

# The Communist Party

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## “We’re Not Backing Down” Working Class Confidence Grows

Conditions of life and the interests of the working class rarely coincide with one another to such a point that the working class of different firms act at the same time. In the United States the situation for working class action has not seen such a combination of conditions since the strikes of the 1970s, one which the bourgeoisie reacted to viciously with all the power the American state could muster. But now, nearly 40 years later, despite the legal and juridical authority the bourgeois state has wielded to maintain and even increase the productivity of the American economy, and amidst a rapid decline in the living standards of the world working class following the 2008 financial crisis, the working class of this country begins to move for its own needs on a similar scale.

### Volvo Trucks

The 2900 workers at Volvo Trucks have rejected concessionary contracts twice since May and have been on strike twice – once for 2 weeks and currently since June 7th. They are members of the United Auto Workers, a union riddled with bureaucratic corruption. Half a dozen national and local leaders were convicted in 2020 of accepting bribes from FCA/Stellantis to ensure labor peace.

But the Volvo strike is a flower growing in the UAW’s bullshit.

A two-week strike began April 17 with a UAW contract proposal presented two weeks later. One worker told Labor Notes magazine “The UAW has been down here twice for town halls, each time we say ‘take it back, it’s garbage,’ and they just say they think it’s a good contract, but they don’t say why.”

The first contract vote on May 16th was turned down by 90%. They were sent back to work by the union. A second proposal that was virtually identical was also turned down and a second strike has been on since June 7th.

A third proposal was voted down on July 9th.

Issues include abolishing two-tier wages – where new hires are paid at a lower wage scale – where wages top out at \$30/hr for long time workers and \$21/hr for new hires. Another issue was a significant increase in out of pocket health care costs.

### Warrior Met Coal:

It has been four months since the United Mine workers of America local at the Warrior Met coal mine in McCalla Alabama have been on strike. Despite the regime union working with the corporation during the last contract negotiations to help Warrior Met recover from bankruptcy while severely reducing the wages and benefits of the workers at the mines and wash facilities, the company still seeks to gain additional concessions to increase the value that the firm is making. Regardless of the crocodile tears that Warrior Met coal has shed for their overhead costs, the companies CEO has gleefully welcomed the jumps in stock prices that comes with the international clamoring to purchase the high quality coal which is used in the production of steel.

Contract negotiations stalled in April, and with no sign of the firm’s negotiators to budge in the slightest the company would have suspected a decrease in their coal reserves. No workers means no coal, and the workers can not continue to place their lives at risk for decreases in their wages and benefits. The solution of the company was not to concede to these rather understandable demands, it was to hire scabs, at the lower wage of course.

Despite this obstinate attitude from the company, the workers at the mines and wash facilities have been steadfast in their strike. They’ve blocked the entrances to the mine consistently enough to prevent the processing and for the decreased productivity to get noticed. This has made the militancy of the workers there more apparent. The significant push back, both from the scabs who brandish weapons and drive their vehicles through picket lines, but also from the allegations of sabotage and premeditated murder that the mine management has used to justify the actions of the scabs, the militancy of these workers to gain their basic compensation and time off makes it a necessity.

As this strike continues, the workers of Warrior Met learn quickly that their only alliance in the fight is with workers, and they’ve learned that their power comes from their coordinated action to impede their employers profitability.

### Health Care Strikes

Nurses and other Health Care workers have been in the forefront of workers’ movement since the outbreak of COVID. Many of the nursing unions in the US are highly militant and run by their membership. The reality is worker actions in health are usually a shift, or a day. It is significant that one nursing strike in 2021 has gone for months. -> to page 3

## Welcome to the HeatDome

Recently the west coast of Canada and the US found itself in an historic heatwave – a region wide “heat dome” pushed temperatures as high as 120°F/ 48°C. These temperatures are 40% over the usual.

This shocking example of Capitalism’s changing of the climate has led to a lot of hand ringing by the bourgeois classes – both small and large.

The small capitalists have to keep operations going to maintain their position in society. But at best, they will apologize to your face over the conditions you have to face. So get to work.

Like characters in a story by Edgar Allan Poe, the large Bourgeoisie - the financiers and Oil Barons and Hotel tycoons - of course just push fast forward into the climatic apocalypse. They need the machine to continue full steam ahead and damn the climatic hurricanes.

Of course, those who have been suffering are workers, whose labor is needed to keep the satantic Rube Goldberg machine system going. The system which is creating the conditions which threaten to kill them.

Unofficial scoring for regional deaths caused by the 4 days of heat were over 40 in Oregon, 30 in British Columbia and 20 in Washington State.

An example from the “heat dome event”, comes from our friends who work in the farms, orchards and warehouses in Washington State’s Yakima Valley. A friend of the ICP – a warehouse worker - was hospitalized for several days with heat stroke.

A comrade working in manufacturing next to machines radiating 400°F/ 204°C. The building’s ambient temperatures were well above 110°F/ 43°C degrees. Our comrade was generously offered “popsicles, AC units near the lines, plus they give out these cooling neck towels...”

There are reports of the various regional Farm Workers unions – which, due to federal laws, tend to be semi-legal and divided by locality, led walk outs from fields undoubtedly saving lives.

Worker action took place last year, culminating into a valley-wide strike that spread to six major packing-facilities. Though, warehouse laborers have been suffering just as much from the heat and other abuses from employers, they have not engaged in real action.

### 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

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MIAMI BUILDING COLLAPSE  
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LIFE OF OUR PARTY*

# Bourgeois Construction: The Florida Building Collapse

On June 24, a section of the Champlain Towers South condominium building in Surfside, Florida collapsed abruptly.

16 people are confirmed dead and over 140 are still missing. Among the unaccounted for are workers, vacationing families, international tourists, and retirees.

In typical bourgeois fashion, the safety of many comes second to the profits of the few. With over 130 units stretching over 12 stories, the structural integrity of the building was already questionable, since the original blueprints did not account for a penthouse. And yet, profits drive the capitalist towards depravity, and thus town ordinances were circumvented to accommodate such a frivolous addition.

The selfishness of the building owners is almost certainly one of the contributing factors in the building's failure.

The building stood on a piece of reclaimed wetland which, according to a study in the 1990s, was sinking much more quickly than the greater Miami area surrounding it. It is possible that part of the structure was sinking faster than the rest, leading to the partial collapse on June 24. This process of land reclamation cannot be sustainable in areas like South Florida. And yet new buildings are constructed everyday, in Florida and across the world, on lands susceptible to subsidence, all in the name of capitalist profits.

The problems at this particular building were not new. In 2001, the Champlain Towers South Condo Association was found liable for negligence for lack of repair to exterior walls due to water seepage. While damages were paid, the underlying structural issues were not properly addressed. In more recent years, some areas within the parking garage and pool equipment room flooded so frequently that the water pumps wore out.

In 2018, a structural engineering firm conducted a 40-year inspection of the building (Florida law only requires building inspections every 40 years!). The engineers found that the steel rebar reinforcing the concrete structure had rusted and expanded. The corrosion was likely due to saltwater spray from the nearby beach. When the steel rebar rusts, it expands, displacing the concrete around it. Flakes of concrete break off, compromising the structural integrity of the building. It is surprising that galvanized or epoxy-coated rebar was not used, given the conditions in the area, but these more expensive building materials eat into developers' profits!

The initial estimate to repair the building was \$9.1 million, however just three months ago the proposed cost (after incurring more damage, or neglect, in this span) had increased to \$15 million. Had the repairs been completed promptly, had the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois property owners thought about anything other than capital accumulation, the residents would not be buried under tons of rubble, now beyond help.

Despite this devastation, it is the bourgeoisie who stand to gain. New economic ventures present themselves with each disaster. This tragedy, and countless others, enrich the bourgeoisie as whole—the banks, contractors, insurance companies, law firms, etc.—through new loans, new construction, and new legal proceedings.

If buildings are not stable under capitalism, what can we say of the structure of capitalism as a whole? This is not the fault of the working class: it is that of the bourgeoisie and the parsimonious nature of business, conducted at our expense! Once the means of production rest at the fingertips of the whole society, labor and resources will be dedicated to building and maintaining safe and livable housing for all.

## Death and Justice in Capitalism

“Only the poor break laws – the rich evade them.” – T-Bone Slim

This newspaper often carries articles involving death. This has especially been the case in the past year-and-a-half, as nearly four million workers died prematurely and unnecessarily across the globe, and life expectancy dropped in even the wealthiest countries. This issue is no exception: we describe the murder of our fellow militant Adil Belakhdim in Italy, the building collapse in Florida has left at least 24 dead and dozens more missing, the heatwave that killed hundreds of people in the Pacific Northwest of North America, the brutal conditions that kill prisoners in Italy and around the world, and the massive number of Covid casualties in Brazil.

We would prefer not to fill the pages of our newspaper with these sad stories, and in our communist future we will write about happier things. But the present bloodbath is the worst expression of the criminal dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Every one of the deaths mentioned above is a homicide, either through intent or through neglect. The perpetrators make no attempts to hide their identities, their whereabouts, or their guilt. But the police will never arrest them, and the law will never hold them accountable, because the capitalist state is nothing other than an instrument for the bourgeoisie to oppress the proletariat.

Common criminals go to great lengths to conceal their activities from the state. The bourgeoisie, by contrast, openly brag about who they are and what harm they do. They attend glamorous parties to compare notes on the best way to extract surplus value from the proletariat's labor. They buy luxury homes in the most desirable neighborhoods. They sit for TV interviews and write opinion pieces for the bourgeois press. Every public company is required to identify its executives and board members.

Yet these people remain at-large. Everybody knows that oil companies have fought all attempts to reduce carbon emissions, but will this government arrest the board of directors of ExxonMobil for the deaths caused by the recent heatwave? Will it charge the owners of the Lidl supermarket chain with terrorism because they murdered Adil Belakhdim? No! Those charges are only for the proletariat. The members of the bourgeoisie are not subjected to such things. When a few of them occasionally get busted, as happened with the Enron and Madoff scandals, it is for ripping off other members of their own class, not for what they all do to the proletariat.

That the bourgeoisie still feel comfortable showing their faces in public demonstrates that they are the law in the present state. Only the communist revolution can make them answer for their crimes.

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At Tenet/St. Vincent Hospitals in Worcester, Massachusetts, nurses have been on strike since March with demands of 4-1 and 5-1 patient to nurse staffing ratios. Tenet is one of the largest for-profit health care systems.

900 nurses at Cook County Health in Chicago went on a one day strike for more staffing. 1500 support workers went on strike the following week.

### “Summer of Chaos”

The Painters union in Portland has successfully won \$4/hour wage increases from contractors through a strategy they called “Summer of Chaos”. After being offered a 25¢ increase by the bosses, the union built a strategy to do random pickets shutting down work at building sites, causing logistical chaos. The first strike of 40 painters was supported by 120 other building trades workers refusing to cross the line. It was announced today – June 30th – that a tentative contract will be voted on which include \$4/hour wage increases.

### Marathon Petroleum

On January 21st, 200 members of Teamsters Local 120 employed at the Marathon Petroleum refinery in Saint Paul Park, MN went out on strike after Marathon locked them out in an attempt to break the power of the union in the refinery. At stake was not only pay and working conditions for the Teamsters, but the health and safety of the surrounding community and of any potential replacements: as history has shown, when facilities such as these employ poorly-trained, underpaid workers, disasters happen. One need only look to the 2018 explosion at the Husky Energy refinery in Superior, WI for confirmation of this fact. Marathon wished to replace these skilled, well-paid workers with low-bid contractors, even notifying a local union contractor that there was no upcoming work for that firm, in spite of the fact that it was widely known that a shutdown was scheduled for April. The health and safety of all workers is threatened when companies are allowed to employ workers with inadequate training, low pay, and supervision whose sole concern is the bottom line.

In spite of the fact that local authorities severely restricted the ability of the Teamsters to maintain an effective picket outside the refinery gate by limiting them to 3 picketers, they did not give up. They also expanded their efforts to informational pickets near Speedway gas stations, which were the primary customer for the fuel produced at that refinery. The union was also pressing for a bill that would have required refineries to employ workers with training equivalent to a union apprenticeship. Finally, after nearly six months, the Teamsters announced victory, just four days after rejecting what the company called its “last, best, and final offer.” On June 26th, the union and the company reached an agreement, which, while allowing eleven fired Teamsters to go back to work, eliminates the minimum staffing requirement, and appears to eliminate several job classifications, opening them up to rat contractors. The union’s desired bill was rejected by the Minnesota State Senate, but it’s reported that the decision to accept the company’s offer was influenced by legislation which, if passed, would require refineries to have their own, full-time, paid fire departments. The Teamsters are scheduled to return to work on the 6th.

### Restaurants, Groceries and Food Manufacture

In the “service” sector workers have

been not returning to post-COVID work, which has pushed wages up significantly. As of the last Federal reports, there are 1,600,000 job openings in food. According to the Washington Post “A Pew Research Center survey this year found that 66 percent of the unemployed had “seriously considered” changing their field of work, a far greater percentage than during the Great Recession. People who used to work in restaurants or travel are finding higher-paying jobs in warehouses or real estate, for example. Or they want a job that is more stable and less likely to be exposed to the coronavirus — or any other deadly virus down the road.”

This refusal to take work is driving wages up dramatically. Shops that had proudly paid minimum wage and resisted the “Fight for \$15” campaigns with talk of replacing workers with various machines have suddenly shown their true colors by paying \$18-20 an hour.

During COVID, walk outs had become common in these jobs. They continue to be so. Just in the last 2 weeks of July we have seen:

### Donuts!

Workers walked out on strike at the famous Voodoo Doughnut shop in Portland, Oregon. Poor Air Conditioning and company water were not enough to protect the workers from the 117°F/46°C temperatures.

### Fritos!

500 Frito-lay workers in Topeka Kansas have been on strike for the first time in the plant’s history since July 2nd. Horrendous over work, deplorable working conditions and little to no compensation, both for base pay and hazard pay have brought the long coming strike to reality. Workers at the facility have brought up issues of hazardous working conditions, complaints of frozen and smoke filled factory floors, callus treatment of workers who die on the job, and lump sum payments in lieu of raises spurred on a drive to negotiate a better contract by the union local at the facility. However contract negotiations quickly broke down as Frito-lay refused to accept the demands the working class put forward, so much so the employer gave workers an ultimatum which sparked the strike. The workers in the facility refuse to return to work until Frito-lay concedes to their demands, but only time will tell how many of them will be met and what the regime union negotiators are willing to give up.

### Pickles!

35 Grocery workers at Dill Pickle Grocery in Chicago went on a 2 day strike the first week of July to make the management follow the recent contract. This is usual because the workers refused to sign away their freedom to strike, an all too common section in American labor agreements.

### Hooters!

A dozen workers at a Houston Hooters Restaurant walked out demanding the store’s Air Conditioning be repaired after a month doing without. The AC was repaired in 2 days and the store reopened.

### Burgers!

Workers at a Jack in the Box in Sacramento, California walked out in protest of the restaurant’s broken Air Conditioning, which they say the owners have a habit of not repairing properly.

### Kroger!

2000 Kroger workers in Arkansas have also walked off the job, after the grocery chain

made the decision to move all of them off their union negotiated health care plan onto the company’s private plan.

### PublicWorkers

**New Orleans** City Council raised wages for workers – example garbage collection – done by contractors to \$15 an hour. Legally speaking, the city council cannot raise wages for city employees whose wages can be as low as \$11/hr. To protest the discrepancy in pay, as well as work safety, city maintenance workers went on a sickout.

**City Workers in In Elizabeth City, North Carolina** went on strike after the city council refused wage increases. The workers’ union, as members of UE Local 150, find themselves in a legal gray area. According to North Carolina law they can join a union but can’t agree to contracts. This provision calls for them to be in constant organization and ready for attacks on working conditions.

### Concluding Remarks

This recent strike wave is an indication of a renewed working-class movement in embryo, a result of the catastrophic decline in wages which has decimated the American petite-bourgeoisie and labor-aristocracy, throwing millions of workers and small capitalists into the ranks of the proletariat. As this ‘middle class’ fades away, the social “peace” that the bourgeoisie concluded with opportunism and yellow trade-unionism following World War II dies with it, a process that began in the 1970s and accelerated following the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic. With union membership at a historical low and Stalinism long out of fashion, mainstream opportunism is reduced to impotent pleas for the Democratic Party to reverse its “abandonment” of the working-class. “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat”.

The coinciding strikes that took place in the 1970s brought concessions for individual factories and labor unions, but also brought with it a degradation in the internal class unity of workers in the United States. This degradation, along with the persistent lack of internationalism, gave room for the bourgeoisie to swiftly break the trade unions that facilitated the strikes, move jobs overseas, and ultimately take back what concessions they were forced to give out.

While these recent strikes are not a unified class force, the spontaneous eruption of widespread class-activity regardless of locality, sector, or trade; minimally influenced by opportunist currents or parties; and under an unfolding economic and political crisis; offers the most favorable objective preconditions, since the Stalinist counter-revolution, for the emergence of a generalized class-consciousness and powerful labor movement. The labor movement is starting nearly from scratch, except with the tremendous advantage of the superior productive forces and of over 170 years of experience. The power of the working class comes from the size of its organization, thus wherever possible workers should seek to unify their economic organizations such as unions into larger organizations. This potential, however, can only be ensured by conducting coordinated class action for immediate, class-specific demands which benefit the class as a whole for instance:

- higher wages
- equal pay for equal work

- shorter working hours
- pensions for unemployed, elderly, and disabled workers
- COVID-19 workplace protections

Furthermore, while international solidarity has always been necessary for the workers' movement, in the era of globalization this has never been more relevant. Any struggle that limits itself to a national scope, let alone a local or sectoral scope is a non-starter. Capital knows no border, neither should Labour.

Internationalism encouraged friends of our party to call struck st FCA (Fiat Chrysler) plants in Italy in against working conditions at the FCA plant in Sterling Heights, Michigan. They and other ICP supporters circulated leaflets in FCA plants around the world encouraging similar strikes.

Friends of the ICP at the Port of Genoa also refused to work cargo bound for the Saudi war in Yemen. And again with arms shipments to Israel. This is practical proletarian internationalism.

Part-and-parcel with an eye towards organizing an international association of workers means rejecting the notion that the working-class has anything to gain from electoral democracy and loyalty to the "nation" or state. The US state, like all existing states, is the apparatus through which the bourgeoisie exercises its rule. This cannot be changed or modified, despite the existence of electoral democracy; no ruling class has ever allowed itself to be voted out of power. Similarly, the "nation" merely denotes the territorial market and its participants, unified by a common language and culture, which is policed by this state. Thus the US state, the "nation", and the American working class are all the property of the American bourgeoisie. Consequently, the American working-class must break with the ideologies of nationalism/patriotism and electoralism which keep its destiny bound to those of the American bourgeoisie and its state. This also means breaking with the ideology of "anti-fascism", which subordinates the working-class struggle to that of defending the democratic form of the bourgeois-state against the fascist form, as if the form of the state was determined by anything except the will of the bourgeoisie. The only true "anti-fascism" is a class struggle against capital.

Without this, and without the working class of the United States joining the international struggle the communist party has engaged in for nearly 100 years, the conditions of work, and the conditions of life in general, will not change.

# UK Electricians' struggle a powerful end to a decade long fight

Electricians in the UK (often known as "Sparks") have a long history of organisation and a defence of their economic interests and status of being a skilled trade. For many decades the Electricians union had a right-wing leadership, and this was finally incorporated into the larger Unite Union.

For the last decade there had been attempts by contracting companies such as Balfour Beatty to introduce a new grade of semi-skilled worker, paid about a third less and have scant training. The rationale was for this new semi-skilled role would be running in of cables, and some connecting up of these cables. This was seen by rank-and-file electricians as not only a threat to their wage rates but also a threat to their own jobs. The fear was not only deskilling of the electricians jobs, but also the displacement / replacement of many of the existing workforce.

Balfour Beatty attempted to introduce this new semi-skilled role of worker at the end of 2011 and this led to determined opposition from the electricians employed by them. Balfour Beatty operated on many construction sites and on the railway network. Over 80% of the electricians balloted voted against this proposal, being concerned that either they would either lose their job, or be expected to work for much less in their wage packet. The ballot result was for a declaration of an official strike.

Balfour Beatty reacted to the strike vote by threatening Court action. The Unite Union reacted by calling off the strike, but the electricians came out anyway. There were demonstrations in London including the headquarters of Balfour Beatty and another site in Victoria, which led to other workers coming out in support. There were also demonstrations in Glasgow which involved other sites. Further strikes and sympathy action took place in Grangemouth, Immingham and Hartlepool. These strikes and demonstrations were unofficial.

There was another ballot on strike action in February 2012 which led to a two-thirds voting for strike action. While the opposition to the deskilling of the electricians role continued Balfour Beatty and other employers took the strike action issue to the High Court to have it overturned. The Court saw no reason to get involved in declaring the strike to be unlawful. The Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey welcomed the Court decision, looking for ways of resolving disputes around the negotiating table rather than in the Courts.

## Another attempt at introducing deskilling role

Strikes broke out again this year when contractors, including Balfour Beatty, planned to introduce again a semi-skilled electrical worker with just seven weeks of training – this was to be known as electrical support operative. The resistance of the existing skilled electricians was determined and well-organised. Attempts to introduce the semi-skilled role at the new nuclear power station at Hinckley C led to picketing at the site at the end of March. A Balfour Beatty site in Bromborough, Wirral, was consistently picketed from March 24th until April 7th. The offices of companies involved in the construction plans, such as EDF, were occupied.

There were also demonstrations over this deskilling role in London, Glasgow and in the

North East of England.

By early June the plans for the electrical deskilling role with Balfour Beatty, NG Bailey and the Hinckley Point site was officially abandoned. The employers agreed to revert to the industry standard Joint Industry Board for training standards of skilled workers. Unite Union officials were more than happy to ensure the smooth running of the construction projects and would be cheaper than taking on a prolonged fight with rank-and-file electricians, who would have little option but to engage in an intensive round of picketing and spreading the strikes. Whether the strikes were official or unofficial would have meant little to the striking electricians, as they would have been able to rely on the support of fellow workers, by either not crossing picket line and providing money at site collections.

## Final Round in Gateshead

An Amazon fulfilment centre is being constructed in Gateshead as part of the Amazon distribution network. News circulated that a contractor was using unskilled labour to perform electrical work, for which they were not trained for and probably had little understanding of what they were doing, raising legitimate health and safety issues. On June 16th rank-and-file electricians from outside the site picketed the Amazon site. About 60 electricians employed on the site refused to cross the picket line and went home. A few days later at least thirty workers were sacked for taking part in this solidarity strike action. They were notified by txt on mobile phones to ensure all their belongings were removed before the end of their working shift that working day.

As of Monday 21st June the sacked workers announced they would picket the site until their jobs were reinstated. There appeared to be attempts to recruit other electricians to replace those picketing outside the site. That appears to have come to nothing.

On Wednesday 23rd June the contractors held a hurried meeting with Unite at which it was agreed that those sacked workers could return to work if they wanted to and would be reinstated starting the following day. An email from a recruitment agency had informed the workers that the matter had been resolved as the site is nearing completion. The recruitment agency stated that matters had been taken out of their hands the previous Friday but now the matter had been settled.

The electricians had won this round because of their determination and class solidarity. The use of a picket line of electricians not employed at the site provided a way of fighting back against the internal threats to the workers employed on the site. The picket line provided the means and excuse for strike action by all the electricians on the site. This was a way of achieving unity in struggle that was not possible because of the lack of organisation in the site. The tactic of external picketing of the site was a way of bringing the dispute to a head, and to be resolved by the contractor backing down or the strike possibly escalating out of control. The employers and Unite union was quick in backing off and resolving the issue. These tactics by the pickets were well thought out and controlled and not some sort of "Wild Cat" action, which was not necessary or possible by the balance of forces on this site.

# THE DIVISION OF POWERS IN BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

In the eighteenth-century Encyclopedia of Diderot and D'Alambert, in the article on "Civil liberty" written by Chevalier de Jaucourt, we read: "There are no words, as Mssr. Montesquieu says so well, to which men have attributed so many different meanings like this one."

In the Enlightenment, words such as Freedom, Reason, Man, Consciousness, and Nature dominated the scene – however, transported to the realm of abstraction, outside of time and history. Only dialectical or historical materialism has made it possible to understand that these terms do not indicate eternal and immutable realities like so many divinities, but products of history: ideas and ideologies which, as such, are the reflection of the relations of production and relations between classes, that is, of the positions in which individuals find themselves with respect to certain relations of production.

The aforementioned conceptions from the Enlightenment, and among them in particular the "law of nature", had enormous importance as constituting the revolutionary ideology of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, and in particular in the French Revolution. This ideology, then revolutionary, was born in the previous century with natural law, not surprisingly in countries such as Grotius's Holland and Locke's England, where the bourgeoisie was already in power or was about to get there. According to this conception, man as such has rights that derive from nature, always as such, so that emperors, kings, and popes cannot deny them.

We limit ourselves to two quotations from Montesquieu and Blanqui on freedom.

It is necessary to first make some clarifications about Charles-Louis de Secondat, who in 1716, at the age of 27, inherited the title of Baron De Montesquieu from his uncle, along with a large fortune and the post of president of the Bordeaux parliament. His most important work is *The Spirit of the Laws*, written in 1748, in which he supports the division of powers between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, based on the English model he admired.

After Montesquieu's death, his ideas were seen through the dominant perspectives of the subsequent centuries. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he became a theorist of the bourgeois democracies of the time, while in the French Revolution of 1789-94 he became a republican and a revolutionary. The ideology of the Jacobins and the revolutionaries in general was a reworked mixture of Rousseau and Montesquieu, with a clear pre-eminence of the former. Rousseau was purged of his criticism of private property and his pessimism, and was uplifted by the optimism of Condorcet and the encyclopedists in general regarding the possibility of regenerating a society corrupted by ignorance, superstition, and inequalities.

Montesquieu, having placed the principle of the republic in virtue, was seen as a

republican, and therefore a revolutionary. Billaud-Varenne, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, wrote in the third year of the Republic (after the Thermidorian Reaction) that Montesquieu was the turning point of French political thought, a thought which was then continued and surpassed by Rousseau. Montesquieu speaks of three types of government: the republic, the monarchy, and despotism. The republic has virtue as its principle, the monarchy has honor, and despotism has fear. The republic can belong to the whole people or to a part of them: it can therefore be democratic or aristocratic. Bourgeois and aristocrats, readers of Montesquieu and Rousseau as well as Plutarch and Cicero, could therefore aspire to be virtuous, custodians of the ancient republican virtues in the myth of Lycurgus' Sparta and the republican Rome of Marcus Junius Brutus.

The myth of these virtues, then widespread, did not automatically mean wanting the republic, and even less the revolution: otherwise it would be difficult to understand the praise of republican virtues made in those years by a King of Poland, even taking into account that Poland, monarchic at that time, was in fact an aristocratic republic, where kings were elected by a very numerous aristocracy, which in some periods of Polish history came to constitute more than 10% of the population.

With the American Revolution of 1776, people began to think that the republic did not concern only the ancient Greek polis or the Swiss cantons, but was also a possibility for large states such as France.

It must be said that Montesquieu, who is difficult to define as a republican, in his writings and notes dated between 1716 and 1755, later rearranged by others with the title of "Reflections and Unpublished Thoughts", writes under the subtitle "Republics": "I am not one of those who consider Plato's Republic as an ideal and purely imaginary thing, which it would be impossible to implement."

The political freedom of which Montesquieu speaks can be found both in the monarchies and in the republics: it is not proper to one or the other as such, but to the governments he calls "moderate", where the division of powers prevents abuses, as he writes in *The Spirit of the Laws*: "For the very arrangement of things, power must stop power." Montesquieu's sympathies therefore went both to constitutional monarchy and to the republic, provided they were "moderate," with the tripartite division of powers.

Obviously, in the France of his time, together with the very large part of the Enlightenment, he supported the less traumatic solution, that is, a monarchy which, under the influence of new ideas, would reform itself in a constitutional sense. He certainly he was not a revolutionary.

But the separation of powers between executive, legislative, and judicial was an attack on absolute monarchy, and therefore a

possible ideological tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie in view of its rise to power. In this sense, at least until 1789, the separation of powers found a place within the revolutionary ideology of the bourgeoisie.

However, Montesquieu's conception of the separation of powers also responded to a need for stability and conservation, referring, from this point of view, to the most ancient and traditional vision of a society of classes. Class societies were made up of aristocracy, clergy, and the (future) third estate, that is, a bourgeoisie that expressed itself in municipal parliaments, often as conservative, if not more, than the aristocracy. The power of the king, even if absolute, found a limitation on the part of the classes which, although not having decision-making power, could not be ignored: it was not wise for the king to ignore them, as this would certainly have procured different problems, lengthened the list of his enemies, and made his power more unstable. The classes therefore had a limited power of influence towards the monarch, but at the same time they fulfilled an important stabilizing function in that society, a function understood by all, starting with the monarch himself.

This does not mean that sometimes, or often, the stability of the kingdom jumped due to the struggles and wars between monarchy and aristocracy, in which one tried to subjugate the other.

For Montesquieu, the tripartition of powers aims to make power itself more stable and therefore stronger, avoiding shocks of various kinds. Executive power remains in the hands of the monarch, as before; legislative power should pass into the hands of a parliament presumably dominated by the aristocrats and with bourgeois participation; the judicial power is in the hands of courts where the bourgeois were already competing for domination with the aristocrats. The example of England, admired by the baron, seemed to confirm the effectiveness of this division of the garments of the poor Christ between monarchy, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie. The effectiveness was in guaranteeing the stability and "freedom of man", which we know to be the freedom of the man who owned property in France at the time, landed and bourgeois. The latter, with the revolution and the Napoleonic period, later became far more important.

We now come to the quotation from Montesquieu taken from the aforementioned collection under the subtitle "On political freedom": "The word freedom in politics does not even remotely have the meaning attributed to it by orators and poets. This word properly expresses only a relationship and cannot serve to differentiate the various types of government: since the people's state consists in the freedom of the poor and weak and in the slavery of the rich and powerful; while the monarchy consists in the freedom of the great and in the slavery of the small (...) So when, in a civil war, it is said that one is fighting for freedom, it is something else: the people are fighting to obtain dominance over the Great, and the great ones fight to obtain dominance over the people."

These words are significant precisely because they do not come from a revolutionary. However, there is the intuition that freedom has

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## Murder of a SI Cobas militant (con't)

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of national and international capitalism, and fearing the extension of struggles and rank-and-file unionism into other categories.

With the "security" decrees passed by the old government of the Lega party and the Five Star Movement, the penalties for roadblocks have become very heavy, and the police obviously treat a picket in front of a factory gate just like a roadblock. These denunciations and sanctions are attempts to break the strength of the rank-and-file unions in logistics, the workers' struggle, and to revoke the gains they have obtained. The later Democratic Party-Five Star government has partially modified the "security" decrees, but not the part that is used by force against workers' pickets.

Covered by the trumpet blast of "national reconstruction" propaganda from the new government, companies and law enforcement agencies seem in recent months to enjoy their authorization to

carry out any wickedness against striking workers.

In Genoa, the prosecutor ordered a search of the homes, telephones, and workplace lockers of port workers' delegates from the USB, after the workers chose them over candidates from the CGIL regime union. In Piacenza, the prosecutor placed two local leaders of SI Cobas under arrest following the clashes that took place at FedEx-TNT, after the police attacked the picket on February 1.

An admirable fight by SI Cobas has been underway for two months in all the FedEx-TNT warehouses in Italy, after the company decided to close the Piacenza warehouse with the sole, blatant purpose of breaking the strength of SI Cobas and getting rid of 280 unionized workers (some of whom were also with the USB). On several occasions, the company has deployed groups of private guards to help the police break the pickets. On the night of June 9 in Tavazzano, Lombardy, dozens of these thugs, along with some scabs, attacked the picket line with improvised clubs, rocks, and broken bottles, seriously injuring a worker.

On June 17, at the Texprint facility in Prato, the boss and some of his henchmen attacked 3 workers who had remained to keep up the strikers' camp, while their comrades had gone to support a strike in another textile company in the Prato area.

In this context, the Guarantees Commission has indicated a clear desire to include logistics within the framework of its anti-strike rules.

Against all this, rank-and-file unionism has finally been able to act together in today's unitary strike. And in this climate of hatred against the exploited who strike, preventing the "national rebirth" (which, of course, is nothing other than the rebirth of employers' profits), a boss felt authorized to crash through a picket line and kill a worker.

The workers must not collaborate with the bosses and their political regime, because nothing will ever really be granted to them, except deceit and hypocrisy. From the infamous actions of the bourgeois class it is only necessary to draw greater conviction of the need to organize ourselves to fight, because only force will defend our class. Today's unitary strike is a step along this path. The assassination of Adil Belakhdim requires an equally unified response, involving not only the rank-and-file unions but also the class opposition within the CGIL, and, on a higher level, the entire working class.

## Bourgeois Democracy (con't)

a class connotation, and that the freedom of some coincides with the slavery of others.

Montesquieu, despite being a baron, is the exponent of an objectively revolutionary bourgeois class, as was shown a few decades later in France. As a revolutionary class, the bourgeoisie can afford to tell the truth, or what it deems to be true, without having to look over its shoulder. Another revolutionary class is still not pressing against it. Then, when the bourgeoisie has become mature, first stagnant and today in a state of decomposition (but it does not die by itself), then it can no longer afford the luxury of saying something that comes close to the truth: materialism and naive ideologies, and in part also generous ones, that it had professed are abandoned. In the name of its war of life and death, of its Armageddon against the proletariat, the bourgeoisie then allied itself with the remnants of all the previous owning classes, recovering their ideologies like an old coat that it is turned inside out and patched up, in order not to appear naked to the proletariat. The bourgeoisie, after having cut off the heads of kings and priests and professed atheism, sprinkles its head with ashes and asks for forgiveness from kings, priests, and God, with whom it stipulates a holy alliance against infidels and blasphemers who do not believe in the holy right of property.

We come now to the revolutionary Blanqui, a communist with a solid vision of class but lacking in science and dialectics. In Social Criticism, a collection he made of his writings from 1850 to 1870, from one of 1869-70 entitled "Communism, the future of society" we read: "Now, communism is reproached for representing the sacrifice of the individual and the denial of freedom (...). On the other hand, where is the evidence in support of the accusation made against it? It is only a gratuitous insult, since the accused

never lived. And in whose name is this arrogant supposition? In the name of individualism, which for thousands of years has permanently killed freedom and the individual. How many individuals of our species are there who have not been made helots or victims? Maybe one in ten thousand. Ten thousand martyrs for an executioner! Ten thousand slaves for a tyrant! And this is supported in the name of freedom! (...) The freedom that communism accuses, we know it, is the freedom to enslave, the freedom to exploit at will, the freedom of great existences, as Renan says, with the multitudes on the sidewalk. The people call this freedom oppression and crime. It no longer wants to feed her with his flesh and blood (...) Communism is the safeguard of the individual; individualism is his extermination. For the one, each individual is sacred. The other takes no more account of it than an earthen jar and immolates it with the massacre to the bloody trinity Loyola, Caesar, and Shylock; after which he says phlegmatically: "Communism would be the sacrifice of the individual". It would ruin the banquet of the anthropophages, this is clear. But those who pay the price will not find this setback annoying (...) No freedom for the enemy (...) In 1848, the republicans, forgetting fifty years of persecution, granted full and complete freedom to their enemies. The hour was solemn and decisive. It will never come back. The winners, despite long and cruel wrongs, took the initiative, gave the example. What was the answer? Extermination. Closed business. The day when the gag is removed from the mouth of labor, it will be put on that of capital."

Here we agree with Blanqui, and in the wake of Marx's scientific, historical, and dialectical communism, we say that the only freedom available to the proletariat is the exercise of its own dictatorship.

# for the class union

news and interventions of the class struggle

## Italy

On Friday, June 18, there was a national strike of logistics workers joined by virtually all the grassroots unions in the sector: SI COBAS, ADL COBAS, USB, CUB, SOL COBAS, and SLAI COBAS, for the Class Union.

An unexpected and important fact, because it tends to overcome one of the main reasons for conflict between the two major unions—SI COBAS and USB—which in logistics had come to clash very strongly.

SI COBAS, USB, and ADL COBAS have also published a common communiqué for the strike, and in the warehouses where both SI COBAS and USB are present, the workers of the two unions picketed together, with their respective flags.

The leaders of these grassroots unions, therefore, who have always rejected, with various instrumental justifications, the trade union indication of our party in favor of the unity of action of trade unions and workers, have found themselves following it and making it their own, contradicting their previous position.

The leaflet of our party, drafted and distributed for the strike and published below, gave particular emphasis and prominence to this important novelty, although we are certainly not unaware of how fragile this unity of action is and how occasional recourse to it is not enough to restore strength to class unionism and the workers' movement.

It was a step in the direction of the necessary unity of action of militant unionism, to be practiced permanently at the various levels of union action, corporate, territorial, categorical, general.

But this is not to say that the current leadership of the major base unions, which have conducted—for years and until yesterday—the political struggle in the union field with the opportunistic method of dividing the strike actions, have abandoned this practice permanently. At the first opportunity, they will adduce justifications to return to their previous conduct. In addition to the seriousness of the situation described in the leaflet, the pressure from below of the workers who are members of their organizations has perhaps brought them to the field of unity of action at this juncture. In any case, it is only on this force from below that one can count on to permanently impose the class line of unity of action in every union body.

\* \* \*

On the morning of the national logistics strike, at the Lidl logistics warehouse in Biandrate, the provincial coordinator of SI COBAS, Adil

Belakhdim, was run over and killed by a young 26 year old boss who drove his truck through the picket line.

The young man is being investigated not for voluntary manslaughter but for road homicide, an indictment routinely assigned in every road accident in which there are victims, which seems to indicate an intention to hit him with a minimum possible penalty.

This fact, together with that of the acquittal, a year ago, of the truck driver who ran over and killed Abd El Salam, an USB worker, in September 2016 during a picket at Gls in Piacenza, would indicate a kind of impunity to other bosses, bosses or scabs who wanted to emulate the gesture of the murderer of Adil Belakhdim.

Similar episodes are very frequent during pickets for strikes in logistics. After years of hard struggles—many lost, many won—which, as an overall result, have marked an improvement in working conditions and a strengthening of grassroots unionism in the category, the bosses seem to have been given a kind of pass to discourage workers from engaging in these methods of struggle, even by means of road accidents. This tool is in addition to police charges, judicial measures, and the maneuvers of the regime's trade unionism to assist companies in replacing combative workers with other unorganized workers, as is happening at Fedex TNT.

On Wednesday, June 30, in Pontecurone (Alessandria), a manager drove his truck into a group of striking workers in front of the company at Miliardo Yida, injuring one.

\* \* \*

The day after the national logistics strike, Saturday, June 19, SI COBAS had already scheduled a national demonstration in Rome.

This is the practice, highly questionable, put in place for three years now by the leadership of the SI COBAS: national strike of logistics on Friday, national demonstration in the capital the next day. This is with the aim, pursued by this leadership, to give greater "political" content to the union mobilization.

This choice has several negative effects:

- Workers are required to expend more energy, having to first participate in the pickets and then bear the journey to Rome, the demonstration and the return trip; this has negative effects on both the participation in the pickets and in the demonstration itself. After the first successful national demonstration in Rome on February 24, 2018, subsequent demonstrations have had much lower participation, even prior to the pandemic;

- Organizing the demonstration in Rome implies a greater financial burden

for the union, which has to rent the buses; a burden doubled with the pandemic, since the buses have to be filled to only half their capacity;

- With this decision are abandoned local city demonstrations, which took place the same day of the strike, with a much broader participation of workers and, at least in part, the union with workers of other unions, which instead have always deserted the demonstrations convened by the SI COBAS in Rome, precisely because of their political characterization; all, without exception, even ADL COBAS that has always participated in strikes together with the SI COBAS.

The demonstration on Saturday, June 19 was attended by about 1,700 people. Successful, then, but not as successful as we had wished, in the just hope of a greater presence in reaction to the murder of the unionist of the previous day, at least from Rome and the surrounding area.

Of the other grassroots unions, the one with the largest presence was USB, with about one hundred militants, including those of the political leadership group and the student organization it controls.

It now becomes clear how decades of political opportunism of the false workers' parties (PCI and subsequent wreckage) and of collaborationism of the trade unions of the regime (CGIL, CISL, UIL) have thrown the workers into individualism, into indifference, a condition from which it is not at all easy to get out.

The role of trade unions—trade unions, opposition class union currents, company trade union representatives—is crucial in every phase of the class struggle, even more so in this condition: in trying to set up a mobilization, their involvement is necessary and it is not enough to appeal only to workers or, generically, to conflictual unionism, as has been done so far by the leadership of SI COBAS, including through the Assembly of Combative Workers.

On this level, the reaction of the trade unions to the murder of the SI COBAS unionist was appreciable. Many RSUs and RSAs (bodies representing workers to the employers, respectively of all unions in a firm and individual unions) have called strikes—of a couple of hours—in solidarity and denunciation, both of the basic unions and FIOM, who have called for a regional strike of all metalworkers in Emilia Romagna.

A general strike was called by the various quarters of militant unionism, both from the grassroots unions and from the CGIL internal opposition group "Reconquistiamo tutto," in response to the release of laoyffs, the liberalization of contracts, the attempt to include the logistics sector in the law forbidding strikes in essential public services, and the murder of Adil.

These positive reactions, however, have remained scattered, and have not been channeled into a single general

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mobilization. The leadership of the SI COBAS would have had the opportunity, given its position in the affair, to undertake such an initiative and ask all the grassroots unions and opposition groups within CGIL to react with a unified mobilization. It did not do so, and on Tuesday, June 22, called alone a 4-hour national logistics strike for Thursday, June 24. It then called for a demonstration for the following Saturday in Novara, which saw a similar participation to the one in Rome, but with the almost total absence of the rest of the militant unionists.

Therefore, the step forward towards unity of action, taken with the strike of June 18, was not followed in the days immediately following by another in the same direction, despite the relatively favorable situation. A good opportunity was lost. The national general strike need not necessarily have been called. We could have called for a new unified national strike of logistics for the entire day; or a general strike in the province of Novara, even if it was only for 4 hours; or a public, formal and official invitation to all the organizations of unionism in conflict to a national demonstration in the Piedmontese city. Or resort to all three possibilities, making the strike in logistics coincide with the one in the province of Novara.

On June 28 in Rome, however, a meeting was held, convened on the initiative of the leadership of the SI COBAS, between representatives of militant unionism, that is, the grassroots unions and "Reconquistiamo tutto", aimed at organizing a general strike for October.

Therefore, unlike what happened in past years, we have overcome the divisive practice with which some organizations were previously excluded from such meetings (USB, Confederazione COBAS, CGIL opposition, etc.) and the leaders of SI COBAS, which excluded the formal involvement of all bodies of trade unionism conflict in the preparation of mobilizations—denigrating this path as a useless "sum of acronyms"—have backtracked and implicitly admitted the correctness of our union address.

June 18

## A United National Strike of Logistics Workers

*For the unitary strike of rank-and-file trade unions in logistics!*

*For the establishment of the United Class Union Front!*

The national strike of logistics workers initially called by SI Cobas received the

support of most of the rank-and-file trade unions: ADL Cobas, USB, Cub Trasporti, Slai Cobas for the Class Union, AL Cobas, Sol Cobas.

This unitary support for the strike is an extremely important and positive fact because it breaks with years of deleterious conflict between rank-and-file unions - for the sole benefit of the employers and the regime unionism of CGIL, CISL and UIL - which had its most serious manifestation in the rivalry between SI Cobas and the USB.

The unitary support of the militant trade union organizations for a strike is not the fulfillment of the unity of struggle of the workers. But it creates the most favorable condition for this objective to be achieved in the most complete way, so that the widest mass of proletarians, including those who are in the regime unions or who are not unionized, also join the struggle.

It is therefore misleading to contrast the unity of the rank-and-file unions in calling the strike with unity in the struggle of the workers, diminishing the former as a mere sum of acronyms, useless for the purpose of the latter: the workers' struggle is powerless if it is not organized!

The current unitary action of rank-and-file unionism is the result of the bosses' aggression on several fronts: the beatings by police officers and thugs hired by the company during the fight against the closure of the FedEx-TNT warehouse in Piacenza; the judicial proceedings initiated by the Piacenza and Genoa prosecutors against trade union militants of SI Cobas and USB; with the announcement of layoffs starting from 30 June (hundreds of layoffs are already being announced at FCA in Melfi and other facilities); the liberalization of subcontracting; the project to include logistics in the anti-strike regulations of the Guarantee Commission to hit the sector where strikes have been most numerous and hardest-fought in the last 10 years; the relaunch of the concertation between the government and CGIL, CISL and UIL; and finally the attack last Wednesday at the SI Cobas encampment at Texprint in Prato.

The gravity of the situation has pushed the leadership of the rank-and-file unions to this united action. This is an extremely positive fact in itself, but also because it shows how this unity of action strengthens the workers' struggle. It must therefore become a permanent practice, and also be expanded to all of militant unionism, including the class opposition within the CGIL, and which ultimately leads to the formation of a united class union front.

The causes that have hitherto prevented us from moving in this direction have not been overcome. They continue in the opportunism of the union leaders, who pursue a political united front, which is necessarily detrimental to the united class union front. This unified strike in logistics

should be considered a victory that is not definitively achieved, but rather is fragile and revocable at any time by the current leadership groups.

It is equally deceptive to confuse the union with a political party. It is true that every trade union struggle has a political significance, and that as the economic struggle of the working class grows stronger it assumes a more and more political value. But the union is not a party and must not be inserted into political fronts. This effort is one of the causes that hinders the unified actions of the major rank-and-file unions, first of all SI Cobas and USB, with their respective leaders committed to using the trade unions as tools of support for their competing political fronts.

It is up to the workers and the rank-and-file trade union militants to fight, so that we continue to march in the direction of the united class union front, making permanent the unity of action of rank-and-file unionism, as a necessary tool to obtain the widest unity of the workers' struggle.

The resumption of a strong workers' movement on the level of economic struggle is the condition for the reconstruction of the link between the workers and the authentic revolutionary party. This party rejects any political fronts (inexorably affected by opportunism) and, certainly not by chance, indicates now that the only way to respond adequately to the bosses' offensive is to constitute the united class union front.

## *The Murder of a SI Cobas Militant: The Perpetrator is the Bourgeois Regime!*

This morning in Novara, Italy, on the day of the first national strike of rank-and-file unions in logistics, a truck driver rammed through the picket line at the Lidl grocery warehouse. The driver struck and killed Adil Belakhdim, provincial coordinator of the SI Cobas union in Novara.

There have been dozens of similar episodes in these years of strikes in logistics, the sector in which workers' combativity is highest. Fortunately, most of them happen without serious consequences, but this was not the case on September 14, 2016 at GLS in Piacenza, when Abd El Salam, a worker with the USB union, was hit and killed during a picket.

However, this new tragedy, the death of this new martyr of the workers' struggle, was not unexpected, but was preceded by a series of political events that have prepared the way for it.

Since 2010, strikes and pickets by logistics workers have managed to obtain important economic and regulatory improvements in many warehouses. In recent years, the employers and their state regime have gone on the counter-offensive, unable to bear this proletarian

-> **page 6** force in such a crucial sector