

Kazachstan, the return of the strikes

As we have argued in our previous articles, the workers' movement had not been wiped out by the repression of the Kazakh government and the Russian-led military alliance troops and would certainly raise its head again. But we never thought it would happen so soon.

As the Kazakh Janartu union informs, oil workers at LLP Burgylau in the Mangistau region went on strike on 19 January, demanding the immediate nationalisation of Industry, the oil company, in their speech to the president on 19 January. So not the wage demands or the lowering of prices as the matter had been reduced to or the supporters of the 'Western conspiracy'...perhaps these blue suits are CIA agents?

However, the call for nationalisation, which has been inscribed on the banners of the socialist movement since the 19th century, is also linked to a dynamic peculiar to this company. As early as 2007, in fact, the collective workforce was transferred to a private company, and since then problems have started with late payment of wages and failure to comply with labour code rules. As a result, the workers themselves report that since 2008 there have been strikes in the company where several thousand workers are employed, and for the first time the slogan of nationalisation under the control of the labour collective has been proposed. They also called for an end to the persecution of activists of the independent trade union.

The Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan argues in its statement that “this breakthrough in the strike struggle shows that the workers’ movement will now raise this demand across the board as part of the political, albeit limited, programme that was formulated in Zhanaozen during the strikers’ demonstration on 5 January. And this is a demand that fully connects to the demand for the return of the 1993 Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of trade union activity and strike action, the establishment of parties and a series of guarantees at work.”

“This will be possible,” the socialists continue, “only by imposing this on the government from below, through a mass strike movement, to renegotiate or abolish the captive contracts for the use of the subsoil and the production sharing agreements that have meant that two-thirds of oil and gas production does not belong to Kazakhstan and that two-thirds of the entire extractive sector of the economy is in the hands of foreign companies. The agreements on the transfer of ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, mines and quarries to Arcelor Mittal Temirtau, Eurasian Group and Kazakhmys Corporation must be revised immediately!”

The communiqué finally recalls that “there must be total freedom for trade union activity in industry and in all sectors, regardless of their form of ownership, and no repression of workers’ activists. Committees capable of directing and coordinating this struggle must be formed now!”