

Preparing the revolutionary strike

Francisco Ferrer

1903

Experience, our best teacher, has amply shown us that if in some cases the workers were able to improve their condition somewhat, using the only weapon they have in their power, the strike, they will not, however, be able, by resorting to it, peacefully to free themselves from wages, their greatest oppressive yoke.

In fact, no matter how many strikes they go on, and no matter how many claims they make, they will never cease to find themselves faced with the following dilemma: either the employers see the possibility of compensating themselves in another way for the advantage that is requested of them, and in this case they give in more or less quickly, or they fear that giving in will take them too far, and in this case they do not give in, leaving hunger and government arbitrariness to subdue the claimants.

If the first happens, the worker has gained nothing, even if at the moment it seems otherwise, because the increase in the price of basic necessities will inevitably make the wage earner as miserable afterwards as before the victory. When the second happens, when the worker becomes aware of his weakness in the face of hunger, brutal police, murderous guards, biased judges and inhuman prisons, that is when the idea of the General Strike is born.

It happens that many strikers go on a General Strike like Republicans go to the banquets of February 11, believing that the mere act will suffice to annihilate the enemy. We must be on guard against this error.

We would spend 30 years doing general strikes like the ones that have been done until now, and we would find ourselves as far from social emancipation as the republicans are from conquering the republic by means of repeated banquets.

General Strike means instantaneous, common action by all workers, not to demand these or those improvements from the bosses, but to suppress them, changing the wage system, which must always be unjust and exploitative, for a system of solidarity and general well-being. This is what the General Strike means.

This was understood by some manufacturers in a city near Barcelona, who, when the general strike broke out in February, met together in fear to offer their workers all the improvements they had been denied until that day and to propose greater guarantees for the future, since they already believed they saw their factories in flames and their reign of exploitation at an end.

It would be better not to call a general strike if it is to be peaceful, and better not to call it a revolutionary strike if we have to be content with burning buildings and taking reprisals against our executioners. No, dear comrades. We must aim higher.

Let every conscious worker study for himself what a society without masters, authorities or money could be like; let him exchange his impressions with his comrades in the resistance societies, and let them influence the federations so that the question of a general strike is discussed. Let an agreement be reached on the mode of production, exchange and distribution of products for the day after the general strike, and the rest, that is, the means of making the revolutionary strike victorious, be a piece of cake.

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