



# Workers occupy Turkish textile factory

Simon Hardy Sun, 06/09/2009 - 15:50

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Members of the League for the Fifth International visited workers at a factory that has been occupied in a dispute over wages

The Ayzi Moda factory, which employs around 100 workers in north west Istanbul, was occupied on 22 August after the boss of the factory fled when his workers demanded three months back pay still owed to them.

Serpil, who is on the strike committee told us, 'the boss left the factory and refused to meet us. We demanded our pay, the boss said that he would give us some money but instead he just ran away.' Another worker Mehmet added 'originally there was only four workers, but then more workers joined the occupation. There was a mass meeting and we elected a strike committee of four.'

A week later the boss said he would come back for negotiations, the workers gathered at the factory but instead of the owner, four vans loaded with riot police arrived and proceeded to attack the building, trying to drive the workers out. After barricading themselves in many workers retreated to the roof top, occupying the roof to keep control of their factory. After a short battle the police retreated, scared that the workers on the roof had petrol bombs, they got back in their vans and drove away.

This was an important victory for the workers, because the police had come to secure the plant equipment and machinery and help the company men take it out of the building.

Now, under Turkish law, the state owns the factory by default, so the government will try and find another capitalist to sell it off to. The Trade Union, Türk-İş, has provided a lawyer to negotiate with the company and government. The bad news is that this lawyer wants to charge the workers a small fortune to represent them.

The workers involved are in a position to argue that since the state owns it by default, it should properly nationalise it and hand it over to the workers to run.

The textile industry in Turkey is notorious for not paying its workers, these kinds of struggles show that workers will not accept this behaviour from the bosses.

As the workers at Ayzi Moda wrote on the walls at the front of their factory *Zafer işçilerin!* (Victory to the workers!)

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