

Ford Action Committee (Germany): For an international fight to defend our jobs and livelihoods

Ford Action Committee (Germany)
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Two months after the official announcement of the end of Ford's Saarlouis plant, the IG Metall union and the Works Council, led by Markus Thal, are working to wind down the plant. If it is left to them, their so-called "fight for Saarlouis" is over.

In reality, it has not even started. We call on Ford workers in Saarlouis, in alliance with Ford workers in Valencia, Cologne and all other international locations, to unite and to coordinate and jointly prepare a real struggle to defend jobs, wages and achievements—in short, our livelihoods.

From the beginning, the rank-and-file Ford Action Committee has warned against participation in the bidding war between our plants in Saarlouis and Almussafes (Valencia). On January 29, we wrote in our first appeal: "On principle, we reject the blackmail and brutal competition being instigated between us and workers at other plants. Playing one off against the other leads to disaster, because it would not be long before the so-called winner would then have to compete against lower wages in Romania or Turkey. There is no end to this downward spiral."

In recent weeks, more and more Ford workers have made contact who now see that this warning has come true—and that it is necessary to organize independently of Thal and his works council colleagues.

This is the reason Thal reacts so irritably and claims that "forces from outside" (meaning the Ford Action Committee) are splitting the workforce.

For Thal, the unity of all Ford workers means to remain being led by him like sheep to the slaughter. For more than half a year, he has insisted on relying on the negotiations with Ford in the intra-company bidding war between the plants in Saarlouis and Valencia. After

Saarlouis was knocked out, he claimed that his trust in Ford had been betrayed. In the same breath, he then declared that the "fight" would begin now for a so-called "social collective agreement", i.e., for an orderly wind-down of our plant.

When Thal speaks of a "struggle," he always means his conspiracy with management against the workforce. He continues to ask us to stay quiet. He demands "resilient figures, data or facts" from Ford, saying that management has an "absolute duty to demonstrate resilient perspectives for Ford."

But the "figures, data and facts" are clear: The plant will close on May 31, 2025, at the latest (and more likely earlier). Then 4,500 Ford workers and many of the almost 2,000 in the adjacent supplier park will become unemployed and will have to look for work elsewhere or will be sent into retirement.

Ford's own perspective is to use the transition to electric mobility, the coronavirus pandemic and now the war in Ukraine to enrich shareholders at the expense of some 190,000 workers around the world. To do this, it is destroying jobs and making the remaining employees work harder for less money.

That has been Jim Farley's agenda since he took over as chairman of the global corporation in October 2020.

Hardly a week goes by without Ford announcing new attacks and cuts. At the end of July, Ford announced it would cut another 8,000 jobs—mostly in the United States. Those affected are mainly employees in the administration of Ford Blue, the division the company split off for the production of vehicles with combustion engines, separating it from the division for the production of electric vehicles--Ford Model E. Now, Ford Blue is being sold off like a "bad bank."

Our plant in Saarlouis and our fellow workers in Valencia are victims of this, as are the two plants in India that Ford has divested. One has been sold to Indian car manufacturer Tata; the plant in Chennai has been closed a month later than planned after an almost eight-week strike.

But the shareholders are happy! In the second quarter, Ford earned \$667 million, about 19 percent more than a year ago, even though its stake in electric car developer Rivian and factory closures in China due to COVID outbreaks hurt its earnings. Adjusted operating profits rose to \$3.7 billion from \$1.1 billion. Ford's stock jumped more than 5 percent when earnings were announced in early July.

Ford has reaffirmed its profit targets for the full year. Management is constantly "actively" looking for ways to implement billions in savings that can then be invested in electric mobility, the annual report said.

It is an iron principle of capitalism that shareholder interests take precedence over our jobs and wages. But our jobs are our livelihood. We can no longer subordinate them to the profit principle. Shareholders and managers do not build cars. We generate the profits. Accordingly, we must also have control over what happens to the money we earn for the company.

IG Metall and all other unions around the world reject this. For them, we are at best humble petitioners without any rights, who must do whatever management, the union and the works council representatives say. While the works council under Thal and the works council in Valencia under José Luís Parra are selling out our jobs, wages and social standards, the future of the works council members is secure. High severance payments, lucrative replacement jobs in company-owned or state-owned transfer companies, residual operations, etc. will sweeten their farewells.

This must stop. We must take the initiative and stand up to the works council. Our jobs and our livelihoods are at stake.

We must become active now and make contact with our fellow workers at neighbouring plants in the supplier park, throughout Saarland and the entire auto industry. As an action committee, we have already organized joint meetings with Ford workers from India and the USA and will expand this work.

We can only be successful here in Saarlouis if we

regard our struggle to defend the plant as part of the growing resistance around the world. Not only Ford, but the entire auto industry is being restructured on the backs of workers. Governments and corporations are collaborating with the trade unions to smash workers' social rights—gains we have fought for over generations.

The costs for the horrendous military rearmament and the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine are being passed on to us workers. At the same time, our health is being sacrificed to corporate profits because of the government's policy of allowing the coronavirus to run wild. Real wages are also being massively reduced through energy surcharges and inflation.

We must link our struggle in Saarlouis with the other struggles in the auto industry, the protests against the natural gas surcharge and the mass struggles of workers all over the world. Internationally, more than 50 action committees have already been formed, many of them in the auto industry. We must network with them in the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees and organize joint resistance. The international strategy of the Ford corporation requires an international counterstrategy from us.

The first step is to contact us and strengthen the Ford Action Committee, which we will extend to all supplier factories. Contact us by sending a Whatsapp message to the following number: +491633378340 or register here for the action committee.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact