxygen mask at a tent hospital for COVID-19 patients in Kakhovka, Ukraine, Sunday, Oct. 31, 2021. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka)

Outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted yesterday: “We have a situation that will surpass everything we have had so far.”

Last week saw over 2.4 million COVID-19 infections in Europe, the most of any week since the pandemic began. Record infections are occurring in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Czechia, Slovakia, and soon Belgium. Yet after the German parliament on Thursday scrapped its finding of an “epidemic situation of national scope,” ending the legal basis for nationwide public health measures needed to contain COVID-19, outgoing Health Minister Jens Spahn bluntly stated the fascistic indifference to mass death that prevails in ruling circles.

“At the end of the winter, pretty much everyone in Germany will, as it’s sometimes been put a bit cynically, be vaccinated, recovered or dead,” Spahn said, adding: “With the highly infectious Delta variant, it’s very likely that anyone who is not vaccinated will get infected in the next few months unless they’re very, very careful ...”

After nearly 1.4 million COVID-19 deaths in Europe, the European bourgeoisie has fully adopted UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s anti-social mantra: “No more f*cking lockdowns, let the bodies pile high in their thousands.” Insofar as scientific health policies to eliminate transmission of the virus would cost hundreds of billions of euros and lessen the flow of profits to the major corporations and banks, they will not be tolerated.

What Spahn was advocating is unrestrained political criminality of genocidal scope. There is no public campaign to educate the EU’s 157 million unvaccinated people on the necessity of vaccination and to provide access to vaccines. Tens of millions more are waiting for booster shots as breakthrough infections of vaccinated people mount. Unlimited circulation of the virus under these conditions would totally swamp hospitals with gravely ill patients in the tens of millions. It would leave millions more suffering from Long COVID and other debilitating chronic illnesses.

As the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has insisted from the beginning of the pandemic, only an international movement in the working class can end COVID-19. For this, it must be armed with a clear political and scientific analysis of the pandemic and the murderous response of the capitalist governments and parties.

The parties in the incoming German government—the Social-Democratic Party (SPD), Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Green Party—openly boast of their hostility to social distancing. Marco Buschmann (FDP), considered a likely Justice Minister, gloated on Twitter: “We have removed measures such as lockdowns, blanket school and business closures or curfews from the law. These can no longer be applied.”

With his statement Buschmann summed up not only the views of the new ruling coalition, but of the entire ruling class. The push to end the “epidemic situation” originally came from Spahn. The decision was supported by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and by the Left Party, which imposes a profit-before-lives policy in German states that it governs with the SPD and the Greens.

The partial lockdown imposed by the Austrian government, to prevent a collapse of the hospital system now underway in several provinces, will not prevent death on a horrific scale. Most non-essential workplaces and schools will remain open, letting the virus circulate. While partial lockdowns place drastic restrictions on the population’s movements after work or school, masses of workers sense that such lockdowns will not end the pandemic.

Indeed, over 700,000 people died in Europe from November 2020 to April 2021, with such partial lockdowns in place across much of the continent.

The re-imposition of lockdowns in Austria and calls for more public health restrictions elsewhere is triggering a wave of far-right protests against vaccine certificates and social distancing measures. Some 30,000 protesters marched and clashed with police in Brussels on Sunday, after Dutch police traded fire with anti-vaccine protesters in Rotterdam, and violent anti-vaccine protests shook the French overseas territory of Guadeloupe.

The sharpest warnings are necessary. Outside the ICFI, no political movement has advocated the elimination of the virus and put forward a perspective to end the pandemic. EU governments endlessly lied—claiming that COVID-19 is a “little flu,” that masks do not help protect against it, that children do not catch or transmit the virus, or that vaccination by itself would stop the pandemic. Parties falsely promoted as “left” by capitalist media, such as Germany’s Left Party or Spain’s Podemos, imposed the same deadly policies as right-wing parties in local and national office.

Under conditions where millions of people do not see any perspective or hope for an end to the pandemic, neo-fascist parties across Europe are exploiting growing popular frustration and anger, demanding that lockdowns, vaccination and necessary health policies be ended. A dangerous cult of death is emerging, driven by the financial interests of the ruling elite, that threatens to gather around itself the mass base for a fascist movement.

For now, the far right does not have support in the majority of the working class, which throughout the pandemic again and again has fought to protect society from the virus.

A wave of wildcat strikes in auto, manufacturing and meatpacking, mainly in Southern Europe and North America, forced governments to impose strict lockdowns in spring 2020. However, these governments refused to set up track-and-trace policies that could have prevented the remaining infections from turning into a new wave of the pandemic. When that new wave surged, renewed strikes and protests erupted against it, including school strikes in Greece, France and Germany.

The current pandemic upsurge comes amid an international eruption of strikes from Deere, Volvo and Dana in the United States to German train drivers and health workers, Spanish steelworkers, and Portuguese public sector workers.

This points to the great significance of the Global Workers Inquest into the pandemic launched by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The working class can fight the pandemic. However, under the fog of lies told by state officials and the media, beset by hostile political forces intent only on defending the profits of the banks and major corporations, it could not spontaneously impose the policies needed to stop mass deaths.

No political tendency outside the ICFI explained that the cost of the trillions being added to the net worth of billionaires worldwide was the failure to halt the pandemic and save millions of lives. Workers were denied scientific knowledge that a period of strict lockdown to cut contagion, followed by track-and-trace policies and mass vaccination, can halt the virus. Such policies were not adopted, moreover, because all the established parties and the union bureaucracies functioned not as servants of the people, but tools of the banks.

Armed with a clear political and scientific understanding, however, the working class can defeat the financial aristocracy and the mounting fascist danger, and halt the pandemic. We encourage workers and youth internationally to participate in the Global Workers Inquest, contribute their experiences, and to make its contents and conclusions widely known in the working class.

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