

Good news: privatisation of the German railway halted

Sunday 18 November 2007, by [GIEGOLD Sven](#) (Date first published: 18 November 2007).

Dear colleagues,

A coalition of unions, NGOs, social movement organisations and public transport experts, led by Attac Germany, has halted the project to privatise the German railway. It is the first major civil society victory against neoliberal projects of the governing big coalition.

After G8 Attac Germany has concentrated its forces on the campaign against the privatisation. While the national campaign was run by a large coalition including the services union ver.di, Friends of the Earth and many others, the grassroots activity was mainly carried by Attac's local groups. The office of the campaign is situated in Attac Germany's office in Frankfurt.

Under the pressure of several national days of action, coordinated pressure on members of parliament (in particular of the governing social-democrats and conservatives), the internal contradictions in the big coalition became so important, that the project is now in a political deadlock. It is not assured, that the privatisation is really stopped, but it seems likely.

The success was possible through a combination of several tools on a massive scale over a longer period of time, including:

- * massive e-mail protest to members of parliament
- * "flash mob" creative actions in 80 stations
- * lobbying of key parliamentarians
- * actions in and in front of the social-democrats' (SPD) party conference
- * three petition campaigns against the privatisation for members of the social-democratic party, unionists as well as ordinary citizens
- * massive leafleting in trains and to commuters (400.000)
- * several spectacular banner-hanging actions at stations, including a huge banner at Berlin main station
- * production and distribution of a film against the privatisation

- * popular campaign website: www.deinebahn.de ("your railway")
- * enlarging the campaign coalition to more and more organisations
- * permanent media work co-ordinated by a campaign secretariat

As the big coalition has a comfortable two-third majority in both chambers of the German parliament, the victory was only possible through:

a) convincing several unions as well as local and regional chapters of the SPD to join the campaign. The politically corrupt union of German railway workers came under pressure by an internal opposition group as well as the competing union ver.di which joined the campaign. Just before the party conference of the SPD in October the social-democratic youth organisation, Jusos, and Germany's largest union "IGmetall" joined the anti-privatisation campaign. The social-democrats, under pressure of the new left party, want to renew their image as a force for social justice. Therefore, they are and were the weak point in the neoliberal coalition. The SPD delegates voted for conditions for the privatisation which are unacceptable for the conservatives. This led to a political deadlock for the privatisation.

b) splits in the coalition how to privatise the railways.

Attac Germany's general assembly this weekend has decided to sustain the campaign for the case that the privatisation will see a "rebirth".

The victory has created a general good mood in our network which proved capable of running effective campaigns putting all forces of the organisation as well as network building capacities together.

In co-operation

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