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Russia

Appeal by strikers at St Petersburg Ford factory

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Saturday 1 December 2007

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**Trade Union Committee of the Ford Motor Co
Information Bulletin
November 27, 2007**

Comrades,

We turn to our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, who live in the Vsevolzhsk region and in St. Petersburg, to those who are working at our plant, and to those whose relative have some connection with the Ford plant in Vsevolzhsk. We have held out a week to win our goals, in particular a wage increase.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Ford_strike.jpg]

You have also seen the contemptuous attitude of the bosses to the demands of our collective and the surprise of our compatriots at our "huge" demands. "You're asking a lot," they tell us, when they see we ask that the wages of welders and painters be raised to 30,000 roubles. But no one is surprised when they raise the salaries of department supervisors and other managers, which stand at 200,000, two times a year by 10-20% each time. In other words, the bosses are worthy of salaries at the European level, but the workers who feed that bunch are supposedly not working at European standards and should get kopecks... A dual approach and double standard. We've went into this difficult strike so that our children do not have to go half-hungry and so that our parents will have decent pensions.

We are the first in Russia of the 21st century who have begun to defend our rights, relying on the law and our solidarity. We are skilled workpeople and we have a right to a wage that allows a decent human existence. Many of us have higher education and have lived in the St. Petersburg-Leningrad region all our conscious lives, bringing much benefit to this land.

We turn to you, our compatriots! Today our victory will be the victory of all citizens of Russia working at any enterprise. Support us! Support yourselves! We will win no matter what! But we would like to reach that victory together with you! We are ready to share our experience and our results with you!

The plant is not working. It has been shut down for a week. The administration is hoping we will give in. Our struggle is not taking place against bullets and shells. We are not forced to stand in the trenches and face tanks, as did our grandfathers at Stalingrad. We aren't facing snipers' bullets and mortar fire, as did our fathers and brothers in the mountains of Afghanistan and in the Caucasus. We are facing well-fed bourgeois and their lackeys, who see to it that the simple working person should work for a bowl of soup and a crust of bread and have no thoughts and claims, wishes or opinions. For them the best worker is the one who works for pennies, and when his health fails, he brings his children to the assembly line to replace him and then goes to die in some ditch or to live in misery on an inhuman pension.

For the bosses this is normal and correct. And if someone suddenly raises his head and declares that he is a person and has rights, then he is an extremist or terrorist – check whichever pleases most. It is not so! Our brothers, fathers and grandfathers shed their blood so that we could have a just and happy life. We cannot stand on our knees, forgetting their heroism. Yes, it is frightening, though we are not at Stalingrad; yes it is dangerous, though we are not in the mountains of Kandagara. It is just that no one in Russia has shut a factory for so long and forced the hand of a transnational corporation. It is always harder and more frightening for pioneers than for the next wave. But if not we, then who?

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Or shall we forget our heroic roots and get used to living on our knees? No! Our memory raises us up and forces us to struggle and defend that for which our ancestors gave their lives. Can anyone really think that our grandfathers and fathers in the trenches dreamt that their children would lose their health and self-respect on the assembly line under the shouts of supervisor-overseers, who allow workers go to the toilet only as an act of charitable kindness? If that is so, then we are ashamed to live in Russia and to call ourselves the Russian people. A victorious people cannot stand on its knees! The shift bosses, who count other people's money and know the wages of each worker at the plant, and the supervisors, who lick the boots of the top management, are afraid... They are afraid of their boss and of organized workers! Organize!

Brother Ford workers! If they call you to work from involuntary layoff [not all workers are on strike, but the plant is not working] in order to start up the assembly line, go to one of our activists, take a form, and write to the general director that you are joining the strike. Don't lend your support to those who don't give a damn about workers, who are interested only in their own welfare and profit! Or have these people become closer to you than those with whom you work side-by-side on the assembly line and who are now fighting for our common well-being? But if for some reason you cannot join the strike, then before starting work demand mandatory health-and-safety training, demand that they familiarize you with the operating instructions, the QPS, WES, especially if you are moved to a new operation. Remember that this is mandatory. Otherwise it is a violation of the law, and you are responsible for all possible consequences!

Fellow countrymen, union brethren! Your support now is especially important. Any kind of support! Both moral and financial! We need to hear you and see you. It is important to us to know your opinion. Come to the walls of our plant. Go to our site www.ford-profsoyuz.ru and tell us your opinion. Our union is supporting the strikers financially out of our strike fund, but unfortunately it is not unlimited. We are into our second week and we will stay out longer! There are already citizens who have given the strikers financial support. Those who want to help will find our account number on the site.

And more... Yes, the corporation is huge and churns out vast sums of money. It is very hard to oppose it. But for a HUMAN BEING nothing is impossible. Remember the Spartans' battle at Thermopylae, remember the Russian's battle at Kulikovo Field [against the Mongols]! Who says the time of heroism and courage has passed, that they belong to history? How our children live and how they will remember us depends on us alone!

Translated by David Mandel.

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