



STRIKE AT FORD COLOGNE

For the last week Ford's Cologne plant has been on strike, and 34,000 workers are idle. What's it all about?

300 TURKISH WORKERS SACKED

Ever since the signing of last winter's contract tension has been high in the plant. Workers have been faced with speed-up, and fast rising prices and rents have made it more and more difficult to manage.

Fords have been having trouble with the Consul and Granada. Sales are so low that the head of the Cologne factory has been sacked for incompetence! Ford expect sales to be down in the Autumn, and thought that they could get away with sacking 300 out of the 2,500 Turkish workers who came back late from their holidays.

Fords Cologne employs 12,000 Turkish workers. The lines are 95% Turks and other Mediterranean immigrants - meaning that they make up the lowest paid section of workers in the plant.

German Ford workers have a month of paid holiday in the summer - but the Turkish workers are usually allowed to take a little longer for the long trip home to see their families. Sometimes they have to drive 6,000 miles there and back.

This year Ford wanted to reduce the workforce - so they used this excuse of the men being late, and sacked 300. Ford have done this before - but this time the men are not going to let it happen. They've come out on strike, and the Turks are saying: "We're staying on strike until they reinstate our countrymen - even if they sack 1,000 of us."

WILDCAT STRIKES:

At the same time, this month in Germany has seen the biggest wave of wildcat strikes since 1969. And the new thing about these strikes has been started by immigrant workers in the engineering industry.

They aren't ready to wait until the engineering contracts come up for negotiation in January '74.

THEY'VE BROKEN THE TIMING OF THE CONTRACT BECAUSE THEY WANT MONEY RIGHT NOW. Their last increase has been eaten away by rising prices and there is less overtime now that the 'boom' is coming to an end.

Over last weekend 50,000 workers were out on unofficial strike in North Germany, including 19,000 at Opel-Bochum (a part of General Motors) and the workers of Ford Cologne. Even though the actions in Cologne were started by the Turkish workers to fight the sackings, wage increases have become the central issue.

THE FORD UNION

Without the workers' actions the union (IG Metall) would have let the 300 sackings pass without a murmur and would have continued to ignore the long-standing pressure from the shop-floor for compensation for rising prices.

The official Works Committee at Cologne has reluctantly agreed to act on every one of these demands....EXCEPT ONE. When it comes to money they are only prepared to 'talk' about it with the management.

MORE MONEY NOW!

To take the heat out of the situation nationally the state is telling the bosses they have to reopen discussions on the contracts and offer a token amount of money in an attempt to buy social peace.

During this Summer's shutdown people from Big Flame went to Germany to meet workers and political groups working at Ford Cologne and Saarlouis. We saw the way that Ford operates in Germany, with the immigrants forced to live in Ford owned barracks or expensive Ford appartments.

The Cologne workers feel that to wait till January and the end of the contract would be to play into Henry's hands. At that time production will be low and he will welcome a strike. So they have decided to take their own action now, without waiting for the annual ritual contract performance by the unions, because IT'S NOW THAT THEY NEED THE MONEY.

THE LAST DAYS AT COLOGNE

Friday 24th August

Around 400 immigrant workers from Turkey and Yugoslavia stopped the lines at noon. The management sent home the 8000 production workers of the late shift 'in order to prevent incidents'. The Turkish workers protested against the dismissal of 300 of their compatriots for overstaying their holidays.

Saturday 25th August

As the strike continued the usual saturday shift was stopped.

Monday 27th August

The morning shift (12.000 workers) started work at 6.45 am and stopped five minutes later. A demonstration was started through the plant. In the end a strike committee was elected consisting of 8 Turks, 1 Italian and 2 Germans. Later in the morning the management laid off the whole Cologne plant and sent home around 34.000 workers, because as they said they couldn't guarantee their machinery and the safety of workers wanting to work. The management also called in the police to open up the picketed gates. As a result of the scuffles between mainly turkish workers stopping german workers leaving the plant there were at least 12 people wounded.

The late shift did not start after german workers willing to work were stopped by turkish pickets.

Tuesday 28th August

There was still the unofficial strike going on and production was on a standstill. On the question of the reinstatement the management seems to soften its hard line. But the company still refuses to give in on any of the other issues involved.

Wednesday 29th August

Groups of german and some turkish workers returned to the plant but production didn't start on either shift. The striking workers inside the plant were expecting the police to come in and clear it during night. 500 police stand by.

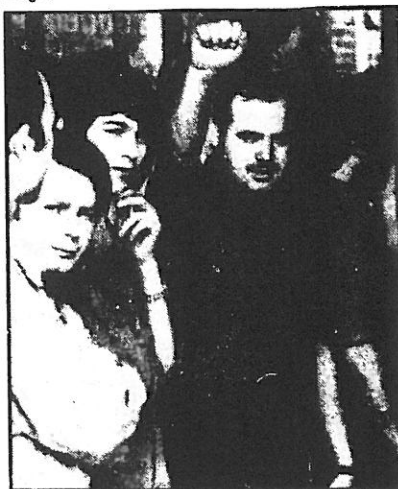
7,500 workers at Ford Genk, Belgium, are laid off.

Several thousand Turks are asking for direct negotiations between management and their own strike committee. They are calling for the dismissal of the official works committee.

Ford are so worried by the strength of the workers that they've agreed to pay lay-off pay in full for the period of the strike

The talks between management and the official workers committee behind locked doors have achieved so far that the management has offered a lump sum of 280 Marks (£ 47) for the period until the present contract ends as a compensation for rising prices; full pay for the strike period except for the 'ringleaders'; and all Turks who can produce evidence that they were late because of sickness will be reinstated. These talks are only of minor importance because to the striking workers the official workers committee doesn't mean anything and the union which controls it has lost all credibility.

TURKISH WORKER IN THE PLANT



THE DEMANDS

- 1 DM (17p) more per hour (backdated to the 1st july)
- 6 weeks holidays (instead of the 4 weeks at present)
- an additional full monthly wage at the end of the year
- full payment for the strike period
- no sackings because of the strike
- reinstatement of the 300 workers that were sacked for overstaying
- abolition of the lowest grade
- slowing down of line speed