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UGT's May Day

More than 1,1 million of workers attended, in Campo de Bagatelle, Sao Paulo, the unified act in honor of the International Workers Day. This act, organized by UGT, along with Força Sindical, CTB and Nova Central, was a time for celebration, but it was also time to reflect on the achievements of the working class.



In his speech, Ricardo Patah, president of UGT, congratulated women, highlighted the importance of this date and the unity of trade union centrals to the fight of the working class. "The unity of the centrals once again provided this great event, and it shows the strength of united bodies committed to the battle of the working class."

Many of the topics that were discussed during this political act were related to the rising inflation and its consequences for the working class. According to the mayor of São Paulo, Fernando Haddad, it is possible that in the next data indexes, inflation might lower a little, and despite these indexes, the working class will continue to earn real gains above inflation.

To Roberto Santiago, federal deputy and UGT's vice president, we must be careful with these indexes that inflation has reached, but it is not an issue that might be considered frightening. "The current inflation is not something that scares me, because the surging tomato was speculation, and it is over (it was a joke). I think they are politically using this economic situation for their election."

For Roberto Santiago, the working class can not be held hostage by speculators who gain from inflation. He guaranteed, under the Congress, the project that regulates outsourced work in Brazil. "What is out there on this very day is given to the employees," he said .

"It is a commemorative and historical date, which nationally shows unity of trade union centrals and that only if we are united we will achieve our goals," said Avelino Garcia, 2nd Assistant Secretary General of UGT.

The most important achievement of the working class celebrates 70 years in 2013. The Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) was remembered as being essential to the life of all Brazilians, and recalled that no central will ever accept that any labor law shall become flexible.

"2013 is the year of the working class and we, from UGT, do not accept, nor shall we accept, under any circumstances, that labor rights are loosened or that there shall be some sort of loss. There can not be setbacks in CLT, because it was a milestone for the working class and only after it we may advance in labor achievements," Ricardo Patah explains.

We lost José Ibrahim

Today is a really sad day for the working class and for all of those that fought for the democratization of our country.

We lost José Ibrahim, our mate and secretary of UGT's Political Education Department, whose biography is mixed with the history of the trade union movement marked by the intransigent fight in defense of workers.

It was him, when he was only 20, who faced the military regime and organized, in 1968, the historical strike of Osasco, on the occasion, he was president of the Trade Union of Metallurgists of that city. Due to his relentless activity in defense of the workmen class, he was arrested, tortured, banned, exiled. But in any moment he gave up his fight ideals for a more just society.

Goodbye, Zé Ibrahim...we already miss you.

Ricardo Patah, UGT's national president



A life of fights

In 1968, as president of the Trade Union of Metallurgists of Osasco and Region, José Ibrahim organized and participated in the occupation of the podium in the official celebrations of May Day - the podium was occupied, Abreu Sodré, the governor, was their protest.



It was the beginning of the fight against the policy of "wage squeeze." Strikes were prohibited, and workers had no way of reacting to salary reduction caused by inflation. The dictatorship caused a brutal income concentration.

Shortly afterwards, on July 16, 1968, Ibrahim led the strike in Osasco, a huge strike in the region with metallurgists occupying factories. The city was taken by the police.

Removed from office and dismissed from Cobrasma, in which he began working at the age of 14, Ibrahim joined the armed struggle against the dictatorship, and he was arrested in the following year

"I was badly tortured, as it usually happened at that time. Especially considering the issue of the strike, the factory occupations, they arrested me within the structure of VPR, an organization that was doing armed action. I was tortured for several days," José Ibrahim said in an interview for a special edition prepared by the union in 2008. He was one of 15 prisoners whose freedom was requested in exchange for Ambassador Charles Elbrick U.S., kidnapped in September 1969.

"We defined that the path against dictatorship was the resumption of democracy, through the resumption of our union (Metallurgists of Osasco). Through this point of view, we were able to organize the first factory committee that existed in this country - the one of Cobrasma" said Ibrahim in Hercules 56, Silvio Darin documentary about the kidnapping.

Cobrasma's factory committee was the role model for the organization of the workers fight in several factories in the following years, whether in Osasco, São Paulo, or in the ABC region (metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, cities of Santo Andre, Sao Bernardo and Sao Caetano, therefore, the acronym ABC). Knowing this, the journalist Paulo Nogueira Ibrahim called the man who had enabled the Lula era.

A fair tribute to a great Brazilian

The hidden side of the fashion industry

The collapse of a three story building in Bangladesh, that housed a cloth factory, not only showed a wide non-compliance of basic security rules in that country, but also showed the hidden side of the international industry of clothes.

In this tragedy, that took place last week in the capital, Dhaka, at least 377 people died. But this is nothing new.

Less than six months ago, in the same place, a fire burned down to ashes a factory that was responsible for making clothes for the American supermarket chain, Walmart, killing 122 people, back then, it was the largest industrial accident that had ever occurred in Bangladesh.

The International Trade Union Confederation reacted to this fact with indignation, demanding world fashion brands a security plan in the workplace, as proposed by trade unions in Bangladesh. This proposition was presented to companies such as Wal-Mart, GAP and H&M in 2011.

This plan was presented once the first fire took place in the Tazreen factory, and it was presented, once again, on the occasion of the second fire.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC secretary general, stated, with indignation: "This big companies continue to show a complete indifference and lack of pity to the lives of thousands of men and women who worked so hard to their employers and subcontractors in Bangladesh.

In the months that followed that Tazreen tragedy, there were dozens other fires like this one, and now, hundreds of workers died in the Rana Square due to the collapse of the building. How many more men and women will have to sacrifice their lives so that companies are able to get their profit before businessmen of this area are interested in this situation?"

The third richest men in the world

Forbes magazine recently published its list of multibillionaires of the world. Despite many economic crises and financial disasters, or due to them, the number of billionaires increased: according to Forbes, there are currently 1,426 billionaires.

Amancio Ortega, owner of Inditex and controller of the brand Zara is the third richest men in the world. This magazine estimates Ortega's wealth in 57 billion euros.

Ortega's wealth increased almost 20 million dollars last year, year in which Spain, host country of this company, faced one of the highest levels of unemployment in the world.

A proof that crime pays well

In Brazil, the campaign of UGT and of the Commerce Workers Union of São Paulo against slavery in the clothing of great fashion brands several times reported Zara through the use of slave labor in their workshops.

Its main supplier, the AHA company, was caught in their illegal factories in Sao Paulo and in Americana, workplaces in which Bolivian and Peruvian immigrants were subjected to conditions similar to slavery and in which the use of child labor was found.

Last month, these same complaints took place in Argentina, occasion in which Bolivian workers were found in conditions of slavery during inspection conducted in late March by the Government Agency Control (AGC) of Buenos Aires. According to authorities, they were producing parts for this brand.

Workers' conditions were the same here: slave labor, exploitation of child labor. Workers, both adults and children, lived and worked in the workshops and could not leave these premises on their own.

Zara defends itself saying it has 300 suppliers in Argentina and performed audits of its factories and production practices. [A recent study by the AFL - CIO](#) showed that these audits are cosmetic and do not report the real situation of workers. In Central America, only trade unions are able to truly do these audits.

Turnover in commerce

Presentation on turnover in commerce gathers federation, trade union centrals and trade unions with one single goal: workers rights. On April 25, Sentracos (National Secretariat of Commerce and Service Workers), presented the seminar "Turnover in Commerce, Sectorial Data and Guidelines for Trade Union Action", coordinated by Dieese (Inter Union Department of Socioeconomic Studies).

Ricardo Patah, president of UGT and of the Commerce Workers Union of Sao Paulo, and his board of directors attended this event, as well as Luis Carlos Motta, president of the Federation of Commerce Workers of Sao Paulo, not to mention president and officials of trade unions and federations from all over Brazil. "This meeting shows that we are beginning a historical movement of unity", Patah commented.



The goal was, through data of turnover presented by Dieese, debate and create a combined action plan to face this issue. "Many times turnover is used as a tool to reduce costs and decrease salaries", José Silvestre Prado de Oliveira, coordinator of Dieese's Trade Union Relations Department, explained.

"Currently, commerce has a strategic importance of sustainability in national economy. However, entire work staffs are changed as if they were products. Turnover is extremely high in this sector. In Sao Paulo alone, we perform 12 thousand legal homologations per month. We must find measures to break this absurd", Patah said. "Together, we are strong. United and organized, we are invincible. Whatever is decided in today's event will be a guideline for officials all over Brazil", Luis Carlos Motta ended.

In memory of work victims

Due to the celebration of the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured, UGT, along with CGTB, CTB, Nova Central, CUT and Força Sindical, gathered, in the morning of April 26, in front of the Ramos de Azevedo Square, and afterwards made a march through the streets of downtown Sao Paulo, to demand a higher supervision and improvement of working conditions.



According to Antonio Evanildo Rabelo Cabral, from the Commerce Workers Union of Sao Paulo, the working class is more united and it is up to the trade union centrals and trade unions to contribute to improve the labour supervision, advancing in the fight against the greed of employers who, in search of profit, sacrifice the health and physical integrity of thousands of workers. "This is not only an act to celebrate, but still, to make a reflection on health and security at work".

This march, which would, at first, end at Sé Square, changed its course and militants walked towards the office of the Regional Labour Court where, due to the request of improvement in working conditions, the Trade Union of Civil Construction (Sintracon-SP) held a protest that received an unconditional support of militants from UGT and other institutions that attended this act. (Fábio Ramalho – UGT)



"The União Geral dos Trabalhadores reaffirms its historic commitments to the working class, while seeking to expand its methods of action, with ethics, courage and the certainty that Brazil can be better and more just. " Ricard Patah – UGT's President]

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