

Germany: Support the WISAG workers' struggle at Rhein-Main Airport against dismissals and wage theft!

Build the Socialist Equality Party!

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28 February 2021

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) calls for the defence of the WISAG workers and to support their industrial action!

For several days, about 30 ground workers of WISAG at Rhein-Main Airport have been on hunger strike. They are reacting to their dismissal and months of wage robbery by WISAG management. The workers' motto is: "Today it's us, tomorrow it's you!" The company sacked 230 ground workers just before Christmas, including 31 bus drivers who have not been paid since October.

The brutal action of WISAG management is not an isolated case

Many employers are shamelessly exploiting the horrors of the coronavirus pandemic to increase the profits of the financial oligarchy by smashing up the rights of the working class. Hundreds of thousands of workers are affected: they lose wages, company pensions and other gains, and many thousands also lose their jobs and thus their livelihoods.

Therefore, the struggle of the WISAG workers cannot be seen in isolation: It is part of a growing willingness to fight in many companies. As it says in one of the greetings sent to the workers: "You are not alone, you are the first."

This greeting was written by the Network of Action Committees for Secure Jobs. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei supports such committees, which coordinate the resistance internationally and are preparing a European-wide general strike. We also propose that the WISAG workers form such an action committee and contact us.

The founding statement of the Network of Action Committees for Secure Jobs says: "We fight to defend every single job and demand a public employment programme in socially important areas like education, health, culture and environmental protection. Human lives are more important than profits! Until the pandemic is under control, all non-

essential workplaces must be closed, with full wage compensation for all affected workers."

The WISAG hunger strike shows all the problems that are depriving millions of workers of sleep

The corporations have pocketed billions in government aid during the coronavirus pandemic while putting workers on short-time rations. And they are using the pandemic to push through long-planned attacks. At Fraport and Lufthansa, entire divisions are being spun off and tens of thousands of jobs are being cut. At the insolvent ground service provider Swissport Losch in Munich, 900 jobs are on the line.

The situation is particularly bad in the auto industry and its suppliers. There, hundreds of thousands of jobs are being cut and workers' rights are being crushed, while companies like VW, BMW and Daimler report profits in the billions. At Opel, since the transition to the Stellantis group, workers have to fear the introduction of 12-hour shifts, the loss of company pensions and even worse.

For the past year, workers have borne the brunt of the pandemic. As co-called "essential labour," they toil under the acute danger of the pandemic, and short-time working means their already low wages are reduced to 60 percent. Often—as at WISAG at the airport—both apply at the same time. Officially, the WISAG group has announced short-time working, but at the same time, dozens of planes are being handled at the airport every day and some are toiling harder than ever before.

Workers are also exposed to the daily danger of falling ill with COVID-19. As is the case almost everywhere, there are always too few masks and other protective equipment at WISAG, and the numerous COVID-19 cases are covered up. In Germany, almost 70,000 people have died from coronavirus; across Europe, the figure is already 800,000 and stands at 2.5 million worldwide. This alone shows that the ruling class is willing to walk over corpses in securing

their profits.

The WISAG workers ' hunger strike must become the prelude to a new stage in the class struggle

Those on the picket line are not only confronted with WISAG's owners, the Wisser family, one of the 300 richest and best-connected families in Germany, they are also up against ministers in the Hesse state and federal government who stand behind them, as well as the media, the trade unions and the bourgeois state.

In Berlin, all the establishment parties, from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the Left Party, agreed the multi-billion-euro "coronavirus bailout" programme for the banks and corporations. They are all reacting to the crisis of capitalism by moving closer together and forming a common front against the working class. For them, German economic interests stand higher than the health, life and welfare of working people.

In the Hesse state capital Wiesbaden, Transport Minister Tarek Al-Wazir (Green Party) has set the course for WISAG at the airport, although their patrons Claus and Michael Wisser do not even respect the collective agreement. Ever since Joschka Fischer's rise, the Greens have played a key role in Hesse. Today, in the Green Party-Christian Democratic Party coalition in Wiesbaden, they work closely with the right-wing CDU. State Premier Volker Bouffier and state legislature president Boris Rhein (both CDU) refuse to expose the right-wing extremist networks responsible for the racist murders in Hanau and the assassination of leading CDU member Walter Lübcke in Kassel at the hands of a known neo-Nazi.

As for the media, including the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Hessenschau*, they have been trying to silence news on the hunger strike for days. They fear that the dispute could be the spark to set off an even wider struggle. Only the *World Socialist Web Site* has clearly taken sides with the WISAG workers from the beginning.

The trade unions, especially the service sector union Verdi, are also firmly on the side of the governments and companies. Verdi, Ufo (cabin crew) and Cockpit (pilots) have constantly pushed through new attacks on working conditions at the airport. At Lufthansa, they offered the company wage cuts, social cuts and layoffs on an unprecedented scale, while board members collected annual salaries in the tens of millions of euros and union officials and works council representatives received fat bonuses. At Lufthansa, for example, Verdi official Christine Behle alone receives €140,000 a year.

The sector trade union IGL, which legally represents the WISAG workers, also basically has the same nationalist programme as Verdi, which is oriented towards the welfare of German big business. In the struggle against WISAG,

nothing comes from the IGL but empty words and petitions to the unscrupulous Wisser business family. In the background, the union is preparing new attacks on the workers together with the company management.

The working class confronts political tasks! It needs its own party in the struggle for its rights and interests!

The common front of all the capitalist parties, the companies and trade unions shows that workers are again confronted with big historical questions. Capitalism will again lead to mass death, misery and war if the working class does not intervene independently in the political process and transform society along socialist lines.

The ruling class is prepared to do anything and is increasingly resorting to authoritarian and fascistic methods again. Donald Trump's January 6 attempted coup was an international warning: and here in Germany, too, right-wing terrorist structures within the police and army are being covered up by the highest authorities and the programme of the far-right AfD is being put into practice by all the parliamentary parties.

Workers must prepare for a confrontation and build their own party. The SGP mobilises the working class based on an international, socialist programme. It draws upon all the historical lessons and experiences of the workers' movement for 150 years, since the Paris Commune first challenged bourgeois power in March 1871.

We call for support for the struggle of the WISAG workers and give it a conscious political direction. Support the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei in its campaign for the 2021 federal election and help build it as the German section of the Fourth International!



To contact the WWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wws.org/contact