

Wildcat Strike at the Ford Plant in Cologne (September 1973)

Abstract

“1 D-Mark more for all” is what predominantly Turkish workers demanded of their employer Ford in 1973, holding a “wildcat strike” from August 24 to 30, 1973, at the car maker’s Cologne plant. At the time, over a third of the workforce was from Turkey, 12,000 workers, 90% of whom worked on the assembly lines in final assembly. The Turkish workforce performed physically demanding tasks for low wages.

The industrial action was triggered by the summary dismissal of around 300 colleagues who had returned late from their annual vacation. In fact, however, the dispute was about a fundamental improvement in the working and living conditions of the Turkish guest workers: one D-mark more per hour, a reduction in the speed of the assembly line, an extension of annual leave, an annual bonus, more co-determination and a renunciation of disciplinary measures as a result of the strike. There were hardly any Turkish workers represented on the works council in 1973. Neither the works council nor the labor union IG Metall showed solidarity with the strikers. Violent clashes broke out between striking workers and German opponents of the strike, which were further inflamed by reporting in the *Bild* tabloid. Management called in the police, and several workers were arrested and fired. In the end, the workers were unable to assert their demands.

Source



Source: Photo: picture alliance/Klaus Rose.

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Recommended Citation: Wildcat Strike at the Ford Plant in Cologne (September 1973), published in: German History Intersections, <<https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/migration/ghis:image-173>> [July 03, 2024].