

## Strikes and demonstrations in the United States, Spain, Greece, France...

# How can we develop and unite our struggles?

***“We have to say that enough is enough! Not just us, but the entire working class of this country has to say, at some point, that enough is enough”*** (Littlejohn, maintenance supervisor in the skilled trades at Ford’s Buffalo stamping plant in the United States).

This American worker sums up in one sentence what is ripening in the consciousness of the entire working class, in every country. A year ago, the “Summer of Rage” broke out in the United Kingdom. By chanting “*Enough is enough*”, British workers sounded the call to take up the fight again after more than thirty years of stagnation and resignation.

This call was heard beyond borders. From Greece to Mexico, strikes and demonstrations against the same intolerable deterioration in our living and working conditions continued throughout the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023.

In mid-winter in France, a further step was taken: proletarians took up the idea that “*enough is enough*”. But instead of multiplying local and corporatist struggles, isolated from each other, they were able to gather in their millions in the streets. To the necessary fighting spirit they added the force of massive numbers. And now it is in the United States that workers are trying to carry the torch of struggle a little further.

### **In the United States, a new step forward for class struggle**

A veritable media blackout surrounds the social movement that is currently setting the world’s leading economic power ablaze. And with good reason: in a country ravaged for decades by poverty, violence, drugs, racism, fear and individualism, these struggles show that a completely different path is possible.

At the heart of all these strikes shines a genuine surge of workers’ solidarity: “*We’ve all had enough: the temps have had enough, long-serving employees like me have had enough... because these temps are our children, our neighbours, our friends*” (the same New York employee). This is how the workers stick together, between generations: the “old” are not on strike just for themselves, but above all for the “young” who are suffering even worse working conditions and even lower wages.

A sense of solidarity is gradually growing in the working class as we realise that we are “*all in this together*”: “*All these groups are not just separate movements, but a collective rallying cry: we are a city of workers - blue-collar and white-collar, union and non-union, immigrant and native-born*” (*Los Angeles Times*).

The current strikes in the United States are bringing together far more than just the sectors involved. “*The Stellantis complex in Toledo, Ohio, was abuzz with cheers and horns at the start of the strike*” (*The Wall Street Journal*). “*Horns support strikers outside the carmaker’s plant in Wayne, Michigan*” (*The Guardian*).

The current wave of strikes is of historic importance:

- scriptwriters and actors in Hollywood fought together for the first time in 63 years;
- private nurses in Minnesota and Wisconsin have staged the biggest strike in their history;
- Los Angeles municipal workers went on strike for the first time in 40 years;
- workers from the “Big Three” (General Motors, Ford, Chrysler) led an unprecedented joint struggle;
- Kaiser Permanente workers, on strike in several states, led the largest demonstration ever organised in the health sector.

We could also add the many strikes in recent weeks at Starbucks, Amazon and McDonald’s, in aviation and railway factories, or the one that has gradually spread to all hotels in California... all of these workers are fighting for a decent wage in the face of galloping inflation that is reducing them to poverty.

With all these strikes, the American proletariat is showing that it is also possible for workers in the private sector to fight. In Europe, until now, it has been mainly public sector workers who have mobilised, the fear of losing their jobs being a decisive brake for employees in private companies. But faced with increasingly unbearable conditions of exploitation, we are all going to be forced to fight. **The future belongs to the class struggle in all sectors, together and united!**

### **Faced with division, let’s unite our struggles!**

Anger is rising again in Europe, Asia and Oceania. China, Korea and Australia have also been experiencing a succession of strikes since the summer. In Greece, at the end of September, a social movement brought together the transport, education and health sectors to protest against a proposed labour reform designed to make employment more flexible. October 13 marks the return of demonstrations in France, on the issue of wages. In Spain too, a wind of anger is beginning to blow: on 17 and 19 October, strikes in the private education sector; on 24 October, a strike in the public education sector; on 25 October, a strike by the entire Basque public sector; on 28 October, a demonstration by pensioners, etc. Faced with these forecasts of struggles, the Spanish press is beginning to anticipate “another hot autumn”.

This list not only indicates the growing level of discontent and combativeness of our class. It also reveals our movement’s greatest current weakness: despite growing solidarity, our struggles remain separate from each other. Our strikes may take place at the same time, we may even be side by side, sometimes on the streets, but we are not really fighting together. We

are not united, we are not organised as a single social force, in a single struggle.

The current wave of strikes in the United States is another flagrant demonstration of this. When the movement was launched in the “Big Three” auto plants, the strike was limited to three “designated” plants: Wentzville (Missouri) for GM, Toledo (Ohio) for Chrysler, and Wayne (Michigan) for Ford. These three plants are separated by thousands of miles, making it impossible for the workers to get together and fight as one.

Why were they so scattered? Who organised this fragmentation? Who officially supervises these workers? Who organises the social movements? Who are the “specialists in struggle”, the legal representatives of the workers? The trade unions! All over the world, they are scattering the workers’ response.

It was the UAW, one of the main unions in the United States, that “designated” these three factories! It is the UAW which, while falsely calling the movement “*strong, united and massive*”, is deliberately limiting the strike to only 10% of the unionised workforce, while all the workers are loudly proclaiming their desire to go on strike. When the Mack Truck (Volvo trucks) workers tried to join the “Big Three” in their struggle, what did the unions do? They rushed to sign an agreement to end the strike! In Hollywood, when the actors’ and scriptwriters’ strike had been going on for months, a management/union agreement was signed at the same time as the car workers joined the strike.

Even in France, during demonstrations which bring millions of people together in the streets, the unions divide up the processions by having “their” union members march grouped by corporation, not together but one behind the other, preventing any gathering or discussion.

In the United States, in the United Kingdom, in France, in Spain, in Greece, in Australia and in every other country, if we are to stop this organised division, if we are to be truly united, if we are to be able to reach out to each other, to pull each other along, to extend our movement, we must wrest control of the struggles from the hands of the unions. These are our struggles, the struggles of the whole working class!

**Wherever we can, we must come together in open, massive, autonomous general assemblies, which really decide how the movement is run. General assemblies in which we discuss as broadly as possible the general needs of the struggle and the most unifying demands. General assemblies from which we can set off in mass delegations to meet our class brothers and sisters, the workers in the nearest factory, hospital, school or administration.**

## **Behind every strike looms the hydra of revolution**

In the face of impoverishment, in the face of global warming, in the face of police violence, in the face of racism, in the face of violence against women... in recent years there have been other types of reaction: the “Yellow vests” demonstrations in France, ecological rallies like “Youth for Climate”, protests for equality like “Black Lives Matter” or “MeToo”, or cries of rage like during the riots in the United States, France or the United Kingdom.

But all these actions are aimed at imposing a fairer, more equitable, more humane and greener form of capitalism. That’s why all these reactions are so easy for governments and the bourgeoisie to exploit, and they have no hesitation in supporting all these “citizens’ movements”. What’s more, the unions and all the politicians are doing everything they can to limit workers’ demands to the strict framework of capitalism, by emphasising the need for a better distribution of wealth between employers and employees. “*Now that industry is recovering, [workers] should share in the profits*” even Biden

declared, the first American President to have found himself on a picket line.

But by fighting against the effects of the economic crisis, against the attacks orchestrated by the States, against the sacrifices imposed by the development of the war economy, the proletariat is rising up, not as citizens demanding “rights” and “justice”, but as the exploited against their exploiters and, ultimately, as a class against the system itself. This is why the international dynamic of the working class struggle carries within it the seeds of a fundamental challenge to the whole of **capitalism**.

In Greece, during the day of action on 21 September against labour reform, demonstrators made the link between this attack and the “natural” disasters which ravaged the country this summer. On the one hand, capitalism is destroying the planet, polluting, exacerbating global warming, deforesting, concreting, drying out the land and causing floods and fires. On the other, it is doing away with the jobs that used to look after nature and protect people, and prefers to build warplanes rather than Canadairs, i.e. firefighting planes

As well as fighting against the deterioration in its living and working conditions, the working class is engaged in a much broader reflection on this system and its future. A few months ago, in demonstrations in France, we began to see signs rejecting the war in Ukraine, refusing to tighten our belts in the name of this war economy: “*No money for war, no money for weapons, money for wages, money for pensions*”.

The economic crisis, the ecological crisis and the barbarity of war are all symptoms of the deadly dynamic of global capitalism. The deluge of bombs and bullets raining down on the people of Israel and Gaza as we write these lines, while the massacres in Ukraine continue, is yet another illustration of the downward spiral into which capitalism is driving society, threatening the lives of all humanity!

The growing number of strikes shows that two worlds are clashing: the bourgeois world of competition and barbarity, and the working class world of solidarity and hope. This is the profound meaning of our current and future struggles: the promise of another future, without exploitation or social classes, without war or borders, without destruction of the planet or the quest for profit.

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**For our struggle today and in the future we need to come together, discuss, draw the lessons...**

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