

the Communist Party

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WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY - The line running from Marx to Lenin to the foundation of the Third International and the birth of the Communist Party of Italy in Leghorn (Livorno) 1921, and from there to the struggle of the Italian Communist Left against the degeneration in Moscow and to the rejection of popular fronts and coalition of resistance groups - The tough work of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and the party organ, in contact with the working class, outside the realm of personal politics and electoralist manoeuvres

Threats of Trade Tariffs Already Deny the Bourgeois Illusions of War- Free Imperialism

Among the many terrible wars raging on the outskirts of the capitalist bastions, with the bloody succession of ruins, nameless massacres and desperate refugees, it seems that capitalism is giving us a new one, perhaps no less bloody and harbinger of terrible consequences: the slowing down, if not the end, of the timid but promising economic recovery, which until now has gladdened politicians and capitalists.

Capitalism, which has been plunging since 2008 into its longest known recession, was finally recovering, but now a reckless, they say, elected to be in charge of the most powerful empire, by means of its improvident outbursts and political and economic decisions, would threaten that virtuous path. It is the end of commercial freedom, the end of a praiseworthy globalisation, which would have allowed everyone to prosper. It is the trade war, a war fought with the use of duties. In fact the reasons taken to justify this tightening on the free transit of goods have a foundation indeed. If we look at the figures of trade balances between the United States of America and its main world counterparts, it is clear that there is a systematic imbalance between import and export volumes; commercially, the US economy is in a significant deficit with all of them.

Of a very different weight compared to the deficit of the Balance of Trade, at least in the long term, it is the enormous and growing volume of public debt, the financial situation towards the rest of the world, which finances the great empire through the purchase of American Treasury Bonds. However, the US administration does not take care of this endemic dynamic, on the contrary it practices it with absolute continuity.

But that is another matter. Here we are not talking about capital but about goods, tangible things that circulate across the borders of states, and must realize the surplus value

crystallized in them.

This "trade war" actually includes several aspects, and is not only limited to the expectation of limiting the dynamic of a growing deficit, taken as an excuse for the opening of commercial hostilities. The USA, the world's largest global exporter, is also the largest importer. At the end of 2017 (data from the U.S. Census Bureau), China, Canada and Mexico, in this descending order, have an import-export volume with the USA of 630, 582 and 557 billion dollars respectively, and involve a negative balance for the USA of 505.6, 300 and 314 billion dollars.

China, the economy with the largest volume of trade compared to 130 billion imports from the United States, exports 505.6. Japan imports 67.7 and exports 204.2, while Germany, South Korea, the United Kingdom, France, India and Italy limit themselves to positive double-digit trade balances: Germany imports 53.5 billion and exports 136.5, Italy 50.0 against 68.3.

The strongest imperialism appears therefore on the world stage as the leading importer of goods and the leading exporter of capital. And it is no coincidence that the Asian giant, which holds the largest volume of both commercial assets and US government debt, matches it in both positions.

These are the irrefutable numbers that have given formal justification to the American decisions to introduce import-limiting customs tariffs in order to constitute "anti-dumping" barriers.

However it is to be seen to whom, on what products and to what extent, because these aggregated trade balances do not show the situation by type of goods. If, for the moment, the reason for the clash would mainly be related to steel and aluminium, the American "retaliations" could extend to other product categories: from cars to semiconductors, thus constituting a serious problem for some capitalisms of Europe and of the Far East.

In a real trade war, the weakest economies can only lose out. It is enough to consider that Germany, France and the United Kingdom have export-based economies, unlike the USA, which exports a small part of its GDP (12%), to realize that the main problem would be for these States, rather than for those who have announced the restrictions with great pomp. But to believe that the protectionist shift, however agitated and only partially applied, can in some way contribute not to cancel but only to reduce the enormous American trade deficit is an unfounded idea. And not for the possibility of "counter-tariffs" that the interested States could apply towards the USA. Because the trade deficit of the superpower is innate to its productive dimensions, to its financial power, to the strength of its currency which is, at least until today, the reference for every kind of transaction. Therefore, the measures, which have not yet been followed up consequently, will have little real effect. And in particular on saving those jobs that, according to

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the demagoguery of the rulers on duty, would be put at risk by the imported products.

Obviously, we Communists understand well that the American impositions, which seem to blatantly violate the foundations of the "free market" and the much adored "globalization", in the name of which the imperialist brigands compete for market dominance, do not have a trade basis such as the reduction of the deficit, but a political and strategic one.

Nevertheless speaking of "war" in general at this stage sounds more like a catch phrase than like a real fact. Although every war begins by looking for allies; and the threat to the productive capabilities of allies and vassals in NATO or SEAT, and of rivals such as Russia and China, is one of the tools in this strategic readjustment.

One objective is that the European Union, and in particular Germany, take restrictive measures against Russia and China. The containment, if not even blocking, of gas sales made by Russia would play a strategic role for the US. For Europe, where Germany, the eighth supplier of steel to the USA, is leading, another American objective is to make the rebellious NATO allies bear the cost of common defence and to disjoin a laborious Union that already tends to crumble on its own. It is necessary to realign the allies on a military level, continuing the imperialist policy as it is developing in this millennium, breaking an alliance that would place them isolated from the overseas *dominus*.

For their part, Mexico and Canada are involved in the revision of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Treaty, and the threat of tariffs plays its part in a Leonine contract as the United States has in mind.

It is certain that the war will really have to start sooner or later, initially on the trade front, and will certainly be to the detriment of countries whose economy and trade are threatened with duties, including China. Even if today, in fact, after an initial phase of protests, the positions of all the contenders have softened and negotiations have discreetly resumed.

The indications of this "unilateral decision", which seems to cancel out the very basis of the fake globalisation and is articulated on different but competing levels, are clear.

First of all, they mark another of our theoretical victory: finally, they are clearing the field of any infringement of mediations that would guarantee perpetual peace between the imperialist robbers, whose huge production of goods will never be able to compensate for, even in a global market without constraints and tariffs.

Secondly because they show what the level of friction between the imperial blocs is at the moment and how the effects of the ten-year capitalist crisis are pushing the States towards a future, perhaps not too far away, conflict unfolded. This new and further step towards war does not come unexpectedly to us. We knew that imperial monsters could in no way "co-exist", not even commercially, from the dawn of our doctrine, even though the dream of "reasonable" capitalism, of "fair and honest" trade, of "virtuous" competition, continues to guide the illusions of the small bourgeoisie, and ultimate shame, of the proletarian drunkenness of democracy and of bourgeois "honesty". As if the evil of capitalism were "dishonesty", fraud, and robbery.

Therefore, we welcome these ferocious, contemptuous decisions of the strongest towards the weakest. The class rebound also passes from here.

U. S. A.

The Profit of Destruction

Trump's attack on Syria, coordinated with Britain and France, has claimed to have been in the interest of the Syrian people and the world, by targeting chemical weapons.

This is a lie, the interest is of capital. Any threat of war or the continuation of war by the bourgeoisie is a threat to the proletariat, not to a nation or to a Constitution. The Constitutions of the ruling class, once a document defending chattel slavery, now defend wage slavery and the trade of the proletarian workforce. The proletariat must unite and organize against these attacks, the Syrian bombings, along with other wars of profits, have been a continuous crime against the working class world wide.

As shown by Lenin two years before the First World War, which he branded as imperialist, the only correct action against any wars of imperialism is to unite the proletariat against the bourgeoisie sending them to their deaths.

"The conversion of the present imperialist war into a civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan, one that follows from the experience of the Commune, and outlined in the Basle resolution (1912); it has been dictated by all the conditions of an imperialist war between highly developed bourgeois countries."

The tactics laid out by Lenin in response to WWI are as follows:

"The following should be indicated as the first steps towards converting the present imperialist war into a civil war:

- (1) an absolute refusal to vote for war credits, and resignation from bourgeois governments;
- (2) a complete break with the policy of a "class truce" (*bloc national, Burgfrieden*);
- (3) formation of an underground organisation wherever the governments and the bourgeoisie abolish constitutional liberties by introducing martial law;
- (4) support for fraternisation between soldiers of the belligerent nations, in the trenches and on battlefields in general;
- (5) support for every kind of revolutionary mass action by the proletariat in general. "

While we are not yet in the condition to know when a third war such as that will break out, the neverending minor wars have certainly provided relief to capital's crises. However, the conditions of the capitalist world keep worsening, after the growth that followed WW2, paid with proletarian sweat and blood. As expanded by Marx in *Capital*, capitalism imposes surplus production in order to keep appropriating surplus value, which leads to the destruction of men and of the world. For capitalism to produce surplus a surplus population is necessary. Although there is enough food and housing for us all, there must be starving people, there must be homeless people. There must be unemployed, to act as a reserve to force wages down.

The Liberals and Progressives that make up the Democratic Party, have also an interest in war, even when occasionally they oppose specific actions, like the recent one in Syria, because they are all agents of capital.

It was the Democrats, for instance, to organize the destabilization of Syria, wishing to oust Assad and defend "democracy" and "moderate rebels". Meantime the US allies in

the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, a capitalist state which maintains a feudal structure, have brutally repressed Middle East and North Africa proletarians.

Kuwait for instance, was encouraged by the US and Saudi Arabia to side drill into Iraqi oil fields, and overproduce oil past the agreed OPEC quotas. Saddam asked what would the US do in response to an invasion of Kuwait, which the Pentagon replied with ambivalence, which in diplomatic terms is the same as a go ahead. Then, knowing Saddam would not respond to UN ordering withdrawal of Iraqi troops, the US led a coalition to "save democracy", ignoring the simple and readily accessible fact that Kuwait was an absolute monarchy.

The nature of capital is seeking constant expansion to lessen its tendency for the rate of profit to fall. The technicalities are not necessary here. The destruction of Kuwait and Iraq provided capital room to expand. This phenomena was most evident after the two Imperialist wars, where for instance the US had massive economic booms in the 1920s and 1950s, as destruction was unequaled, and the death of the proletariat and destruction of capital and commodities provided ample room to grow in formerly oversaturated markets. The war policies of the US are completely resulting from this. From Korea, to Vietnam, to civil wars in Africa and South and Central America, destruction brings profits, and arms manufacturers expand.

Saddam was less than cooperative than what was hoped after the First Gulf War. Following 9/11, which was partly responsible for mid ranked Saudi officials, the US immediately invaded Afghanistan, a proposal that Democrats voted for.

Rebuilding the World Trade Center turned a profit as well, while the workers, firefighters, and rescue volunteers were to suffer lung disease and cancer without any aid from the government. The priorities of the government was elsewhere, and the government passed acts to limit anti-war expressions.

Then, the War on Terror started. It is often joked about that you can't win a war against a concept, such as the "War on Poverty" or "War on Drugs". These wars aren't meant to be "won", but to run a profit. From the turning overhead costs of education and healthcare into commodity capital; to acquiring slave labor in prisons, destroying countries to civil wars and coups, and actually selling drugs (like the CIA did).

The war on terror is the same. Para-military corporations, arms manufacturers, infrastructure firms, oil companies and oil miners, private contractors, etc. all make profits off young men and women forced to kill, and who come back with the mental and physical scars of war, if they come back at all.

Iraq in particular had a lot of oil, and would provide a pipeline route, reducing overhead costs in transportation. The Democrats (including Clinton) and Republicans coordinated to raise profits through the spilling of blood of hundreds of thousands, a process still continuing and issues given lip service by the "brave" anti-war Democrats with the situation in Syria.

The expansion of the drone program under Obama is also telling. The costs of taking care of soldiers and their families when they suffer is not only an overhead cost capital wishes to eliminate, but is also bad publicity. Drone manufacturers make their profit, and other corporations will expand into the burned and leveled homes of the innocent. Drones reduce overhead costs of transportation and maintenance of the living soldiers. As with all things, capital's inorganic part grows faster than its organic part, and the reset is needed every so often to combat the trend of rate of profit falling.

So is the case in every country the US invaded. Syria is in the same position. While not having much oil, it would provide a route for an oil pipeline, further reducing overhead costs. What better way to abuse the proletariat than to throw alleged

support to one "rebel group", giving Assad legitimacy in crushing his opposition brutally (Assad is to be fully opposed as the enemy of the working class, along with all leaders of all states and their lackeys), and the use "illegal means of killing" provides legitimacy in invasion. It matters not which side used chemical warfare, the inter-bourgeoisie struggle of the US capital and Russian capital in Syria does nothing but slaughter the proletariat, leave families aching at the loss of their loved ones, and many more fleeing to better places.

These better places treat them with contempt and open arms at the same time. There are two forces of capital at work: contempt by the petty bourgeoisie, open arms by liberal capital and liberal petit-bourgeois. Migrants and refugees provide cheap source of labour-power to exploit. This is why Starbucks, Chobani, and Walmart for instance are taking the "brave and righteous stand against racism, xenophobia, and bigotry". Who else would be less able to demand better working conditions and wages than people who come out of a warzone? First bomb and destroy their homes, then pretend to bother about their welfare. They need democracy, after all, and this *is* democracy!

This caring is best shown when Obama deported 600,000 people from the US, then proceeding to show any inclination of a heart when children made dangerous journeys on foot to America.

If a section of capitalists allows protection of the worst paid, it does so only to avoid the competition taking advance of it. This trend is also hundreds of years old, for instance when one group of capitalists in Great Britain in the 1840-50s had to limit child labor, this was the same group of capital that forced the restrictions on all other domestic industries. There was, and is, an unspoken agreement to continue to exploit children in poorer areas of the world, and to constantly undermine attempts to limit child labor there.

Let it also be known that more exploitative conditions, such as slavery, have recently experienced a rapid spike, thanks to Obama's intervention in Libya. A remarkable achievement for our first black president, the re-emergence of the slave trade in North Africa! We're guessing this wasn't the Change and Hope slogans weren't meant for the people being beaten and malnourished in slavery, unless the Change was from an already bad situation to an even worse one!

Let it be known that no state or democratic posturing is in the interest of the proletariat. Democracy is a trap in which any petit-bourgeois and bourgeois reforms are made to seem wanted by the "people", and the promised economic growth would be to the benefit of all classes. Even the war would be fought and won by the whole society, and all classes would be benefited by it. Society in its entirety would periodically decide its own destruction and oppression, as a matter of fact always to the advantage of the top classes.

We wish to destroy this society that causes so much destruction and suffering, so that we can finally live in a human society. One where there is no class of people to sell their labor-power to earn their survival, while the capitalist class profits off unpaid, alienating labor.

There is no interest of the proletariat in any political party inside any Congress or Parliament or Diet or in any President or Prime Minister or whichever agent of capital puts on a smile in a suit or a dress or a pant suit or in casual wear. The interest of the proletariat is the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisie and their lackeys. For only a war of liberation of the proletarian class can end all wars. This is to be done with the coordination of the proletariat's class party, the Communist Party, able to rally the proletarian class and the deserters from other classes.

The conditions of organization of the proletariat are in a very poor state. This is why to all haters of the current society

we say that we must support the rebirth of local labor organizations, both against the immediate boss and the class of the bosses; coordinate with other labor organizations and break with labor organizations that irreversibly betrayed workers interests. Defy all limitations on ability to strike and negotiate, including if it is illegal for you to strike.

The communist workers will inform and help organize local struggles, in view to restore proletarian class unity.

Thus organized, in its party and in its unions, the working class can once again make immediate economic demands to the bosses and to the states.

In such a situation the proletariat will be in a position to turn any wars of imperialism into civil wars, in which the workers and all the oppressed can overthrow, forever and internationally, the power of its enemies and oppressors.

Behind the Farce of the 19th Congress of the Chinese "Communist" Party

The Power and the Frailty of a Great Imperialist Country

Comments in the bourgeois press on the 19th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) all agree when it comes to praising the confirmation of President Xi Jinping, being anointed as the third most powerful president of the People's Republic after Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Even a stuffy review like *The Economist* dedicated its cover to the "most powerful man in the world".

Once again, an impotent bourgeoisie feels the need to dream about great leaders. Without having to make any political distinctions, everybody agrees about giving importance to the efforts and personal qualities of Presidents and Prime Ministers in influencing both past and future events. Indeed, for the bourgeoisie and its hack writers, the progression of history is governed by brilliant leaders, deceitful or thoughtful in turn. And the hacks get all excited and fawning in reverent admiration for some personality, who, in reality, is pretty trivial. The more capitalist society rots, the more spreads the religious belief that from the great and powerful we can expect either salvation or doom. According to this belief, history is determined by "men of destiny" and by their comings and goings at the world's capitals, either in the American, the Russian or the Chinese way.

Our Italian comrades would call these 'great leaders' a bunch of 'battilocchi'. A "battilocchio" is a lad who strives for attention while displaying his own utter emptiness at the same time. Marxism has always questioned the role of individuals in social processes and in particular the role of great personalities. Engels wrote: "for a great man to be born in a certain age and place, naturally is a sheer accident. But, if we dispose of them, the demand for a substitute immediately takes place; and

without much further ado, that substitute will be eventually found". Marxism recognizes the authentic engine of History in the economic material necessities of the classes, in the context of a given production process and their social struggle.

It's these circumstances which require the arrival and success of certain individuals. It is history which plays with these supposed 'superhumans', not them with it.

Almost a century ago, in 1924, we asserted that "our theory of leadership is far away from all the idiocies with which theologies and official politics prove the need of popes, kings, "first citizens", dictators, Duces, all poor puppets who deceive themselves in believing they are making history".

So it's obviously for the sake of Chinese capitalism that Xi Jinping's "political vision" has been added to the Party's Constitution; a privilege that up till now has been reserved for Mao Zedong. In 1997 "Deng Xiaoping's theory" was introduced in the Constitution of the Party, though Deng Xiaoping was already dead. From a Marxist point of view, Mao, Deng and now Xi, who are being celebrated as "great helmsmen", are only representatives of three different periods of the national history of China.

From Mao to Deng, National Independence and Capitalist Development

As a result of the impositions of the imperialist States, which pushed themselves to engaging the shameful Opium Wars, China, which is now characterizing itself as a world-scale capitalistic power, thus capable of sustaining a competition with the old powers which came to their own status by centuries. was in a miserable state at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Unlike India and other colonial countries, China entered modern history as "everybody's colony". Soon the export of capital to China prevailed over that of industrial products. To protect their investments, the great powers agreed to partition the country into spheres of influence. In Beijing, the foreign diplomatic corps controlled the Chinese state's finances.

The imperialistic rule, that firstly weakened the imperial dynasty and ended up eliminating it completely, produced in China the dismembering of its land. Indeed, without a centralized power, it ended up under the rule of the so called warlords, that is the military leaders, paid by the imperialistic powers, who detained the rule through the use of mercenary armies made up of landless peasants. A warlord's regional control corresponded to the sphere of influence of the country which aid them.

The warlords protected the interests of imperialism and the foreign backed bourgeoisie by exploiting the proletariat of both the cities and the countryside and by taking control over the country's wealth.

The weak national bourgeoisie, while being conscious about the need to get rid of imperialist oppression and reestablish national unity, lacked the needed strength to achieve its aims.

China in the early 1900s was fraught with bourgeois revolution. Ahead of it was not only the the essential task of gaining national independence, but also enacting agrarian reforms - a precondition of for industrial development. Although it was unclear if such a task would need to be carried out by the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.

In 1911, a top down revolution had overthrown the imperial dynasty and established a bourgeois republic under the presidency of Sun Yat-sen. Soon an inconsistency emerged:

The newborn republic was immediately killed off by the interference of warlords. The warlords were encouraged by the bourgeoisie itself, proving that class to be incapable of fulfilling even the tasks of its own revolution.

This principally in the fear of not being able to control the powerful forces of the proletariat and the peasants, since a revolutionary process would have inevitably set these forces in motion. So the Chinese bourgeoisie was in conflict with the warlords, but was also tied to them for the sake of repressing the proletarian movement. And in 1911 Sun Yat-sen, President of the Republic, passed over his government's power to the regional warlords. It was clear, as in Russia, that the national bourgeoisie, with its own forces, would have not been capable of leading its revolution to success.

In the meantime a new fact began to have a decisive influence over world events. World War One caused the outbreak of the Russian revolution. The proletarian victory in October 1917 shocked the world. Each country having to make a choice: revolutionary communism or bourgeois counter-revolution. The strategy of the Communist International theses on the colonial question was to connect class struggle in the main capitalist countries with the national revolutions going on in the colonies. Such a world strategy would have put communist Russia at the revolutionary epicenter, which in a complex cycle, which would have ended up overthrowing capitalism worldwide.

Just like in Russia, the working class, in alliance with the peasants, ripped off their chains - that is the chains of capitalist and landlord power - and put an end to an imperialist war. While in the west, proletarian revolution was on the agenda, in the backward countries, such as China, a struggle for a double revolution, guided by the communists in the form of a soviet regime, was not only feasible, but proper in the point of view of revolutionary communism.

The emergence of Stalinism, and the overthrowing within the proletariat's own power in Russia put this perspective to an end. A triumphant worldwide counter-revolution, especially in Russia, handed the Chinese proletariat to the bourgeoisie.

Stalinism stood as a dominant force in Russia and the International during the period of 1923 to 1927. The Chinese Communist Party was forced to kowtow to the bourgeois Chinese nationalist party, the Kuomintang. The CPC had lost any chance of the independent struggle needed for a revolutionary victory.

The giant revolutionary efforts of the Chinese workers and peasants were drowned in blood. The tragic epilogue turned out to be in year 1927. In March of that year, the particularly numerous and combative proletariat of Shanghai (the most important industrial and port city in China) rose up and took over the city. For the dominant position Shanghai had in China's economic life and for the recent developments in the revolutionary workers and peasants movement, this episode could have given the Chinese revolution a totally anti-bourgeois direction. Instead, the Communist Party and the working class organizations who were in power submitted to Moscow's guidance and handed over their rule to Chiang Kai-shek, who not long after broke his alliance with the communists and turned to full repression, imprisoning and mass killing communists and workers, destroying both their trade unions and their political organizations. The Shanghai massacre was only the first of many more massacres that took the working class and the peasants down.

The year 1927 stands for the victory of counter-revolution and the defeat of the revolutionary proletarian movement in China.

A revolutionary movement shall come back to life only after the second world war, starting with the most backward

and rural areas of China, with a completely different class characterization, being nationalist and anti-imperialist, yet not communist.

It was from those regions that Mao's peasant armies ran rampant and conquered the towns. The following events and the character of the Chinese revolution itself that made China in 1949 turn into an independent nation, can only be explained under the light of the tragic facts that happened in the 20s. The defeat of the Chinese proletariat and the repression it had to face, helped the shifting of the revolutionary movement from the towns to the countryside and the full overturning of its character from a class point of view.

The following revolutionary movement in China featured a completely absent proletariat and may be considered to be a petit bourgeois-peasant movement, enclosed in the frame of its national revolution. The party in the lead of this movement at the time, notwithstanding it continued to label itself Communist Party, didn't have any more features to qualify as one: in its own words, it became the "authentic Kuomintang", or conversely, the authentic representation of the interests of the bourgeoisie and the small Chinese nationalist bourgeoisie. The social constituent basis of the CPC was composed by peasants and their main purpose became the achievement of the national unity and independence, not for the sake of the proletarian dictatorship, but of the 'Four classes' block', in other words of the bourgeois-driven development.

Even if we define Mao's party as reactionary for having forsaken the tactic of the double revolution and the main line that would have brought to the proletariat's historical affirmation, the final victory of CPC on the Kuomintang, and the installation of the People's Republic of China, has represented an essential step from the point of view of the installation of the modern capitalism. It in turn has, through a long and tormented process, allowed the humongous development of Chinese economy, and therefore the rising of a modern proletariat, clustered and powerful, which is the forthcoming terminator of bourgeois society.

Since its own beginning, the Chinese national revolution had to fulfil its historical goal of developing capitalism, facilitate commerce and the industrialization of the whole enormous country, since then dominated by an unbounded and backward rural world.

Even though traitors and counterfeiters had announced the "construction of socialism" in China and in other places, our Party has always countered that such "socialism" only meant a further accumulation of capital and the extending of market economy.

Anyhow we underlined the great historical significance of those events, and the figure of Mao was a part of this great historical process. "Mao's thought" wasn't other than the expression of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China and the worldwide anti-proletarian counter-revolution.

The national unification was a necessary material precondition of the process of accumulation of capital in China, for the making of a domestic market between the towns to trade and the countryside, the development of capitalistic economic relations based on waged labour and its associated work and mechanization, in the real perspective of a proper process of industrialization.

Mao's economic program consisted essentially in nationalizing big companies and banks and actuating the agrarian reform. In spite of Mao's verbal extremism, that was so passionate about a so called Chinese road to socialism, skipping the capitalist phase, its program was pretty much exactly a democratic-bourgeois revolutionary program. The Maoist program differed slightly to the Kuomintang's, having added to Sun Yat-sen's "Three People's Principles" - i.e.

nationalism (Mínzú Zhǔyì), democracy (Mínquán Zhǔyì) and people's wealth (Mínshēng Zhǔyì) - some other measures such as the eight-hour working day and a agrarian reform defined as "radical".

The Agrarian Reform

Indeed, the first important act of the Chinese Popular Republic was the Agrarian Reform Law of June 1950. This reform was perfectly compatible with the bourgeois regime. We may cite the first article just to leave no doubt about it: "the system of peasant land ownership shall be introduced in order to set free the rural productive forces, develop agricultural production, and thus pave the way for new China's industrialisation".

At first the reform seemed to realize the millennial dream for a egalitarian repartition of the farmland. The new Law ensured each individual under the age of 16 a minimum of 2 to 3 mu of farmland (15 mu make a hectare, around 6 mu make an acre) depending on the region. This meant in practice that a family of five would be given an hectare of land.

Land ownership implied that the new land owner would acquire also the right to buy, sell or rent their own land.

The distribution of land was carried out especially at the expense of the landowners, whose land, draught animals, agricultural equipment, cereal surpluses and rural buildings were confiscated without compensation (though they still had the right to receive 2 to 3 mu of land just like all the rest). Apart some exceptions both the land of the rich farmers cultivated by themselves or with the help of waged labour and the rich farmer's other possessions were protected and could not be affected; just like the other small plots of land they owned and rented.

Apart some exceptions both the land of the rich farmers cultivated by themselves or with the help of waged labour and the rich farmer's other possessions were protected and could not be affected; just like the other small plots of land they owned and rented. The land of the average farmers, including the ones better off, was inviolable without any exception. In this way almost half of the area under cultivation (47 million hectares) was distributed among 300 million peasants, who had themselves assigned about 0.15 hectares each, i.e. 2.3 mu.

Yet the distribution of the farmland could not be the definite solution of the agrarian question in China. Since centuries the Chinese farmland was extremely fragmented: indeed the land, even if possessed by a rather small number of landowners, was divided into small plots and rented to the peasantry. The land indeed was already divided, and a further massive division would not solve the problem at all.

This is why until year 1927 the revolutionary proletariat claimed the nationalization of the farmland, since this would have lead to the development of big state companies conducted by waged workers with the use of modern means of farming. The watchword of the division of the farmland was typically the average farmers', that is of those farmers who already cultivated a small plot of land and who wanted to get rid of the heavy landlord's rent. With the reform the rent was replaced by a state tax as high as 17-19% of the harvest's value.

If the agrarian reform eliminated the landlords and a small part of the rich farmers, with the distribution of all the former's farmland and of part of the latter's, making the peasants free to cultivate without having to pay a rent to the landowner, such undeniable advantages could not minimally change the relations of production in the countryside, because of the excessive fragmentation of the farms and the extreme backwardness of their farming technology and their farming methods who both carried jarred with the needs of capital

accumulation.

The division of the farmland, brought to better living conditions for the peasants, yet it did not imply any growth of the productive forces and did not make agricultural surpluses available. The peasants were all worried about reaching a better living conditions and methods of farming of the small plots stayed the same around for thousands of years. So when the bourgeois state asked for money, the farmlands ignored the state's call, since the agricultural surplus amounted to 30 million tons of cereals, so it was all absorbed by the peasants. Yet already significant signs of social polarization appeared such as the buying and selling of farmland, loan sharking etc.

The boundless small farmer family lead production became the swamp which blocked the projects of rapid industrialization. The low productivity of the parcelled agricultural property out of lease was unable to fully absolve the bluntly bourgeois task of forming and developing a national market, it was not capable of supplying surplus value to the cities and excesses of agricultural products necessary for the industrialization and to feed a grown army of proletarians. The industrialization was slowedown by the underdeveloped countryside, without machines and capital.

Both to overcome such unfavourable material matter of facts and for fear of not managing to control the social differences that were emerging in the countryside, in the mid 50s the regime launched the cooperatives' and Communes movement. The disturbing mass campaigns that were being organized were inspired by old principles that have always been present in the thousands of years lasting Chinese history: collectivity is higher than the individual and the state has an indisputable supremacy. But the fundamental point over which such initiatives were based on is the fact that such initiatives could count on the only wealth that a backward country such as China could have, that is millions of men. The energy and direct interests of the peasant masses were used as a leverage to deal with a new immense task: now it was not a question of supplying the central state with surplus value and more food for the sake of developing the industrial sector, instead, it was a question of substituting the industrial sector itself with a small village industry that would have used the available technical resources around and the workforce that exceeds the work at the fields and the stalls.

Yet the toil of the peasant communities to meet such a new task not only produces exceeding capitals, it also ended up in complete failure. Also for the bad meteorological and climatic conditions, such a toil resulted just in misery and famine. The productive forces, which do never abide by the domination nor of the governments, neither by the personality of men, the latter great or not, imposed their own rhythm: a sudden recoil shook a regime that used to be in office, safe and sound until then. The failure of these gigantic mass campaigns, the Great Leap Forward and the Commons movement had as their consequences a first harsh crisis in Peking's regime, but, maybe still on the trail of the great victory of the previous decade, which meant power and prestige, it was able to keep the structure of the Party and of the State both solid and united. Mao Zedong had to leave Liu Shaoqi in charge of the Presidency of the Republic, which didn't have the meaning of a simple substitution of men: at the opposite, it was the initial display of the clash of enormous social forces, which would have pervaded the immense space of China for the subsequent 20 years, with more or less memorable facts, including the so-defined Cultural Revolution

The failure of that first Maoist mobilization granted new power to theses which had already been conceived in the 50's and disregarded as "right-wing". The deepest problem, and yet the most dreadful for the growth and development of China

since the Republic's foundation was a social structure still revolving around agriculture for the most part of it. According to the industry's own needs, the productivity of the rural world had to be increased and the latter should have focused on producing for the market, not for direct consumption. Likewise, the national industry was powerless about stocking the countryside with necessary tools to meet such expectations of mechanization and modernization, which would have allowed such productivity increase, because of its insufficient development at the time.

The overcoming of China's belated industrial development had in its premises the expropriation of tens of millions of peasants, therefore obliged to leave the land, and once depleted of their basic goods, to flow into the outskirts of the cities, thus starting their proletarianization. But, a quick process of this kind awed the Communist Party in office, because of the necessity to carry out both its management and control, all the above avoiding to throw the constituted order into hazard.

Since the early 1950s, in order to provide a solution to this problem, two main lines already emerged in the CPC. The first had a firmer resolution to rapidly offer a solution to the rural issue by putting the necessary reforms into action, to implement the capitalist system into the context of agriculture also. The second was more concerned about any possible effects such reforms could be able to cause, more conservative and with less impatience of rendering them effective. The latter tendency kept into proper consideration that the recent rise to the power of the CPC was made possible by the support accorded by the peasants, of which the approval couldn't afford to be lost. Through the Great Leap Forward, such tendency attempted to reach the goal of industrialization by the "peasant" path, resorting to forced and gratuitous mobilizations of workforce. Not out of aesthetic nuances, but basic necessity, these mobilizations required a society with a strong egalitarian connotation, absolutely collective, to fight back against every kind of "individualism" and thwart social polarization.

The so-defined "right-wing" tendency, more conscious of the necessity to introduce reforms, argued that, since the State was not able to finance the intake of capitals in the countryside, if not in a way that would have deemed utterly insufficient, it was to be a part of the peasant themselves to deal with such historical duty, thereby thriving on land, machinery and capitals. It would have been necessary then to invite the peasants to trade and thrive such that the State could have the chance to reinforce its control structure, and keep in its hands the formidable leads of the monopoly over the dairies' commerce, the allowances for residence and transfer to the population to prevent an excessive and uncontrolled urbanization from happening.

Both of these conflicting lines, even if they were given off as left- and right-wing, were corresponding to the needs of the national economy, to the necessity of developing capitalism and both if they were bourgeois lines. Notwithstanding their differences, they were in accord upon each other on the need of devolving every resource to the capital's reproduction and the accumulation. Afterwards, we can say that the so-defined "right-wing" line was likely envisioning one safer and quicker perspective of industrialization, resolved to hastily precipitate a large fraction of the immense peasant class in the hell circle of the proletarianization and the salary work. It held the meaning to barely come back to the private business in the countryside, with the including freedom to sell land, buy it, rent it, in order to favor a relatively quick ruin and expropriation for the majority of the peasants, with the final constitution of a modern, mechanized agriculture, based on privately run large businesses.

The Cultural Revolution taking place in the second half of

the 1960s held the meaning of an attempt of the most conservative line to stop the reformists in their track, so that they got expelled by their directive duties. The propagandist affirmations and famous sentences must be put in the context of the struggle between economic forces into place back then: it went by the name Cultural Revolution, because it was the small bourgeois and the teachers who were the most receptive, so they put themselves at the hands of the Maoist fraction of the Party and the State.

For the definitive predominance of the "reformist" line, China had to wait until the 11th CPC Congress in August 1977, which saw the rise to the power of Deng Xiaoping. That way, the romantic heroic deeds of the Chinese national revolution, that had shaken the enormous country for more than 60 years long came to an end. It was the time for China to be faced with more pragmatic issues. After dropping myths and illusions, the one and only remaining thing was the categorical imperative to produce as much as possible, to carry out the development of production forces, to decrease times and costs of production, and of extending the capital constantly and safely in the unfathomable rural world, still to be subverted and proletarianized for the most part. In absence of a victorious movement of the proletariat in other countries, equipped with a fully mature capitalism, his stage has represented a necessary step for the disruption of those pre-capitalistic production reports and property forms that were bothersome to a further development of the productive forces, but this eventually came at the price of a painful, blood-dropping path for the proletarian generations who were affected by it.

Xi Jinping and Chinese Imperialism

Present day China has concluded this awesome development process of its productive forces, thus becoming 'the World's factory', the largest exporter in the entire world. China can today project its economical and military power far beyond its own national borders, and it portrays itself on world market as a freebooter among other freebooters, looking for raw materials and new markets. It has begun to review its relationships with other States, not just with close ones: it will be sufficient to mention the tensions in the Southern and Eastern Chinese Sea, but it's posing even a threat to the dominance of the greatest world-scale imperialism, the United States of America. Chinese imperialism is trying to redefine the entire world's power balance, seeking to expand itself: it's not doubtful that this powerful force corresponds to ideological reflexes, thus requiring new forms to be theorized by the Communist Power in charge in China.

The last CPC congress has then reconfirmed Xi Jinping to the role of guide of the Party and the State, even contributing to grow its myth. But, exactly as his illustrious predecessors, Xi is nothing else than the product of a certain social situation, of a certain development level of the productive forces, to which he cannot hold any opposition, no matter his personal virtues.

The so-called "Xi's thought" cannot but put itself into accord with the powerful historical process that testifies the end of the age in which China was forced to "hold a low profile", and the beginning of a new historical phase, the third after the ones of Mao and then Deng: the Chinese imperialist interests' outburst phase.

Xi's thought, as stated in the Congress, is summarized into "14 Principles" which clearly express the imperialistic maturation of China, as well as its desire to become a world-scale power. The "Chinese dream" of the "Nation's resurgence", a rhetoric tool characterizing all of China's leaders from Sun

Yat-sen onward, is today intended as the return to a role as world-scale power after the humiliation suffered between 19th and 20th centuries: The "Xi's Jinping thought" about a "Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new age" revolves around this very concept.

The New Silk Road

An enormous importance is acknowledged to the New Silk Road Project (Belt and Road Initiative, BRI), which refers to the new commercial routes which, from China through Asia, will reach the heart of Europe. This project has been explicitly included into the Party's Statute, among the "14 Principles", in order to elicit its relevance for the "Chinese dream" of the "Nation resurgence". But nowadays China should not only find markets for selling the humongous amount of goods it produces, it also need to make abroad investments with the capital accumulated and already exceeding. Thus, its foreign money reserve are, at a rough estimate, 3'000 billion dollars. BRI project would allow a fraction of this capital to be invested for building infrastructures in many of the 65 traversed countries, who host more than half of the world population, three quarters of the energetic supplies, and a third of the global gross domestic product. According to Morgan Stanley, the enormous project requires 1'200 billion investments into roads, railways, ports, electrical supply networks. BRI would be the likely candidate for the largest project of investment ever attempted, Taking inflation into account, it would surpass the notorious Marshall Plan of at least 12 times.

Through the creation of the Silk Road Fund and of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, China has equipped itself already with the necessary financial tools, but whatever public or private entity in the world having an interest is called to take part to the project, for example, during the Trump's visit in China an agreement was signed between the American General Electrics and the Chinese Silk Road Fund.

In addition to the terrestrial link between China and Northern Europe, with its branch from Central Asia to Middle East, with the development of a commercial zone throughout the whole Asia, a sea route, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, has been also envisioned. It's a pool of backing ports which will connect Chinese ports to those of Southern Europe through the Chinese Southern Sea and the Indian Ocean. These infrastructures would cut the transportation time of goods, from Europe to China and backwards, of a significant fraction.

In the present day, they amount to 19 days by rail and 29-35 by sea.

Recent Tensions

Will China manage to complete their project?

For starters, China's expansion gets in friction with the American imperialism. Chinese projects do not invest only economical aspects, but they have large scale strategical side effects, since Chinese investments in other countries, as well as the financing of pompous infrastructures allows China to expand their abroad economical interest, consequently attracting the involved countries in its political sphere of influence.

Clearly, this is the answer to Pivot to Asia, the United States' strategy applied to the containment of the economical and military rise of China in the Far East, envisioning empowered relationships between the US and the countries which perceive China as a threat. These include Japan, India, South Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, Australia.

With its own projects, China does not just address the Eurasian continental area. As we mentioned in various previous

articles, Peking claims to seize control over a large part of the Chinese Southern Sea, disputing its sovereign over the other coastal states: Vietnam, Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia. For this purpose, China is building artificial islands, in the Paracel and Spratly islands, for military use in these waters. The goal is to provide coast with protection from various attacks, and to control the transit of merchant ships towards China. A rising China cannot indefinitely stand an obtrusive US military presence in those waters. On the other hand, the United States are opposed to China in the area, both maintaining a substantial military force in their bases in the Pacific, and striving to reinforce their long running relationships and alliances with those Asian countries who feel threatened by China.

In its visit to Asia last November, Trump has made stops in Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam and Philippines, having as a goal the reassurance of his allies and restate America the engagement in the region.

Trump has even made a stop in China, where he met Xi Jinping. But, other than the deployment of the honor guard, the menu of the banquet and the itinerary of the visit to the Forbidden City, the two "great leaders" had little to no chance of affecting the course of the events. The Asian-Pacific region represents the pulsating heart of the world's economy. It's in this area that the contrast between the imperialist countries will become fiercer, and it's here that the direct clash between China and the United States will spark.

In the present moment, these contrasts are at a risk of an explosion because of the North-Korean issue. The United States are trying to oblige China, under the threat of commercial sanctions, to put North Korean nuclear ambitions to stop. But, if one hand Peking cannot push too much the barrel into putting severe measures into action against North Korea, because it doesn't want the crumbling of that regime, on the other hand Pyongyang goes on with their missile and nuclear tests in order to put their safety under warrant.

The latest missile test occurred the 28th of November. Having made the test only two months after the previous launch, this made tensions grow in the region, to the point that an imminent war was mentioned. Many have referred about Chinese military preparations in the perspective of a possible conflict between North Korea and the US. China continues to promote talks between the two countries, but nevertheless it also prepares countermeasures at the Korean border. In the last months there has been a significant growth of activities going on in that part of the country, including the growth of military personnel and training. In the meantime Chinese media talk about a possible imminent conflict in the Korean peninsula.

The fundamental problem is that the birth of a new, great imperialism has put on the top of the agenda the issue of a new division of the world, in which context the Chinese imperialism aspires to supersede the United States. First and foremost, this is what the "Chinese dream" is about. And in order to fulfill it, Chinese proletarians will be called to spill their blood for the Nation.

The constant rumors of an imminent war in Korea fostered by the mass media of several involved countries, even if they may just be regarded as propaganda, serve anyway the purpose to prepare the workers to the moment when they will be called to "sacrifice themselves for the Nation" when the latter will call them to arms. Chinese proletarians, as well as those from all the other countries, must not side with their own imperialism. The "dream" which the Chinese leaders brag about, is nothing but an illusion to distract the proletarians from the struggle in defense of their own interests, in order to stop retaliatory struggles that are more and more increasing. Conversely, they should continue to extend the struggle for

salary increase, the shrink of working hours, the freedom of association and strike, fueling class organization, the rebirth of class-wide workers' unions and the rejoicing with the program of revolutionary Communism.

The young Chinese proletariat has a glorious tradition to rejoice with. It should resort back to the methods of struggle and organization, which were proper of its first working class generations. Albeit its inconsistency in numbers respect to the peasants mass, the Chinese proletariat put itself in the lead of the revolution in the 1920s.

The workers' unions, which were nearly nonexistent in China before the 1920s, have been created in those years, leading either struggles and strikes which were authentic class wars, which left on the field a lot of worker's blood, but also yet another historical confirmation that the proletariat can fight for power and win, exactly as it happened for the victorious Shanghai insurrection of ninety years ago.

Today in China capitalist development has decomposed the Chinese countryside, piled the proletarians in hundreds of gigantic industrial metropolis, giving life to hundreds of Shanghai-like cities. The "Chinese dream" of the "Resurrection of the Nation" just translates into the nightmare of the exploitation for the sake of the Capital and proletarians may safely assume that tomorrow the Nation will call them to shed sweat and blood.

The answer shall be like Shanghai in 1927: class war for the overthrowing of the capitalist regime and the overtake of the power. No illustrious name worth of commemoration have made it into History out of that revolution, let alone a "great leader" to idolize.

Anonymous proletarians fought, with their class organization and their Party having their backs. Let's leave to the bourgeoisie, coward and powerless, the cult of their minions.

In order to win, the proletariat doesn't have to wait the coming of any great leader of sort. As we have repeatedly stated, the revolution will rise its head once again, anonymous and dreadful.

(Blaz Mesner, a Slovenian worker) walked off his shift, to be greeted by those on the picket line. The pickets returned later in the morning to continue the picket line.

That same morning saw a demonstration outside a McDonald's in Cambridge at which some workers walked off the job in support of higher pay and organising rights. Also at Crayford in Bexley, South-East London, a demonstration took place in support of workers who had walked out for a second time. The demonstrators came together at Watford, the home town of McDonald's Boss.

This parallels similar campaigns in the US, which demands a minimum rate of pay of \$15 per hour.

At the moment the campaigners are members of a small trade union, the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers [BF&AW], who are affiliated to the Trades Union Congress. The choice of this union is to give them some form of official status while keeping as much control in their own hands. Although the campaigners have banners with their union emblem on their banners, there is little sign of the resources of the Bakers Union being available to them. Also the fact that this same union is controlled by Trotskyists seems to make little difference to the lack of official support. The campaigners are clear that their movement is rank and file led, and it is likely to remain that way. That politicals and MPs are providing support at the moment is only to be expected, but how far that support will remain when the fight becomes determined remains to be seen.

The internet publicity is a way of communicating and organising themselves. It also keeps the campaign under their own control, for the moment at least.

These May Day demonstrations by Fast Food Workers was a bright example of the spirit of May Day and what it should be, rather than the subsequent rallies of the official Labour movement pleading for the lessening of the nasty politics of austerity and other aspects of a bankrupt society.

Done with the Tories or Done with Capitalism?

After May Day there were marches (7th May in Liverpool and 12th May in London) against the Tory Government to prove they will not tolerate any further cuts in wages, or the general and progressive deterioration of their living conditions. In the 10 years following the 2008 economic crash, workers have seen their purchasing power decline significantly, with the cost of living steadily rising and their wages staying put, when not actually decreasing. At the same time the amount of wealth amassing at the other end of society (latest example: Persimmon boss receives £75 Million bonus) has reached grotesque dimensions. As even mainstream media are forced to admit, the world now sees the worst levels of inequality since records began. No wonder Marxists are now starting to gain a wider audience.

What will come next?

A change of government will not bring any gain whatsoever to the working class. Once in power, the Labour Party, which claims to be defending the workers interests, will promptly drop all its promises in the name of the *higher* "national interest" (i.e., in the interests of capitalism and the fight of UK capitalists against those of other nations). The Labour Party, that is, once in power again, as is likely to happen, will deal with the declining rate of profit by ramping up the level of exploitation of labour by increasing its intensity and the length of the working day, and by making it easier to hire and fire through the use of part-time and agency workers,

UK: Fast Food Workers Out on May Day

There have been some attempts in the past to organise workers well in fast food restaurants, but these have faced real obstacles in maintaining any form of organisation.

There is now a more determined campaign to publicise their campaign for organisation, recognition and pay rise to £10 per hour across the board, which means the end of youth rates of pay, as well as guaranteed hours of work. McDonald stores are in particular being targeted for campaigns and demonstrations. Information on this campaign can be found on the internet under #McStrike and @FastfoodRights.

Demonstrations were held in five centres, from Manchester, Cambridge and London, ending with a rally at Watford later on at the First May Rally. The campaign began shortly after midnight in Manchester on First May when the McDonald's restaurant on Oxford Street store's staff member

which has the additional effect of driving a wedge between full-time and 'temps' status. And on the latter issue, where solidarity between workers in full-time and those in precarious employment is an urgent necessity, we will not hear much from the trade union leaders.

Workers have seen this drama happening over and over again. To bring this perpetual 'groundhog day' to a close they need to build a real and strong movement that is decidedly based on class demands, which will mean leaving behind the illusion that their enemy, or false friends like the Labour Party, with its insipid brand of acceptable radicalism, are going to guarantee them a better life. What they need is to dedicate their energy to rebuilding unity of action, rebuilding a class movement in the trade union sphere on a territorial basis, focused on inter-sectoral actions, that chooses not to place any faith in the parties and institutions of the enemy class.

An Arduous but Necessary Struggle

The proletariat class has the ability to conduct and win difficult battles. In their daily resistance against a system based on ever increasing work exploitation, they should demand:

- Minimum wage for all workers linked to the cost of living;
- Reduction of working hours with wage levels maintained;
- A living wage for workers who have lost their jobs;
- A general increase in pensions.

With the unity of all working class and the guidance of its own party, the proletariat – the class that has to sell its labour, whether its individual members are in work or not - will be able to defeat capitalism and free itself and humanity from the yoke of wage labour and the ongoing farce of capitalist 'planning'; which is so patently unable to resolve the huge problems of war, the environment, increasing population and, of course, the problems of unemployment, a living wage and perpetual insecurity.

Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains.

You Can Find The ICP in these Cities:

In North America:

Akron/Cleveland, Denver, Montreal, New Haven, NYC & Portland, OR

In Australia:

Perth

In New Zealand:

Christchurch

In the UK:

Liverpool, London, Manchester, Reading

A letter from Brazil

Strikes and the Situation in Brazil

The recent trucker strike started on May 21st and as of today, June 11th, it has not ended.

First, we have to take into account that a good portion of the striking truck drivers either belong to the petty bourgeoisie or they are associated with a transport company;. This means that, while there is legitimate revolt surrounding the price spike on fuels, there is also a confluence of interests between the drivers and the bosses;, the end of negotiations and the refusal of many drivers to end the strike made possible the appearance of a sector of drivers disposed to assume classist positions, that is, close to the demands of the proletariat, going further than the demand of a reducing of fuel prices and better freight prices in demanding a raise in wages and a cutting of work hours.

The truck driver, as a member of the petty bourgeoisie, often goes through many of the difficulties that any other work goes through, but sometimes, their immediate interests end up aligned with the capitalist class, their own bosses, this resulted in the initial collaboration between the autonomous drivers and the employer's union. This "fluidity" of positions and alliances are characteristic of any petty bourgeois movement, however, this should not mean an abandonment of intervention amidst the strike or the general movement, not in a blind appropriation of the demands of the drivers, but in an assertive and precise manner that aims to not only push it away from it's petty bourgeois positions towards the immediate demands of the proletariat but also towards its historical program, communism.

It is safe to say that this strike also reveals a confrontation between sectors of the bourgeoisie, in one side 'shareholders' of the present government and in the other, the transport industry and international investors: the proletariat has no interest in allying with either and should instead enjoy a renewed struggle.

This opportunity was followed by the declaration by Oil Workers of a 72 hour strike calling for a reduction of fuel prices and the expelling of the current president of Petrobras, Pedro Parente they join in this wave of strikes teachers in Belo Horizonte and São Paulo, freight drivers, subway workers.

It is in the face of this opening and wave of activity that we turn our eyes to the opportunist positions of Social democrats and "Marxists": the official leadership of our social democratic left has managed to align the position of their bases in defense of the strikes, but don't let yourself be fooled, they did so in the interest of their electoral hopes, this is a guarantee that they are "by the side of the people", that the politics of PT are opposed to Temer's, that this crisis and instability would not take place in a government that "fought for the worker", the vote is again placed as an alternative to the convulsions of the capitalist system.

This support by the social democrats have not lead to bigger mobilizations, no call for a general strike on behalf of their unions, not even a defense of a new cycle of struggles, it is nothing more than an opportunist declaration in time for the elections.

Our "Marxists" have not acted much different, PCB has

also declared its support, not for the opportunity of reorganization of the class, but in defense of “our” companies, of the national interest of our own bourgeois dictatorship and of the old lie of the “united front”; it’s here, facing a notable opportunity to reaffirm revolutionary positions that we see both the representatives of social democracy and of so-called communists placing themselves always in a defensive position, in defense of democratic guarantees, of “our” companies, of national interests and of every other cliché made popular by the ‘left of capital’.

It’s in the replacing of class struggle for the defense of a “united front” and of democratic stability that we can clearly see that their compromise is not with the proletariat and the proletarian revolution but with the legitimization of the bourgeois dictatorship we live under.

We should not mistake ourselves over the consequences of this process of confrontation, the disruption of the bourgeois State and the intensification of social conflict will not take us straight to a revolutionary upheaval, our situation can only be objectively revolutionary when the class—more than breaks with the traitorous unions that abandoned their struggle—founds their own class unions, their own organs of struggle and assume a fundamental defense of the revolutionary program of communism.

What emerges from this wave of strikes is the necessity of a response to the continuous attacks of the bourgeois against our class, it is necessary, therefore, to organize a united front of the proletariat, based on their demands, their strike committees, one that rejects conciliation, cooperation and affirms a true classist organization.

The class struggle, therefore, can’t be directed by old or new electoral parties, but by its own party, an organization of struggle that can transpose the limitations of the economic struggle of the proletariat and direct the class towards a revolutionary conclusion, this is the task undertaken by the International Communist Party.

Even in Nicaragua, the Blood of the Proletariat is Exposing “Socialism of the 21st Century”

It is not like the Nicaraguan government has become bourgeois and bloody today, all the sudden. The Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) was already bourgeois from its origins when, as a guerrilla movement, based on the oppressed masses, it overthrew the government of Anastasio Somoza.

Its government later managed the interests of the bourgeoisie, securing social control with propaganda, politicking, and violence.

With the imposition of Chavez in Venezuela, which waved the banner of "Socialism of the 21st century", and the emergence of a series of equally characterized governments in

Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador, and Honduras, the bourgeois government of Nicaragua has not hesitated to align itself in spreading that populism and that demagoguery that have allowed the secure perpetuation of capitalist exploitation and the growth of corporate profits. The number of workers enrolled in the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute (INSS) in March 2018 fell by 1.5%, with respect to the same month in 2017: 896,869 versus 910,621. In March, the nominal average monthly salary was 10,737.8 Córdobas, about 342 dollars. Between April 2017 and April 2018, the rate of inflation was 4.75%. However, in Nicaragua, illegal employment, with low wages and no social security, continues to be over 70%. Of the total population of 6,279,712, 50% are considered economically active; this also counts the unemployed and those who worked only one hour.

Agriculture is one of the main activities of the country, representing 60 percent of exports, a with strong employment, but there are also some industrial centers and the extraction of precious minerals.

The Government of Managua has also fulfilled its commitments with the IMF, signed in 2005, when it had remitted the debt, as long as it respected an adjustment plan for the economy, so much so that in 2012 the debt of Nicaragua to the IMF was reduced to zero. In 2006 the country also signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Dominican Republic and the other states of Central America and the United States.

In an agreement with Chinese companies, the Government of Nicaragua in 2014 presented the "Great Inter-Oceanic Canal" project: a blueprint of 278 kilometers, from the mouth of the Punta Gorda river on the Caribbean coast to the mouth of the Brito river on the Pacific coast, in which 50,000 workers would have to work. This project opens a new space for trade and geopolitical confrontation between the United States and China.

Therefore, in Nicaragua the capitalists are fine, although with some contrast with the IMF regarding the policies to carry out regarding pensions and social security, and with the US government mainly due to the penetration of Chinese capital.

So, for many years Nicaragua has not come on the front pages of international newspapers: although the says only that which the bourgeoisie wants to make known, and with distorted versions of reality, the truth is that a lot of time has passed without it hearing anything of trade union conflicts, of the social situation and the repressive action of the government.

But, as in a volcano, underground pressure accumulates until the lava of social struggle explodes, pushed by the contradictions between capital and labor

. The government had announced a series of laws aimed at guaranteeing the financial sustainability of the INSS, reforms that it intended to agree upon with the representation of the businessmen, the Superior Council of Private Business (COSEP). However, without having reached an agreement with COSEP, it approved a decree that increased the contributions that companies and workers deposit into the national pension system. COSEP rejected the decree because it would have increased the cost of work, launching screams about the reduction of competitiveness and the employment ability of the companies. Obviously, it opposed the decree not in defense of workers, pensioners, and social security, but because of the threat to corporate profits.

The government then admitted that the INSS would not have had the funds to pay pensions before the end of the year. For this reason, the provision expected that the insured workers would have paid more (from 6.25% to 7%), employers from 19% to 22.5%, while to the pensioners the pension would have been reduced by 5% and the State would have contributed,

although with a minimum.

But last April a spontaneous explosion of rage and protest surprised both the government and the various movements and political groups. The reaction of the workers was immediate. Only the National Employees Union supported the reform and saw some small concentrations of public sector workers who expressed their support for the government, against the "destabilizing violence of the right."

The bourgeois government, led by Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo, then ordered a massacre across the country; proletarian blood once again flowed through the paved streets in Managua, where there were counted at least 27 dead, then in the cities of Masaya, Leon, Esteli, Matagalpa, and Bluefields, with a further 50 dead and more than 400 wounded.

The disproportionate military and police response against the demonstrators came after more than a decade of strict political and repressive control over the workers, of an intense action of suppression of their organizations of defensive economic struggle, to expand the corruption and capitulation of the existing unions. So that is why the reaction of the masses to the reform of the social security system has needed necessarily to occur in this manner, spontaneous and anarchic, since there do not exist forms of class-based organization that can channel and direct the struggles.

Naturally, the official version, like that of all the "workers" and "progressive" governments of Latin America, in line with "Socialism of the 21st century", has proclaimed that in order to defend the workers that this reform was imposed on the employer, and to "not bend to the IMF." In this propaganda, the Sandinistas are accompanied by international opportunism that repeats that Ortega has "faced the IMF" and the "imperialist right", committed to destabilize his government, and defends the working class.

Thus, the government believed that to control the reaction of the masses it would have been sufficient, as in the past, its Collectives or its goon squads: it was not so. Although the university students have also publicly protested in their petty-bourgeois style, with them have united vast strata of workers who mobilized in the area. They erected barricades and there were street clashes. The government has turned off the free Wi-Fi that since 2014 had been installed in all public places, since it was used to coordinate the protest actions.

The situation has reached such dimensions that the government has decided to call for dialogue and to review the reform of the INSS with the business community.

In the meantime, COSEP had announced a demonstration for April 23 in Managua; the population of the capital joined the procession of industrialists and the crowd overflowed.

Later they tried to broaden the negotiations also to the students and to the Church. On April 28 it was the Church that announced a "Pilgrimage for Peace", that had had again a massive participation. The government for its part organized an event for the occasion of the 1st of May, ending with a speech by President Ortega.

The opposition movements have seen in this occasion the possibility to increase their weak forces. They know that if the bourgeoisie decided that the FSLN government no longer guarantees them the ability to exploit the workers in a climate of social peace, as in recent years, it has the possibility to choose between the opponents, who can equally guarantee their interests.

If COSEP rejects the reform of the INSS, because it damages the interests of the employers, the businessmen have however benefited from the government of a reduction of many taxes and have had facilitated the exploitation of the workers. Moreover, COSEP, like the businessmen in all the world today,

push for an increase in the retirement age to 70 years and for the increase in contributions the burden of the workers.

The bourgeois solution that has taken up the negotiations is clear in the points of order of the day: investigations on the murders during the demonstrations; b) reform of the electoral system to guarantee "free and transparent" elections; c) institutional reforms that guarantee the "State of rights", and elimination of corruption; d) resolution of the INSS crisis.

Both the bourgeois political fronts, the government and opposition, will act to prevent the masses of employees to join and organize on the basis of their goals, such as the request of a salary increase, a reduction of working hours, and a reduction in retirement age.

The president Daniel Ortega on April 22nd finally announced the repeal of the reform. But roadblocks, barricades and clashes continued in the month of May. Parts of the barricades were made by the "Movimiento Campesino Anticanal" (Anti-Canal Farmer Movement), against the expropriation of the land. Looting also began in stores. Therefore, the list of dead, injured and arrested has continued to grow. On May 13 a caravan of vehicles, with great attendance, left from Managua for Masaya, in solidarity with that city, where the clashes on Saturday the 12th had left at least 1 dead and about 150 wounded.

On May 12th, the Army in a declaration appealed to "non-violence" and to the resumption of "dialogue." On May 14, the government announced to have authorized the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to come and observe the situation in the country, after the death of at least 54 demonstrators!

It is certain that it is due to the courageous revolt of the lower classes the success in the forced cancellation of the reform, at least for the moment. However, in all this clash, although violent and general, the independent participation of the working class has not yet emerged, nor have its exclusive claims been heard, nor have its forms of struggle been imposed, first of all the strike.

The opposition is now pushing for the resignation of Ortega or for the induction of elections. Whether after this crisis the government of the FSLN remains in office, or whether its opponents take control, Nicaraguan workers have nothing to foresee from either. As in the rest of the world, they must traverse the path of unity and organization at the base, to resume the claimed class struggle, outside of the unions of the regime and of the appeals to electoral solutions, the defense of the homeland, and the national economy, proclaimed by all the opportunists.

Class Struggles in Israeli Ports

For nearly five years, negotiations on port reform have been going on in Israel, conducted by the dockers union, which is affiliated with the Histadrut union confederation and without any results.

As time has passed, the construction of two new privately held ports, whose opening is scheduled for 2021, has advanced a great deal, alongside the existing publicly owned ones in Haifa and Ashdod. Obviously, the investment is so the bourgeoisie, both foreign and domestic, can increase the rate of exploitation of the port workers.

Reform of the ports would involve a reduction in jobs, more competition between the ports of call, a reorganisation of pilots, tug boats and moorings, a deterioration in wage

conditions and greater freedom for dismissal. As often happens, the bosses aim to break through on all fronts, with the hope of success in at least some of them.

The port of Ashdod, one of the most strategic sectors for Israeli capitalism, has reported earnings of more than 200 million Israeli Shekels (US\$55,062,000, €46,944,000) in the last year alone. But it is also one of the industrial centres with the highest rate of unionisation, nearly 100%.

In April 2018, tired of the endless and inconclusive negotiations, and worried by the rumours in anticipation of the new ports opening, the patience of the workers ended. A couple factors were the straws that broke the camel's back. First was the release of an audio recording in which the secretary of the Federation of Transport Unions - Avi Edri - suggested that Histadrut was willing to give in even if the demands of the union were not accepted during the negotiations.

The second is a judicial decree issued by the Labour Court which obliges dockers to recover certain quotas of quantity and intensity of work. From the last week of April through the beginning of May, there was a 20% drop in productivity compared with the same period last year, a 39% increase in the time it takes to process the goods arriving at the port, and therefore a decrease in profits. This data - produced by a statistical office paid by the companies - was presented as evidence of sabotage of production by workers. On the basis of the boss' allegations, the Court issued a judgment where the dockworkers were accused of implementing what is curiously called an "Italian-style strike", i.e. a voluntary slowdown in work activity. The dockers were ordered to recover the productivity allegedly lost and were warned not to take industrial action until the negotiation process was underway.

Thus on 9 May, without any prior notice and without consulting the Histadrut, the dockers of Ashdod and Haifa, led by the leaders of their trade union, left their jobs in an organized way, completely paralysing port activity, without establishing a deadline for the strike and, therefore, ripping up the court's decree.

The bosses, as always happens in these cases, have begun to scream in their powerful press, about the damage to the economy of the country, the huge amounts of damaged and irrecoverable goods, astronomical losses every day, the rule of law, democracy, and the Histadrut as a necessary union collaborator.

The judiciary promptly declared the strike illegal, ordering the workers to "immediately stop the action" and warning the Histadrut to "apply its organizational power to force the dockers back to work". A valuable demonstration of the nature of this trade union confederation.

The workers, using the methods of class struggle - autonomously and against the wishes of the all trade unions who have sold out to capital - found themselves facing all the ideological and repressive weapons of the ruling class. Starting with the collaborationist trade unions, passing to the mass media and supposed experts from the middle class. Finally on to brute repression, be it the judicial, the police, prison and, if necessary, the army.

The next day, May 10th, in the face of the continuation of the strike, the court gave a mandate to the police to search for and arrest the leaders of the dockers union. The Secretary of the Federation of Transport Unions, who is a member of the Histadrut confederation, stated that the leaders being sought were "untraceable" but that the confederation would "work as closely as possible with all available means to achieve a dialogue with them" (from the Histadrut online newspaper "Davar Rishon", May 11th).

The judiciary, in Israel, like everywhere, is proclaimed by the bourgeois left as a bulwark of that counterrevolutionary

myth of democracy. The courts have shown their nature by attacking the workers who dared to break out of a legal cage built in defence of the bourgeois regime of exploitation. The courts, criminalising and attacking the struggles of these proletarians with repression. "What has happened - Judge Ilan Atikh, vice-president of the National Labour Court and signatory of the judicial decree said to the bourgeois economic daily "Calcalist" on May 13th - is something unthinkable in a rule of law (...) it is not a particular issue but of national order (...) is something that can not go unnoticed". We fully agree with this eminent member of the bourgeois regime. But we believe that we can aim even higher and more precisely: this is not a national issue but an international one and, above all, a class issue. It must not be passed over in silence, but must be brought to the attention of workers beyond national borders.

When the workers return to using the methods of class struggle, when they defend their class interest against that of the bourgeoisie, whose class interests are passed off as universal, it is something unthinkable for any capitalist regime, in that it is too dangerous - as well as unsustainable - to immediately take off the democratic mask and show the real face of capitalism's dictatorship.

The National Labour Court has fined the Dock Workers Union leadership with disproportionately harsh fines of €25,000 each. The police have been ordered to search for them. They have also given them their final judgment, threatening imprisonment, as well as an increase in their fines for every hour the strike continues.

The Histadrut, for the entire duration of the strike, did not move a finger to help the dockers, placing a barrier between the federation and the dockers' struggle. They worked to isolate it in order to help the bourgeois regime defeat it. Thus showing once again the federation's nature as a union servile to Capital. This was confirmed by a statement of one of the federation's leaders, confirming those of the magistrate: "For the Histadrut, the rule of law and respect for the law are a fundamental principle" ("Ynetnews", 10 May), to which the living and working conditions of the proletariat are subject, we add.

The repressive action combined with the isolation imposed by the Israeli regime union accomplished its aim of helping the bosses in trouble and on May 12th, after three consecutive days of total blockade of port activities and a demonstration lasting until late at night, with hundreds of workers outside of the court, the strike was suspended.

Before this outcome, the return to using the methods of class struggle was a victory in itself for the working class, which has been able to see how democracy is a mask of the political dominion of the bourgeoisie. It also showed how the Histadrut central trade union is an impediment to effective struggles, rather than a useful tool for this purpose.

In the following days, the Dockers asked the Histadrut to declare a legal strike, threatening to leave the Confederation if it wasn't declared. They also demanded the Secretary of the Transport Federation - the Avi Edri mentioned above - to resign. The Histadrut, having achieved its real goal, began the procedure declaring the strike on June 12th. But on June 10th, the relevant governmental body refused to issue the permit.

The employers continued to complain about the fall in production rates. Histadrut, for its part, is on the verge of losing control of the workers, which we hope will happen as soon as possible. Such a collapse allows for the construction of a trade union organisation that does not claim, as the various puppets of the capitalist regime do, the "rule of law" and "legality" but the use of class methods of struggle: strikes without warning, to the bitter end, without minimum services.

No Job Security If You're in the Working Class

on the Second Congress of the USB

(continued from previous issue)

We will now go more deeply into the trade union policy that emerged from the congress.

In its communiqués the USB states that it wants to build a great class union.

But from what appears in the confederal congress document – which also informs the congress documents of the different categories – the leadership aspires instead to build an organization which oversteps the confines of the working class – the sphere within which the trade union traditionally operates, and which, in our view, needs to be preserved to ensure its healthy development – to the point that it loses its class character and adopts “popular”, inter-classist features. What is indicated in the introduction to the document as the organization’s general objective is: “To build a general confederation of all of the working and non-working sectors of society that are today caught in the vice-like grip of neo-liberalism”.

The words are never chosen at random and they express political positions that are reflected in well-defined practical policies. We would have written this instead: “To build a general confederation of all wage workers, in and out of work, who are exploited and oppressed by capitalism”. The USB leadership’s way of expressing things is different from ours because it entails a different policy both as regards organization and practical action.

With the formula “social sectors of society” it means to include not only waged workers but also some self-employed workers, broadly speaking “on a low income”, such as the small farmers, small shopkeepers, street peddlers and taxi drivers that the USB is already organizing in some cities.

Then are included not only sacked workers, casual workers, working students, or those whose job contract has expired, but generically “those who aren’t working”, a category which lends itself to infinite stratification: students who are not workers, members of the petty bourgeoisie fallen on hard times, lumpen proletarians...

This policy is expressed in the document by repeatedly using the terms “social class” and “social bloc” as though they were interchangeable: “A militant trade union that reassembles an entire social bloc”, is the title of the document’s final section; “The construction of a social bloc involves the production of a new class consciousness, that has adapted to the features of contemporary society” is stated at another point.

This extension of the trade union’s organizational range beyond the confines of the toiling class is justified, according to the USB leadership, on the grounds of the

changes within contemporary capitalism and its impact on the class.

The congress document correctly criticises and rejects “the hackneyed notion of the disappearance of the working class”, noting that on the international level the number of wage workers is enormous and still rising; that “in the industrialized countries, faced with a reduction in the number of workers employed in manufacturing and mining (...) we are witnessing a process of “workerization” of largescale commercial distribution and care services and “intellectual work too” is undergoing a process of “proletarianization both from a wages and organizational standpoint”.

However the analysis of the USB leaders becomes openly duplicitous when it tries to convince us that the increase in job insecurity experienced by an ever greater portion of the working class is blurring the boundaries of the class to the extent of transforming it into a generic “social precariate of temporary employees”, which forms a “social bloc”, of which the working class is just a part, albeit the most important part.

The document in fact is keen to emphasize the most recent “novelties” in the field of flexible working: “the new forms of work like ‘smart working’ [...] have a devastating effect (...) The impact on the condition of the worker is isolation in his working and social life (...) New forms of super-exploitation are on the increase, above all of the young [...] a world without permanent jobs or rights [...] All this produces a social condition in which fulfilling your needs becomes impossible in the face of crushing material circumstances, which cannot be changed unless collective social demands are made and there is an ‘organized subjectivity’.”

Meanwhile we say that the ‘precariate’ to whom the USB leadership refers, along with sacked workers and pensioners, are simply other divisions of the working class, just waiting to be reintegrated into the union as such.

We note in addition that the analysis of the USB leaders exaggerates somewhat by painting an unduly negative picture (“The new forms of work have a devastating effect”). An extreme vision which is useful in justifying their erroneous position and which reveals a lack of confidence in the working class, in its capacity to arouse itself from its current position of weakness and overcome these divisions, even if they continue to be exposed to the same old ideological rubbish from the bourgeoisie, who as ever peddle their threadbare dreams of a working class that has magically disappeared, leaving behind a society of robotic individuals eternally submitted to the whims of capital.

Yes, capitalism does fragment the working class, impose isolation and individualism and does try to atomize class identity, all of which makes the organization of workers more difficult. But this constant state of insecurity and precariousness, of being alone against the overwhelming power of capital and the bosses, that is, precisely the working class condition, and always has been. The only exception has been a few decades of post-war economic boom in a very few countries. And the function of the trade union is and has always been precisely to alleviate this condition by means of a collective effort.

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It was during a period of far greater job insecurity than now that the early trade union organizations came into being. The working class has been able to organize under much worse conditions than the present, and it will do so again in the future.

As to the most recent forms of ‘flexible working’, it has certainly not guaranteed employers who have used it any immunity from workers’ struggles; the most recent example being what happened last year among the delivery workers of Foodora and Deliveroo in Italy, Spain, Belgium and England.

Finally, if it is true that out-sourcing and contractual fragmentation within the big firms present a difficult obstacle for the collective organization of workers to overcome, nevertheless, the sharing of a common workplace remains a powerful, irrepressible material factor which, if effective trade union work is carried out, is bound to sooner or later shatter the bosses’ dream of a permanently weak and divided workforce.

What the labor movement needs is not alliances with other social strata and classes, but to engage in the tough, serious work of rebuilding unity on the basis of trade union struggle. The proletariat is a slumbering giant which is only temporarily weakened, when it recovers its strength it will once again strike fear into the ruling classes.

Oppose Class Divisions by Organizing on a Territorial Basis

How does the USB leadership propose to combat the divisions that weaken the working class?

“If work no longer constitutes the most natural and immediate terrain on which to get organized because one is unemployed or retired, or because one only works for a few hours or on one’s own, or because the activity is too irregular, it will be the locality and the shared condition of precariousness which will form the links on which to build new coalitions and new collective relationships.”

It might appear that the road to territorial organization of the union is finally being indicated here.

Among the essential pillars of our party’s trade union policy is the one which refers back to the experience of the original Chambers of Labour (Camere del Lavoro), which were territorial organizational centres of the labour struggle. Workers gathering within a territorial framework would meet with workers from other companies and from other sectors and trades; there they would recognize each other not just as employees of such an such a firm, but also and above all as members of the same class. This helped overcome the narrow horizons of the firm and the trade and favoured class unity.

The USB would be making an very important and positive change if it placed the union’s territorial framework at the centre of its activity because up to now that hasn’t been the case. Most union activity has been expended at the company level; it begins there and ends there. The union’s offices are hardly ever visited by its members, militants or even its representatives. Meetings of its representatives are often held in the workplace and not in the territorial office. Only rarely do the provincial co-ordinations meet.

Obviously we don’t want to deny the difficulties

involved in getting workers to participate in union life, but nor do we want to deny the responsibility of the union as a whole for their failure to carry out systematic work among its militants and representatives with a view to increasing their awareness of the need to emerge from the strictures of a purely company based trade union activity.

Real Centralization or Organizational Rigidity

The need to place at the union’s territorial framework at the centre of the union’s organization is, as we have stated, a central plank of our party’s union policy. This point we recently underlined at the first congress of the SI Cobas in May 2015, pointing out that it would be a good idea to modify the union’s statute which declares: “The underlying structure of the SI COBAS is the Comitato di Base (Cobas)”, reformulating it as: “The union arises in the places of work, where the Cobas’s are based, but the inter-company territorial bodies, the provincial coordinations, are what constitute its underlying structure.” This seems to us the best way to convey how the trade union organization can raise itself from the level of the Cobas to that of the class union.

This objective the USB leadership reckons it has already achieved. And that might appear true if we restricted ourselves to observations on the USB’s organizational structure, which is formally defined and centralized; elements which are certainly necessary and useful for a class union.

But this formal centralization, in order to have any real substance, must be capable of maintaining itself in two ways, not just from top to bottom but by ensuring real participation on the part of militants and union representatives in union life. Where instead the bulk of union activity continues to devolve mainly on the union’s representatives and officials, without the development of an intermediate strata of militants between them and the rank-and-file members, and without sufficient participation on the part of the latter, then organizational formalities count for very little in terms of enhancing union growth.

And they can become downright dangerous when used to impose the leadership’s line without any proper discussion within the union, a typical example of which was when a small group within the union leadership decided, within the space of a week, to subscribe to the TUR. (The Testa Unica sulla Rappresentanza Sindacale - Unified Text on Trade Union Representation - which came into effect in January 2014, is effectively an agreement between the regime workers’ Unions on the one hand and the bosses’ Confederation - the so-called “Confindustria” - on the other. It defines the “rules on trade-union representation”, establishing, among other things, that the right to be included in the trade union representation at the company level, and to participate in the national CCNL negotiations, is conditional on agreeing to limitations on the freedom to strike.)

The reconstitution of a network of union territorial organizations, a new network of Chambers of Labour, would today be especially useful given the contractual fragmentation described in the confederal congress

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document.

Union reps and militants in medium-sized and large companies could get together with their counterparts in smaller firms, to which an ever increasing part of their company's work is contracted out, and thus help to rebuild labour unity in the workplace. Also workers in the many small firms spread throughout the territory would find they had an organizational focus. Organizing and bringing together unemployed and retired workers together in these centres would help them maintain links with those who are still working. By going down this road the re-emergence of a working class identity would also be encouraged.

Who it is that the USB wants to organize on a territorial basis however is those workers whose working situation is most insecure alongside groups and strata in society who do not belong to the working class, who with it supposedly constitute the "social precariate" and consequently the so-called "social bloc". Such it is that instead of encouraging class unity and the rediscovery of its identity the opposite proves to be the case:

Those workers who, due to contractual conditions or their activity or because unemployed or retired, have the most difficulty integrating into the class and identifying with it are further alienated by being associated with self-employed workers of various types and with an array of interclassist movements (students, service users, etc);

The divide between part-time/agency/temp workers and workers in full-time or relatively more secure work is further accentuated;

Since temps are more likely to be young, it also drives a wedge between them and older workers, resulting in precious energy which could have been spent on union work being diverted into movements of the so-called "Social bloc", of petty bourgeois and lumpen-proletarian origin.

The Union and the 'Social Movements'

A class union is right to denounce the injustices of this reactionary and inhuman society and to express solidarity, in practical ways as well, with whoever rebels against it, but it is not designed to deal with all of capitalism's ills. The union is the organization which workers use to defend themselves economically, and it would be denying its function if it altered its constitution to encompass and provide leadership to a whole range of other types of organizations and movements. It would be detrimental to the unity of the wage-earning class and the building of its organization and it is doomed to failure.

At the very least the union should first dedicate its strength and energy – of which there is never enough – to the objective which gave rise to it, that is, to increase in size and only then, once it has set down firm roots, should the problem of cautiously entering into relations with movements on the margins of the working class be broached.

To try to cram into the union variegated social types, belonging to different social strata and classes, only appears useful to those who naïvely subscribe to the idea that greater numbers necessarily corresponds with a stronger organization. But such a mixture of often conflicting

conditions and interests is impossible to synthesize and can only end up by damaging the organization of the labour struggle.

The class of wage-earners, however divided it is by the bosses and its various machinations, is united by a profound common interest: opposition to the selling of its labour power for less. The defence of wage levels and working conditions, under its various aspects of struggle against the extension of the working day and for its reduction, struggle against the intensification of the pace of work, against redundancy and dismissal, and in defence of the social wage, pensions and benefits, it is this which unites all workers and overcomes all barriers.

This is the union's job, and if it thinks it can take on other ones as well then it won't function properly. The task of bringing about the general transformation of society, of finding a remedy for its many contradictions and injustices, that is a function that only the party can perform, by taking political power, which for communists can only be achieved by revolutionary means.

The community of interests that unites the working class is not found among the various so-called 'social' or petty bourgeois movements. The workers' movement is capable of equipping itself with organizations which endure for years or decades, organized at the national and even international level, of launching strikes which cover an entire national territory, and which encompass an entire sector or even the class as a whole. It is a movement which originates in and hits at capitalism's vital core, the production of surplus value (profits, rents, interest). Even when a part of the wage-earning class which is not directly involved in the production of surplus value goes on strike, public sector workers for instance, the capitalist regime in its various manifestations is always arrayed against it, due to its innate, and justifiable, fear of any strengthening of the trade union organization and the class movement.

Meanwhile, movements exterior to the working class, of the so-called 'social' variety, come into conflict with workers' organizations both because their aims are not the same and because of the extempore methods they use 'to protest'.

What is more the working class – even if today in its current weakened condition the opposite might appear to be the case – has a specific character of its own, one that is distinct from the rest of the society; it is a character within which we communists can discern, among the many defects generated by being subjugated to capital, the seeds of genuine rebellion against the present society, and also the society of the future: the negation and overcoming of both Capital and wage labour, of the bourgeois condition as much as the proletarian one. For us the working class isn't a 'reference point' – a horrible expression used in the congress document which smacks of a 'marriage of convenience' and is typical of opportunism – but is simply "our class". Jealously protective of it we want it to be independently organized and separated from the negative influences of the petty bourgeoisie and irrelevant social classes.

This is also made clear on the theoretical plane. One of Marxism's fundamental arguments is that the dominant ideology is ruling class ideology. Within the working class,

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too, the bourgeois ideology prevails, although not as completely as outside it. Fighting this ideology inside the working class is already quite difficult enough without trying to achieve the organizational union of the workers with other groups, ranks, strata and classes; frankly, it just does the ruling class a favour, by making the penetration of their ideology amongst the working class that much easier.

Either you make a commitment to uniting working class actions and organization – and creating a working class identity in the process – or you undermine that task by diverting precious energy into building ‘a social bloc’, a ruse devised by political and trade union opportunism to create an entity which will be forever incapable of deciding which direction it wants to go in.

The ‘Social Issues Federation’

This line adopted by the USB leadership is not new. We have already alluded to its earlier incarnation as the ‘metropolitan union’, which was how it was described to the national assembly of the RdB-CUB in May 2009; the one which sanctioned the end of the “Patto di Base” – the rank-and-file pact – and the split between the RdB and CUB.

The arguments used by the USB national co-ordinator (still in post now) at the time are analogous to the ones being used now: “The world of work – he announced – has been radically transformed. There exists a whole swathe of people who don’t have a physical place of work (...) or only for a few months at a time”. And he suggested breaking with “the hegemony of pure trade unionism” so as to embrace “practices which are different but absolutely fit-for-purpose that are proving their worth in the cities and the social sector”. For this reason the Assembly should have produced “a proposal for a political/organizational synthesis with a corresponding larger general assembly of rank-and-file trade unionism, open to social movements and social activists who believe it to be useful and who want to link up with it”.

The second USB congress has taken this inter-classist line a step further. If in May 2009 the proposal was to make overtures to the social movements, that is for the union to have some kind of relationship with them, what is being suggested now is that they should be organized in the union itself by creating an appropriate “organizational setting” for them: the Federazione del Sociale, (‘Social Issues Federation’).

The USB leadership attributes such a degree of importance to this new structure that it refers to it in the congress document as the organization’s “third limb”, along with the USB Lavoro Privato and the USB Pubblico Impiego (Its private and public sector branches).

Particularly clear about the duties that the union’s new structure should take on was a representative of the National Executive who spoke at the first congress of the USB pensioners’ organization on May 10th: “A new entity which we are going to set up will be utilized by and be the home for all that is [...] self-employment”.

The final document approved by the national congress, within the Federazione del Sociale, to ASIA USB (Tenants and Residents Association) and the USB Pensionati it has added a new entity: the SLANG, the “Sindacato lavoratori

autonomi di nuove generazione” – Union of the New Generation of Self-employed Workers.

Since companies use self-employed labour as a way of avoiding taking new workers onto the payroll, thereby cutting labour costs, it is right that the union should get involved in the battle to raise the conditions of these workers to the level of full-time workers. Thus it is necessary to organize temporary workers and those on short-term contracts within the same organizations as those to which the rest of the workers in the company belong. But with SLANG a framework will be created in which self-employed labour is organized separately. Thus there is the risk that the Federazione del Sociale will aggravate the isolated position in which self-employed workers find themselves, by abandoning them to the influence of non-working class groups and strata. The brief of the Federazione del Sociale is to take charge of organizing and supporting a diverse group of inter-classist movements, ranging from users of social services, to environmentalists, to those involved in inner city regeneration schemes. The young temporary workers, the unemployed workers, and the pensioners who are supposed to be part of it will end up wasting their energy in activities that are nothing to do with trade union struggle and which are imbued with inter-classism. Temporary and retired workers, instead of imbuing a sense of solidarity and power of their working class, and being welcomed into its organizational embrace, will instead be pushed towards the desperate impotent world of the déclassé.

Class tradition dictates that unemployed and retired workers, rather than being organized in separate organizations, should be organized in the unions of the category to which they originally belonged, thus maintaining their connection with active workers and with union activity. Our party fought for this kind of organizational approach within the CGIL when, up to the late 1970s, it was still calling upon militants to fight within this union, denouncing for example the separate organization of retired workers in the Pensioner’s union (the SPI).

The creation of the USB pensionati is going down the same road as the SPI, with the additional aggravating circumstance that not only are retired workers now to be separated from active workers on an organizational level, but also as regards their activity, with the emphasis being put on supporting the work in the “social movements” instead of in the trade unions.

The Trade Union Movement and the Political Parties

The USB’s intervention in the “social movements” didn’t begin with the formation of the Federazione del Sociale but, as the congress document itself explains, was the outcome of previous experimental forays, beginning with the “sindacato metropolitano” as it was called, followed by the “confederalita sociale”.

And yet this activity, in contrast with its declared objectives, has never been particularly strong, has been present only in a few localities, and is poorly organized.

The problem is that even this sphere of activity, in

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which the leadership wants the union to get increasingly involved, requires energy which is in short supply, which makes the choice of not concentrating what little, previous energy there is on proper class-based trade union work all the more wrong.

Therefore, setting aside our critique of the leadership's overambitious projects to commit the union to engaging with the social movements and with self-employed labour, and the fact we do not share those objectives, it must be taken into account that even their partial realization will be far from easy and cannot be taken for granted.

Although this should reassure us, that is only partly the case, for reasons we will go on to explain. It is necessary in fact to understand these movements better and how the trade unions, not only the USB, relate to them.

Whereas in the class camp, groups of workers from within the wage-earning class sign up to their union irrespective of the ideological or political loyalties, propelled by the need to defend their own living and working conditions, in the "social movement" camp, on the other hand, the intervention of the union is often mediated through a relationship with bodies that already operate within the sector and which, despite presenting themselves as "social", are instead political, i.e., collectives, social centres, etc. We come against the myriad groups of the so-called "movement", adjectiveless insofar as it is not a workers' movement. It is a characteristic phenomenon of imperialism, the final phase of capitalism, and expresses the inconclusive agitating of the intermediate social strata, of the middle classes, cultivated by each national capitalism, in proportion to its power, useful insofar as they attenuate the opposition between the working class and the bourgeoisie, to whom is left some economic space by the ephemeral wellbeing and heightened morale brought about by the temporary weakness of the working class. The phenomenon re-appeared in Italy and other countries with a mature capitalism from around 1968.

By intervening in this camp therefore, each union encounters, as distinct from what happens in inter-union relations, "political entities", and it goes without saying that each union leader contrives to establish relations with those groups with whom he or she has a political affinity. In the end, behind all the theoretical justifications and ambitious projects regarding the "social bloc", which are unrealistic and of minimal importance, the practical effect that counts – and this is an open secret – is the mundane creation of a new repertoire of manoeuvres which can be deployed in demonstrations, and a base of support within the union, useful to the leadership in pursuing its petty political schemes.

Because, naturally enough, the "third limb" of the union will have a certain weight in terms of its delegates, within the confederal, territorial and national bodies. And since these are chosen on the basis of a process of political selection, already they give, and will continue to give, the leadership a greater guarantee it can successfully impose its policies on the union.

This stirring in of the union leaders with the "social movements" leads to the union becoming characterised politically in a certain way, not as a result of a maturation of the working class in that direction, but quite the opposite,

because it is going to exacerbate the opposition between the various rank-and-file organizations and therefore hold back the class struggle, the growth of which is the condition for a general organizational strengthening of the class in the unions and, eventually, on the political level as well.

The various rank-and-file unions thus tend to resemble party unions, perpetually battling and competing among themselves. Not that they become parties and cease to be unions. But by using the excuse that they are acting as part of "the social movement" the leaders acquire a greater degree of control over the organization, in order to use it for their own ends, than they would if they were restricted to just working on behalf of the wage-earning class.

Trade Union and "Political Role"

The congress document explains how the attack against the working class is becoming increasingly harsh – which is pretty obvious to everyone – and that in order to respond to it the union must take on a "political" role as well:

"Today the union of the trade unionist type [il sindaco di stampo tradeunionista], linked solely to industrial disputes and interventions at the company level, is largely obsolete, and there is a willingness on the part of the leading cadres of the organization, but not only them, to take on a political role (...) Even collaborationist unions, who are accomplices of the state, have responded to the politicization of the struggle with politicization (...) To meet the challenge of the struggle's politicization, and consequently of our role, means to have a broad leading cadre that is well-equipped and of a high calibre".

Apart from the fact we should take it for granted that a self-proclaimed class union wouldn't tail along behind "accomplice, collaborationist" unionism, we will try to shed a little light on this, as opportunism thrives on confusion.

Meanwhile it has to be said that, between the union "linked solely to industrial disputes and interventions at the company level", which the USB leaders wrongly define as "trade-unionist", and the union that takes on "a political role", there are a host of others somewhere in-between.

The policy of the class union is to try and achieve the unification of workers' struggles, insofar as that is the condition for maximising the workers' strength. Therefore it highlights the importance of overcoming the various divisions in the wage earning class: between the different parts of a company, between the different companies, between categories, between full and part timers, between those in the state and private sectors, between large and small firms, between 'native citizens' and immigrants, and then of sex, political opinion, religion and nationality. As regards union organizations, it indicates that the path to unity is via joint struggles, that is, joint strike actions.

The best way to enact this policy is to respect the true function of the union, whereas the immature, impatient utilization of the union to carry out a "political function" can only delay or reverse any progress made in this direction, eventually dividing the workers and the union movement on the basis of political opinions.

It is on the practical level of the struggle, not on the basis of opinions, ideology or social theory that most workers will subscribe to the communist line on trade

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unions, because it is seen as demonstrably the most coherent and efficient in terms of effectively defending and strengthening of the wage earning class. While the other trade union policies, emanating from other schools of thought and political parties will, as the class struggle becomes harder due to the inexorable advance of the economic crisis of capitalism, end up subordinating this trade union objective – in words proclaimed not just by communists - to their counter-revolutionary and opportunist political objectives.

The communist policy is the only one which will not manipulate and exploit the union in this way, not because the communists are genuine and the others are not, but because their line uniquely expresses a general political objective which coincides with the best and maximum development of the trade union movement.

We should make clear that we are neither indignant nor scandalized by the fact that the union leaders aim to achieve political objectives. In a general sense we can accept that they believe they are doing so for the good of the workers. An apolitical union is an impossibility. Politics affects every aspect of social life and is evidently, and necessarily, linked to the trade union sphere. Precisely because the union organizes workers on the basis of their social condition and not their political or religious faith, there naturally develops within it different approaches to trade union policy, which in a more or less coherent way lead back to the various political parties. Mistrusting those who hide their opinions and intentions is a good thing; conversely, their expression with maximum clarity is to be valued and freedom of expression within the union should be the rule. To fight for trade union apoliticism can only result, on the one hand, on the repression of the expression and manifestation of different political opinions, and on the other, the maintenance of an illusion – apoliticism – behind which lurks an indifferent and cynical ‘who cares’ attitude, which is in fact just one more cover for ruling class ideology.

What we object to, therefore, is not that the leadership of the USB pursues political objectives – as it inevitably does – but rather the evident contrast between these objectives and the practical necessities of the active forward movement of the workers’ struggle and of their trade union organizations.

The USB leadership’s campaign to get the union to take on a political role, at a time when the formation of the class union is still a distant prospect, when the practical activity of the USB still has difficulty moving beyond the confines of the workplace, will put a brake on and distort the union’s development, like a new-born baby in restrictive swaddling clothes. This is happening for example, as described above, with the creation of the union’s so-called “third limb”, la Federazione del Sociale, with the aim of widening the base the leadership can count on within the union to support its political aims.

The real “Political” Objectives of the USB Leadership

These political objectives are expressed in the so-called Eurostop Social Platform, summed up in the slogan “No Euro, No EU, No NATO”, with the USB one of its key

proponents.

Our political objective is overthrowing capitalism, the USB leadership’s objective is fighting neo-liberalism, in other words, fighting for an alleged better form of capitalism, since they harbour the illusion there is a possibility of reforming this system, rather than it just being subjugated and destroyed.

The fight against neo-liberalism translates in practice into struggle for a “left” government, via elections. To that end, of much more use to it than developing the unity of the working class, is the formation of a political movement, which is precisely what Eurostop is, at whose service the USB has been placed, drawing in the broadest possible spectrum of the electorate, and therefore also class ranks, strata and social classes not of the salaried class.

While revolutionary communism advocates overthrowing capitalism, and points out the only way to get there as the path of revolution – on the national level, by destroying the bourgeois state apparatus and replacing it in the short term with a working class state, and on the international level, by rejecting all fronts composed of alliances between capitalist states – reformism always seeks an alleged ameliorative political objective to defend, and seeks out an international front composed of better, or less bad, bourgeois states to ally itself with. This political objective today is to leave the Eurozone or the European Union and, on the international alliances front, to leave NATO in order to support the other imperialist front, Russia and, in Syria for example, the Assad Regime.

About these political objectives most of the rank-and-file members know little, and even less about how much of their money is spent on them, seeing that their membership subscriptions go to fund conventions, demonstrations and even trips for USB national delegations to the theatres of war – like Donbass (Ukraine) and to Syria – hosted and protected by the political and military structures of one or other of the belligerent parties.

Faced with these local wars, which will tend to become increasingly generalized and are bound to lead to a global imperialist conflict unless the proletarian revolution prevents it, the USB is already taking an interventionist stance, i.e., one which lends itself to drawing up the workers on one of the war fronts.

This stance is nothing new, and is not that surprising given it emanates from the same political group that has been in charge of this union since it was formed back in the early 1980s as the RdB. Indeed, during the wars in Iraq and Serbia the leadership took the side of Saddam Hussein and Milosevic.

They are the political positions of social-democratic opportunism, in Stalinist guise, replacing the working class with “the people”, with the “social bloc”; Internationalism with nationalism; and communism with state capitalism.

Conclusion

That this policy of the USB leadership has been more or less approved at the union’s second congress doesn’t mean it will actually come to anything. The leadership of a union, whatever it may want, has to take account not only of the class enemy but of the living nature of the union organ,

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and of the reason why it arose and came into existence. A union isn't willed into existence by its organizers and leaders but because it encounters the necessity of organizing and defending workers. The policy of a union's leadership can either damage or favour the development of the organization and of the power of the working class, but it cannot do with it whatever it wants.

Notwithstanding the foolish ambition of the USB leadership to intervene in the social movements and create a related organizational structure, trade union work will continue to be, as it is today, a fundamental part of the organization's activity, and whose forward movement will tend to attract other fighting spirits who have already embarked on the same path.

Since for hundreds of years the union has had certain characteristics and boundaries and still has them today, organizing only the working class, because this corresponds to determined material characteristics of capitalism, the innovatory opportunistic fantasies of the USB leadership are not going to change that any time soon.

If and in the measure that new groups of workers join the USB, injecting new energy into it, the trade union side of the work will have a flywheel effect and condition the organization more and more, forcing the leadership to come to terms with this practical necessity.

It will also be reflected in a plurality of trade union policies and positions, which will be much harder to repress if the membership continues to grow.

The USB leaders are themselves certainly aware of this and if at congress level they have formulated, as we have seen, very restrictive rules, something that for now has been accepted due to the union's overall immaturity, there is, at the company and category level often greater room for manoeuvre.

Indeed the leadership's positions haven't been the only ones to be aired at this congress. The Lavoro Privato, the private sector workers section of the union, which is the most important, tabled motions and agenda items which raised issues we have highlighted in this article: the need to focus energy on union work, the wrongness of the policy which aims to have the union take on a "political role", unity of action with rank-and-file unionism.

In a motion approved at various regional congresses of the Lavoro Privato and then presented to the category's national congress, where it was rejected, we read: "Labour is at the centre of union activity; it is the priority. The rest is dodging the issue, a flight from reality (...) Faced with the politicization of discontent, the response is not to politicize ourselves in our turn. Quite the contrary: we must resume and reinforce our core, typically trade union work (...) Which doesn't mean just participating in the election of Rsu and Rsa [trade union representational bodies – see footnotes to part one. Edi]. Quite the reverse (...) The unity of all those who work in the same place, whatever their contract, must be the USB's priority (...) USB supports the initiatives of working men and women that have arisen in the work place, independently from what union they may belong to".

In this direction our work as communists continues.

1) These footnotes were meant to appear alongside part one of this article in *The Communist Party*, issue 7-8, but were unfortunately missing in the hard copy. They have now been added to the online version on the party's website. Apologies for any confusion caused. Ed.

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