

General strike in Spain

Mike

1994

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SPAIN WAS closed down by a general strike in January. Very little mention of it appeared in the Irish media. An Irish worker in Barcelona, and activist in the anarchist National Confederation of Labour (CNT-AIT) union, sent us this report.

“Thursday 27th was the General Strike, called by the ‘socialist’ UGT union against the minority ‘socialist’ government elected only six months before. It was against a package of anti-worker laws, being passed by 90% of the parliament. Laws introducing short-term ‘rubbish’ work contracts, making it simple to fire workers and condemning under 25s to ‘apprenticeships’ on starvation wages. Afterwards the unions claimed 90% had come out, while the government and bosses claimed 30%. Details below are from the alternative Radio Contrabanda. The regular media put out a pack of lies.

NO WORK TODAY

“7.00am Barcelona... tens of thousands of police have occupied the city. (35,000 in Madrid). Fights with cops at the main metro stations. No local trains running. The Metro is reduced to ‘emergency levels’ laid down by decree. No buses. 5% of taxis running. The port is closed. No newspapers. All industrial areas are picketed and 95% closed for the day.

“Small shops and bars begin to open. 10.00am... little traffic, Sunday levels. Universities and most state schools deserted. Fights begin with thousands of pickets to prevent the big department stores opening. Finally most are opened plus many offices and banks, despite glued locks.

“Reports from workers’ areas say all is stopped and from rich areas that all is open. Hardly any international or local trains or planes. Tourists have to serve themselves in hotels. Private colleges open. Police block roads to prevent people marching into the city, but fail. Atmosphere generally calm. Pickets touring the city trying to persuade small shops to close. Some do, though others stay open. Wholesale and local markets almost deserted.

COPS ATTACK ANARCHISTS

“Various demonstrations begin around the city, building to one of 200,000 (55,000 say the cops). In Madrid the estimates go up to 500,000. The Barcelona demo had a fiesta atmosphere until the end. Then the cops attacked the CNT-AIT section. This led to running fights and burning barricades in the back streets. Lots of plain clothes cops swamp the city and we go home. 30 arrests in all.

“In other cities the story was similar. Most radical perhaps were the mining areas of Asturias where everything closed and there were lots of barricades. (One reason for barricades was to stop incidents like that in nearby Burgos where a picket was run over and killed).

“In the Basque capital, Bilbao, open street warfare was reported. But the press ignored these areas in favour of long condemnations by politicians. The Catalan President threatened to withdraw support for the minority ‘socialists’ and let them fall if one comma of the anti-worker is changed.

“So what does it all mean? Lost a day’s pay.. said some, fucking great.. said others.. while the general feeling was that solidarity is essential in the ever deepening crisis (20% unemployed now). The huge crowds of young people on the streets were certainly having a ball... tasting workers’ power maybe for the first time.

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