

WISAG rally in Wiesbaden: “We do not place our hopes in the parties, in the state assembly or in the Bundestag.”

Marianne Arens—Bundestag candidate for the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei
17 March 2021

Around 200 ground workers from Frankfurt Airport took part in Tuesday’s rally in Wiesbaden in front of the Hesse state assembly to protest against their arbitrary dismissal. The service company WISAG is using the pandemic as a pretext to throw 260 experienced, long-serving workers out on the street in the foulest way. The workers have already been fighting against this for three months and, as well as numerous demonstrations and rallies, held a hunger strike for eight days in Terminal 1 of Frankfurt Airport.

We publish here the speech delivered at the rally by Marianne Arens, a candidate of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) for the Bundestag (federal parliament) elections.

Good afternoon, my name is Marianne Arens and I am an executive committee member of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party).

This rally is very important because it highlights the anger and resistance that is building up in the working class. Those who thought workers would accept mass layoffs and be led like lambs to the slaughter were wrong.

The workers who are demonstrating here at the Hesse state assembly are fighting like lions for their jobs. They have been demonstrating and fighting for three months, and they even held a hunger strike at the airport for eight days. They are determined not to give up.

This demonstration is an indictment of the WISAG group and its allies in the political system.

The WISAG corporation is using the pandemic to fire hundreds of long-serving workers and make a buck for itself. It is cold-bloodedly throwing workers out on the street who have carried out backbreaking and professional work at the airport for decades.

WISAG is even throwing out workers who have toiled at the airport for forty years, ruining their health, and replacing them with temporary staff, thus depressing the general wage level for everyone.

With their resistance, the WISAG workers have shown the

world the unvarnished face of capitalist society. In the past weeks, they have experienced that not a single establishment party, no public authority and also none of the big trade unions are on their side. The service union Verdi at the airport has not lifted a finger for them!

The parties here in the Hesse state parliament gave WISAG access to the airport. The Green Party Minister of Economics, Tarik Al-Wazir, has publicly defended WISAG’s takeover of the concessions at the airport.

All parties have actively supported the orgy of deregulation at the airport introduced as part of the single European aviation market. They created the legal basis to destroy secure and well-paid jobs. It was the Social Democratic Party-Green Party government of Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer that opened up a huge low-wage labour market with the Hartz laws.

It used to be a dream job to work at the airport—today it is a nightmare.

For all the establishment parties, from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to the Left Party, the profit interests of German big business come first and far ahead of securing the lives of working people. This can be seen particularly blatantly in their policies on the coronavirus pandemic: share prices are rising at the same rate as the piles of corpses of COVID-19 victims.

2.7 million people have died from coronavirus and a hundred million have lost their livelihoods. The World Bank estimates that about 120 million people worldwide have lost everything because of the pandemic.

WISAG’s naked policy of exploitation is the new business model! Everywhere the pandemic is used to enforce massive social attacks. At the airport, mass dismissals are also being imposed at Lufthansa, Fraport, Airbus and everywhere. In production, especially in the car industry, half a million jobs are on the line in Germany alone.

The WISAG workers have chosen their slogan of struggle wisely: “Today it’s us—tomorrow you!” Workers

everywhere face the same problems, and in many places strike action is being prepared.

WISAG and its owners the Wisser family claim it is their right to do what they want with workers' jobs. But they are wrong. Workers no longer accept this. For them, work is the only source of income and the basis of their existence. Their lives and needs—and those of their families!—stand higher than the profit interests of the corporations and the super-rich.

I have spoken to many WISAG workers recently and the question came up: What is this actually about? It quickly became clear, it's not about handouts. Workers are not beggars. Workers have rights! And the right to work and a decent wage is a fundamental right!

But to enforce this, we need a clear political perspective.

A few days ago, we celebrated the 150th birthday of Rosa Luxemburg. The great Marxist and internationalist was also often here in Hesse and spoke at crowded workers' meetings—for example in the Titania in Frankfurt Bockenheim.

Rosa Luxemburg always and repeatedly emphasised that the problems of the workers cannot be solved within the framework of the capitalist system of exploitation. And the question she dealt with—"Social reform or revolution?"—this question has been finally decided today!

The best proof of this is the anti-social, arrogant, aggressive behaviour of WISAG and its owners the Wisser family. The time of supposed "social partnership" is irrevocably over. All the talk about improving conditions through co-determination has been clearly refuted. The works councils sit on the supervisory boards and act as co-managers in the interests of the corporations.

Rosa Luxemburg would say: You must see your industrial struggle in a wider political context. The profit interests of the ruling class are irreconcilably opposed to the life interests of the workers. There is no way to reconcile the two.

Therefore, a socialist perspective and an international strategy are necessary.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei stands in this Marxist tradition. We do not put our hopes in the parties in the state assembly or the federal parliament. We know that they are responsible for the conditions that are destroying our lives. They have made the laws that allow oligarchs like Wisser to exploit and disenfranchise workers in such a way.

We can also do without crocodile tears and feigned solidarity.

We are fighting to extend the industrial action of the WISAG workers. For this, it is necessary to build up independent rank-and-file committees and to prepare a European-wide general strike. The aim must be to

expropriate the big corporations and to reorganise social life according to the needs of the people.

Here in front of the state assembly and the state government of Hesse, we can't help but also think about the fascist murders the Christian Democrat-Green Party state executive is covering up and hiding: the murder of Walter Lübcke, the Hanau murders and the threatening emails from Frankfurt police officers to the lawyer Seda Ba?ay-Y?ld?z that just won't stop. This government has locked away its archive data on the relations between the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU) with the secret service over the course of the last 30 years, instead of making it available to the public.

This same government deports people mercilessly. Only recently, a 60-year-old woman was deported who had lived and worked here for 35 years and raised five children, one of them disabled. Every week, people are deported, even if they have lived and worked here for decades and are fully integrated into society.

This state government may express regret for the layoffs at WISAG, but it will do nothing to give the airport workers back their full rights and jobs. It has proven that it will walk over dead bodies.

The alternative is, as Rosa Luxemburg said, socialism or barbarism. And whoever decides against barbarism today must first support the struggle of these workers against arbitrary dismissals and wage theft. That is the appeal we are making today to all workers—at all WISAG sites, at all airports and throughout production. Above all, we are also addressing the metalworkers who are currently participating in protest strikes.

The industrial action of the WISAG workers is a turning point. It must be the launchpad for a broad political movement against exploitation. That is our only way into the future.

Thank you.



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