

The Communist Party

Newspaper of the International Communist Party

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

October - November 2023

Issue 54

25¢ 25p 0,50€

UAW Workers Stand-In For Class Unionism!

The International Communist Party salutes the workers of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, whom have chosen to strike against the devilish "Big Three". Like the heroes of an ancient epic, the workers must once again cut down to size this three headed hydra, a perennial foe of the working class. When it was first founded in the 1930s, the UAW was made famous for its militant sitdown strikes. We remind workers of the events of "The Battle of Running Bulls", when thousands of UAW workers in Flint, Michigan occupied Cleveland's Fisher Body plant, repelling the bosses' scabs for weeks. When the capitalist state sent in its armed forces to dislodge workers, wave after wave was defeated & the police "bulls" were sent running. As the workers in the plant stood unmoved, the strike spread to 17 other GM plants over 44 days. As a result of this generalization of the struggle, the company was forced to capitulate. Then as now, our power lies in acting as a unified class, by taking up concrete action beyond the confines of single workplaces, trades, and employers.

It was through these methods that workers of the industrialized world cleaved from the hands of our class enemy a decent standard of living in the last century; however, after World War 2, opportunist union leadership in collaboration with the bosses and the capitalist state, turned the unions into pathetic HR firms of the companies themselves. The auto worker, who once represented the epitome of the American "middle class", has today become proletarianized. Everywhere the sterile "American Dream" has given way to the depressing reality of a putrefying capitalist society, while the employers' totalitarian state manages with its profoundly inhuman technology a disgusting, bizarre, & contorted social reality. This system's senile, infirm, and morally bankrupt leadership inches ever closer toward tossing the workers of the world into the jingoist blood bath of world war, in a vain attempt to save their rotten order from its inevitable demise at hands of the ever deepening capitalist crisis. In contrast, the International Communist Party stands as the only force capable of leading the working class to victory in the battles to come.

All over the world the class is beginning to wake up from a great slumber, casting aside its collaborationist leadership and taking up the weapon of the strike once again. We salute the over 18,300 UAW workers currently on strike. As the strike grows and more workers join its ranks, the more powerful workers become. Already other unions such as the Teamsters local 299 have pledged to stand in solidarity and refuse to cross picket-lines. We call on the workers to demand that UAW leadership mobilize its remaining membership in solidarity, as over 100,000 workers remain on the job working in the same industry where other workers are already striking.

Ultimately, the working class must move beyond the narrow confines of a trade unionism in which only 10% of the US workforce has been able to be organized. The need for a class union which unites all workers in common defense under a "one big union", beyond individual trades and workplaces, was once the great aspiration of the workers' movement which recognized the need to centralize their dispersed trade unions in order to win against the concerted attacks of the capitalist class. Today, we must advance a practical unity of action among the existing unions to realize this goal. We need a united front of all combative and class unionist forces, uniting the masses of already unionized workers in common defense, a necessary step towards a future class union. As an immediate practical step, we call on sympathetic UAW workers to join other class unionists within the Class Struggle Action Network in an ongoing effort of cultivating a class unionist pole within the existing labor movement.

Towards the Class Union!

International Communist Party

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM FALSE FRIEND OF THE WORKING CLASS

In his 1875 Critique of the Gotha Programme, Karl Marx took aim at what he considered to be a particularly pathetic current within the contemporary workers' movement: a "kind of democratism" which "keeps within the limits of what is permitted by the police and not permitted by logic". He saw in this current's demands "nothing beyond the old democratic litany familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people's militia, etc." Now, a century and a half later, we are confronted with that same litany—one which is even more absurd today than in Marx's time, given how thoroughly capitalism and bourgeois democracy, its characteristic political form, have revolutionized the world.

We are referring here to "democratic socialism". Those who subscribe to this fundamentally petty-bourgeois ideology are very sensitive to the deficiencies of bourgeois democracy. Where it promises freedom and equality, they see unfreedom and inequality; where it promises rule by the people, they see rule by a tiny minority; where it promises emancipation for minorities, they see oppression. In a word, they are disappointed with the results of existing—that is to say bourgeois—democracy. Their solution to this is simple, if banal: more democracy is needed. Instead of questioning exactly what democracy itself entails, and whether it is really a one-size fits-all panacea for the world's problems, they simply assume that these problems are due to a lack of democracy, that the form of democracy which currently exists is not real democracy.

In his *Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy*, Marx informs us that "[e]lection is a political form present in the smallest Russian commune and artel. The character of the election does not depend on this name, but on the economic foundation, the economic situation of the voters...". Lenin takes up the same theme in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, where he castigates the titular opportunist for his invocation of "pure" democracy:

"If we are not to mock at common sense and history, it is obvious that we cannot speak of 'pure democracy' as long as different classes exist; we can only speak of class democracy. ... 'Pure democracy' is the mendacious phrase of a liberal who wants to fool the workers. History knows of bourgeois democracy which takes the place of feudalism, and of proletarian democracy which takes the place of bourgeois democracy".

Currently, the vast majority of the world lives under some version or another of bourgeois democracy: that is, a democratic regime suited to the needs and interests of the bourgeoisie, the class which enjoys ownership over the means of production. By extending political rights to the whole population and enfranchising the masses, the bourgeoisie ensures the continuation of its class rule. To put the matter simply: in a society without any a priori political privilege, those with economic power inevitably rule. For this very reason the bourgeoisie, in its great revolutions against the Ancien Régime, swept away the political privileges of lords and kings, and in doing so, it put the citizen in place of the feudal subject.

The equality of citizens is only the political reflection of the economic relations upon which bourgeois society is founded. In this society, individuals confront one another as owners of commodities, i.e., of private property in the form of products destined for exchange. They are free, in that they voluntarily swap their commodities in order to meet their own needs; and they are equal, in that they meet in their capacity as commodity-owners and trade commodities of equal value. Here, in the relation of commodity exchange that constitutes the basis for capitalist production, all distinctions of social rank and traditional privilege are razed. There are only commodity-owners.

In *Capital*, Marx has demonstrated that the exploitation and enslavement of labor-power is perfectly compatible with this free and equal exchange of commodities. The worker sells his labor-power for wages; he and the capitalist exchange their respective commodities on the market, with no extra-economic coercion required. But labor-power has a special use-value: when consumed, it can create new Value. In fact, it creates more Value than is required for its own maintenance and reproduction. This is the source of capitalist wealth. At the end of the whole process, the laborer—once he has exchanged his wages for food, clothing, rent and other essentials—is left with nothing but his ability to work (or his labor-power), as before. He must once again sell this paltry commodity if he is to survive. The capitalist, meanwhile, has been furnished with the product of the laborer which, when sold on the market, returns to him not only with an equivalent for the variable capital (wages) he has advanced, but also with surplus-value that can be used to command more labor.

This is how the freedom and equality of commodity-owners transform dialectically into their opposites, the exploitation and enslavement of some by others. As Marx puts it:

"... [T]he laws of appropriation or of private property, laws that are based on the production and circulation of commodities, become by their own inner and inexorable dialectic changed into their very opposite."

It is little wonder, then, that in constructing their preferred political order the bourgeoisie did not need to resort to the crude system of political privileges that characterized the feudal State. Freedom and equality are by no means incompatible with bourgeois production—indeed, the latter actually presupposes them as its basis. Hence the citizen, this abstract designation stripped of all differentiation of rank, steadily replaced the lords, serfs and slaves of the pre-capitalist order. In their capacity as citizens, individuals from all classes—at least in the classical form of bourgeois politics—are permitted to vote, that is, to participate in the bourgeoisie's rule. They select the personnel who will administer the bourgeois state, a state whose fundamental mission, the defense of private property and capital, is never up for debate.

Democracy "changes every time the Demos changes" (Engels), or, in other words, every time the economic and social situation of the voters changes. The demos, in a typical capitalist society, embraces the entire adult population. But within this population the ruling economic force, hence the ruling intellectual force as well, is the bourgeoisie itself. Its command over the means of production grants it command over the means of mental production as well; and so, "generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it". And since bourgeois democracy abhors special political privileges, that is, it treats every member of society as an abstract "citizen", it is only natural that those with

economic privileges rise to dominate the positions of rule. They have the time, money and resources to do so, and after all "[t]he ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas". Plus, the state machine itself cannot be viewed in isolation from the economic power of the bourgeoisie since it depends upon the accumulation of capital for its own power, a power which it wields to safeguard that very same accumulation. The State is an organ for the exercise of bourgeois class rule, and the democratic forms it takes do not change this fundamental fact.

As Lenin writes:

"Kautsky the Marxist historian has never heard that the form of elections, the form of democracy, is one thing, and the class content of the given institution is another."

Thus, throughout history the democratic mechanism has been employed by various ruling classes, from Athenian slaveholders to Roman patricians to the modern bourgeoisie, as an instrument of rule. The mere form of democracy in no way guarantees the rule of any class—its outcome depends on the "the economic foundation, the economic situation of the voters" (Marx, *Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy*).

Thus the State, for the individuals enmeshed within bourgeois relations, is viewed as a means to certain ends—ends which the state itself imposes upon them, for example, the need to dispose of private property in order to satisfy one's needs. And all the while, its actual purpose, to safeguard the conditions for continued accumulation of capital, remains unchallenged. The State, after all, is the association of the bourgeoisie against the other classes. The cry against, for example, the corruption of corporate lobbying only reveals a complete ignorance of this class nature of the state. The latter relies upon the success of the capitalist economy for its own power, and makes use of democracy as a means to this end. Where democracy fails to produce the required docility, rare as this is, recourse can always be had to naked force. Violence is not in contradiction with democracy, but is its necessary complement; where the scalpel fails, the hammer will suffice.

We mentioned above that Marx demonstrated how economic freedom and equality can transform into their opposites: unfreedom and inequality. But those who accept this insight in the field of economics often remain curiously unwilling to apply it to politics. They do not realize that elections based on free, fair and universal suffrage can serve as instruments of class rule because of the economic relations within which they are intertwined. They cannot see that democracy is "not a 'principle', but rather a simple mechanism of organization, responding to the simple and crude arithmetical presumption that the majority is right and the minority is wrong" (The Democratic Principle), that its character "does not depend on this name [i.e., democracy], but on the economic foundation, the economic situation of the voters". This economic situation, as determined by the prevailing mode of production, dictates the content of the democracy in question. Hence the democratic "mechanism of organization" has demonstrated its compatibility with social formations as distinct as the Athenian slaveholding state, peasant village assemblies and proletarian trade unions. Our tendency wrote in 1920:

"Bourgeois electoral democracy seeks the consultation of the masses, for it knows that the response of the majority will always be favorable to the privileged class and will readily delegate to that class the right to govern and to perpetuate exploitation. It is not the addition or subtraction of the small minority of bourgeois voters that will alter the relationship. The bourgeoisie governs with the majority, not only of all the citizens, but also of the workers taken alone."

It should be clear, then, that a "pure", "true" or "real" democracy does not exist and has never existed; rather, the nature of a given democracy is determined by the economic foundation upon which it develops. And this, in turn, should demonstrate why "more" democracy will not solve the problems created by the capitalist mode of production. Quite the reverse: it is only by depriving the ruling class of its political rights, by using its untrammelled political supremacy to upend the existing economic relations, that the working class will succeed in remedying these ills.

This is not to say that, within the proletariat's methods of organizing itself, there can be no use for democratic mechanisms. Situations may arise in the course of the revolutionary struggle which demand democratic consultation of the class, or of specific parts of the class. But to ascribe an innate value to democracy is to tie the proletariat's hands in advance, to limit it arbitrarily to a particular mechanism of organization, to deprive it of the tactical versatility it will require in order to prevail in its conquest for power. There may come moments in the life-and-death struggle with the bourgeoisie when the proletariat must trust its leading element (i.e., the party) to act without consulting the masses, such as during military emergencies, instances when the majority of the class has been deceived by bourgeois propaganda, etc. To refuse, in principle, to allow for any deviation from the democratic mechanism of organization is to paralyze the revolution in advance. Communists evaluate democracy as a means to the end of a complete revolution in the social mode of production—nothing more, nothing less.

There can be no question at all, meanwhile, of extending democratic rights to the bourgeoisie under the dictatorship of the proletariat. We have seen that, on the basis of the capitalist mode of production, equality of political rights between classes is precisely what reproduces and sustains the present state of things; it is the arrangement which corresponds to the interests of the bourgeoisie as the economically dominant class. In order to overthrow this mode of production, therefore, the proletariat must deprive its enemy of its political rights and ensure that the workers alone wield power; it must privilege itself against the bourgeoisie.

One question remains for us to answer: if the demand for "pure" democracy, or more democracy, in the abstract does not emanate from the revolutionary proletariat, then what is the class basis of this demand? Or, as Lenin might have put it: who stands to gain?

The Petty Bourgeoisie: Labor's Executioner

The petty bourgeoisie occupies a peculiar position within capitalist society. Caught between the ruling class and the class of wage-slaves, its individual members are

constantly threatened with class destruction. It competes hopelessly against the big bourgeoisie, which, with its larger capitals and grip on state power, is perpetually fated to win, and cast the petty proprietors down into the ranks of the working class, in short, to expropriate them from above. While the bourgeois State, as the most advanced fighting organization of its class, may have an interest in maintaining a stratum of petty proprietors in order to blunt the proletariat’s antagonistic relationship with the bourgeoisie, it can only do this in spite of this ceaseless centralization of capital. On the other hand, the petty bourgeoisie is threatened with expropriation from below, that is, by a revolutionary movement of the proletariat against the relations of private property upon which the existence of the petty bourgeoisie is based. Too weak to challenge the bourgeoisie on its own, it must constantly try to dupe the proletariat into supporting its demands. But as soon as the proletariat begins to feel its own strength and fight for its own demands, the petty bourgeoisie is bound by its interest in the preservation of property to betray the workers at the critical moment. This is the pattern of vacillation displayed by the so-called middle class throughout history, a pattern which arises from its precarious position between the two great classes of modern society.

Moderation, adherence to an ideal of bourgeois society, is thus what the petty bourgeois wants most. The petty bourgeois wants private property, but of a moderate size; he wants competition, but of a moderate intensity; he wants workers, but docile ones; in a word, he wants capitalist society without its necessary consequences, consequences which threaten his petty-bourgeois existence. He is thus not only an arch-reactionary but an enemy of the working class, because he is an enemy of the socialization and concentration of productive forces which constitute capitalism’s great contribution to social progress and which provide the basis for the future communist society.

It is therefore no surprise that, in the sphere of political ideology, the petty bourgeoisie’s demands appeal to a “pure” democratic ideal, a form of democracy which has never and will never exist. Perversely, it condemns actually existing democracy as fake while extolling an ideal democracy as real or authentic. It reveres the ideological reflection of bourgeois society, the image it maintains of itself, as a refuge from the precarious position it really occupies.

“The peculiar character of social-democracy,” Marx writes in the Eighteenth Brumaire, “is epitomized in the fact that democratic-republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with two extremes, capital and wage labor, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony. However different the means proposed for the attainment of this end may be, however much it may be trimmed with more or less revolutionary notions, the content remains the same. This content is the transformation of society in a democratic way, but a transformation within the bounds of the petty bourgeoisie. Only one must not get the narrow-minded notion that the petty bourgeoisie, on principle, wishes to enforce an egoistic class interest. Rather, it believes that the special conditions of its emancipation are the general conditions within whose frame alone modern society can be saved and the class struggle avoided”.

Democratic socialism, as the modern heir to the tradition known in Marx’s time as social democracy, fully exhibits these same tendencies. It seeks more democracy, pure and true democracy, because “the special conditions of [the petty bourgeoisie’s] emancipation”—i.e., the contradictory need for a capitalist society shorn of its necessary threats and antagonisms—demand it. And because the petty bourgeoisie is too weak to extract meaningful concessions from the bourgeoisie on its own, it must enlist the proletariat in its cause. Hence the democratic socialists advertise their pipe-dream of a renovated capitalism to the workers, promising them that their sufferings are due to a lack of democracy and that “real” democracy will put power in their hands. Instead of organizing on their own class terrain for their own demands, workers are encouraged to join in inter-classist campaigns for universal healthcare, higher taxes on the rich, nationalization of industries, abolition of the Senate, universal basic income, etc. All of these measures, as Marx points out, aim merely at diluting the antagonism between capital and labor, keeping the workers docile enough to be exploited sustainably and the big capitalists too weak to expropriate their smaller cousins. Above all, the petty bourgeois is concerned with maintaining his ever-threatened position, by hook or by crook.

Communism versus Democratic Socialism

If democratic socialism is concerned with weakening the antagonisms inherent in capitalism, and therefore preserving the existence of the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeois society itself, communism is concerned with sharpening those antagonisms and bringing them to their historical conclusion: the overthrow of the ruling class by the working class. The proletariat has no stake in bourgeois society, which rests upon the ruthless exploitation of its class. On the contrary, it can only liberate itself by abolishing bourgeois society and its material foundations.

The same cannot be said of the petty bourgeoisie, who want more than

anything to maintain their position within this society. That is the source of their magnetic attraction to democratic socialism, which promises a harmony achieved without the destruction of the present social relations or of the petty bourgeoisie as a class. What this ideology amounts to is a pious wish: an inane positing of the ideal expression of bourgeois society against its dirty reality, of “pure” democracy against democracy in its social reality. It is a fantastical attempt to perfect bourgeois society, to eat one’s cake and have it too, whereas the revolutionary proletariat seeks to abolish this society. The ideology of democratic socialism bursts like a soap bubble upon the slightest contact with the real world.

Democracy, on the foundation of bourgeois production relations, has given us the world we see today—the very same world which the democratic socialists condemn as undemocratic. In order to change this world, democracy will not be enough; no simple “mechanism of organization” can guarantee the success of a revolution in the social relations of mankind. Rather, what is needed is a proletarian revolution, one which deprives the bourgeoisie of all participation in political life and uses its dictatorial grip on power to abolish by force the basis for capitalist exploitation. This will not take place until the proletariat has learned to stand on its own two feet and fight for its own class objectives; until, in other words, it has freed itself from the distracting influence of the petty bourgeoisie and its ideologues, who want only to enlist workers as deluded foot soldiers. The democratic socialists are prime examples of such ideologues, and therefore, in addition to being wrong, are harmful to the workers’ movement. The practical experience of the failures of the present workers’ movement will inevitably compel workers to gain this theoretical consciousness and sever ties with the petty bourgeoisie and its organizations. The practical experience of the consequential success of the workers’ movement will ensure that the petty bourgeoisie will never regain its hold upon that movement, so long as the workers stay true to their own independent position, that of communism.

Europe’s Decrepit Stalinist Parties Fail to Surprise on Ukraine

Little has brought out so nakedly and egregiously the bourgeois and anti-revolutionary nature of the so-called socialist and communist parties than the war in Ukraine. Many of these parties in Europe, some of which we will focus on here, have pledged their support neither for the Ukrainian war effort, nor the Russian—acting as if they are bravely defying their country’s official line (which generally consists of military and economic aid to Ukraine, staunch public support for the country, and the condemnation and sanctioning of Russia), they forge a path ostensibly between support to either actor in what they often correctly describe as an inter-imperialist war. However, the character of these exhortations against support for Ukraine is not the revolutionary defeatism which sums up the communist position on such conflicts. Rather, it takes the character of something less than Lazzari’s old formula of “neither support nor sabotage” in regards to the war effort. Using the language of humanitarian neutrality, rather than proletarian revolution, they argue against supporting either side, and for bourgeois peace—and frequently this neutrality is a veil beneath which tacit support is offered to their “side” in the war.

This attitude can be found across the parties and organizations which call themselves communist or socialist and which claim to represent the interests of the working class. Four examples from various European countries will be given here, to illustrate the widespread adoption of these views as regards the war in Ukraine.

The Communist Party of Spain (PCE) “calls for an immediate cessation of all military operations initiated by Russia in Ukraine, and will support all initiatives that promote a peaceful and definitive solution to resolve a shared security of Ukraine and Russia outside of military logic and responses.” The same statement contains the practical demand that “Europe needs to move towards a Shared Security System that overcomes the logic of the cold war, initiates verifiable disarmament processes and manages to become a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Spain should not be part of this conflict and should support intense diplomatic initiatives to put an end to Russian aggression and contribute to the construction of a Continental Shared Security System”, as well as advocating for “an International Conference under the auspices of the UN and the OSCE [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe] to build a Shared Security that gives security to Ukraine, Russia and all European people.”

These positions and demands are not accompanied by any mention of, or indeed action tending towards, the authentically communist position—

that of revolutionary defeatism, that the communist party must actively work against its own country’s effort in the imperialist war (a doctrine that can indeed be applied to military support for Ukraine, and not just to direct intervention in the conflict). Rather, the demands are merely for a negotiated peace between the warring parties. And their proposed methods for achieving this?—To leave it up to the bourgeois states themselves! These ostensible communists will support “all initiatives” which promote a negotiated end to the war, and this must be done through bourgeois mechanisms, as those are the forces in existence capable of bringing about such a settlement. These forces will not, of course, work towards a peace beneficial to the working classes of Ukraine, Russia, and beyond, but will wrangle out a peace most advantageous to the international bourgeoisie, and the various bourgeoisies of those powers who are able to gain the upper hand in the war, and therefore in the peace conference. This position is not even a lack of sabotage of the war effort—it is undeniably aid to the final step of the war effort, the process of establishing the peace most advantageous to the victorious, or more victorious, bourgeoisie that can be found. But the PCE go even further, suggesting that the UN and OSCE, who are of course entirely bourgeois institutions, host the conference which is to bring about an end to the war. Is this party communist, or Wilsonian? And of course, we should not forget their advocacy of a “Continental Shared Security System”, which would ostensibly secure peace in Europe. It is not mentioned, of course, that security cooperation in Europe would lead to nothing more than an intensification of European imperialism—the bourgeois states of the continent will not act in a benevolent manner should peace be established, but rather, they would exploit the lack of danger on the continent to all the more viciously exploit and brutalise the rest of the world in the interests of European and international capital. All of this goes beyond Lazzari’s formula in its heinousness—the position of the PCE is nothing more than the capitulation of an ostensibly communist party, whose doctrine lacks any resemblance to revolutionary Marxism, to entirely bourgeois institutions and aims.

The reprehensible French Communist Party (PCF) goes even further than its Spanish comrades, demanding not just bourgeois negotiations, but sanctions! The party’s national council, in a declaration issued in March 2022, argued that “the economic sanctions taken by the EU and Western countries must be strong enough to twist the arm of Russian political power and its economic and financial backers, and compel Vladimir Putin to an unconditional ceasefire and peace negotiations. The sanctions must not target the Russian people without distinction”. At least in their kindness they explain that they do not wish to starve the Russian populace into submission. Sadly, that is about the best that can be said for this position—the PCF demands not only negotiations, to be managed by the various bourgeois states, and therefore to establish a bourgeois peace, but actually call for sanctions “strong enough” to compel Putin’s regime to make peace. Clearly, this peace will be to the benefit of the Ukrainian, and generally Western, bourgeoisies, as the circumstances under which the war will be ended thanks to this plan will be forcibly created by the imperialist bloc of Europe, the US, and their allies and clients. This disgraceful position is a call to adhere to the war in all but the most explicit, directly military manners in which it is conducted, in a way that can only serve as an auxiliary to those military manners, facilitating the butchery of the proletariat on the battlefields of southern and eastern Ukraine. The PCF also makes similar demands about pan-European cooperation as the PCE, calling, due to the “failure” represented by the outbreak of war in Ukraine, “all European countries to jointly develop a common framework for pan-European cooperation and collective security.” They also make a patriotic demand in favour of France’s bourgeois sovereignty, arguing that “the strategic independence of France, like that of all the member states of the European Union, must be defined and controlled within the framework of cooperation and partnership, the first aim of which must be the preservation of peace and collective security in Europe and internationally.” Imagine that, a party calling itself communist, which aims to prop up the strategic independence of the imperialist European states!

Across the Channel, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) also falls within the bourgeois camp, demanding that UN Peacekeepers be deployed to Ukraine in the wake of a ceasefire agreement (though only with the free consent of both Russia and Ukraine, of course!), and for OSCE observers to return to the country. While differing in specifics, this is much in line with the common position of the revisionist “communist” parties who have abandoned the workers’ revolutionary struggle, including the two parties discussed previously, in that its key focus is not for a transformation of the imperialist war into civil war, nor even for revolutionary defeatism, but rather for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine under the auspices of a bourgeois international security complex, whether that be organised by the UN, Europe, or any other international or supranational organisation or group of States. This line is found throughout the statement in question, as when the question of

Britain specifically comes up, the suggestion made by the CPB is not in any manner connected with socialism or revolution—rather, the party asserts that “the British government should be using its permanent membership of the UN Security Council to work alongside China for peace and a negotiated settlement.” This bizarre demand is comical in its deviation from any sort of Marxist viewpoint, merely hoping that the British State plays the role of mediator in the inter-imperialist war. This statement contains no positions resembling revolutionary defeatism or any other communist policy, and neither does any other communique of the CPB. For a party that was ostensibly formed against the revisionist tendencies of its predecessor (though of course both factions in the split were equally revisionist, each in their own right), this is an especially laughable position to take.

Meanwhile in Portugal, that country’s resident Stalinist party, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), has said little beyond what has already been discussed in relation to the parties above, condemning the EU’s response to the war while stating that the party “considers it urgent to return to the path of respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, of peace and cooperation among peoples.” They also make the remark, almost amusing when coming from an ostensibly communist party, that the Portuguese State’s policy of support for Ukraine’s war effort runs “contrary to the interests of the Portuguese people and the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic”. Oh, this boundless evil! How malevolent must these actions be if they violate the Portuguese constitution, apparently a document communists are bound to respect? These statements were, like all others, unaccompanied by anything resembling a call for an authentically communist policy towards the situation at hand.

These examples are common to the so-called communist parties of Europe which have mired themselves entirely in bourgeois electoralism (nevermind the Stalinism animating all of the parties discussed above) and have thus abandoned any pretence at revolutionary aspirations, or indeed a proletarian program of any kind. Rather, the views of these parties are entirely bourgeois, with merely the thinnest veil of pseudo-Marxist terminology strewn haphazardly over it. In their responses to and policies concerning the war in Ukraine, rather than anything resembling a revolutionary communist approach, we find only bourgeois aims, bourgeois language, and calls for bourgeois peace under bourgeois institutions.

For the Class Union: August 16th Public Sector Strike in Turkey

Toward a General Strike with a Trade Union Front from Below!

The collective bargaining negotiations, which started on August 1 and concern approximately 4 million public workers and 2.5 million retired public workers, continue. The collective bargaining demands of the Islamist regime union Memur-Sen, which says that the lowest salary will rise to 29,700 liras in January 2024, are as follows: for 2024, a 35% increase in the first 3 months, 10% in the second 3 months, 15% in the third 3 months, 10% in the fourth 3 months, including prosperity share in quarterly periods; for 2025, a 25% increase in the first 6 months and 15% in the second 6 months . The fascist regime union Kamu-Sen demanded a 40% increase in the first 6 months of 2024, 30% in the second 6 months and a 10% welfare share on top of the increase given from January. KESK, on the other hand, demanded that the lowest public worker salary be raised to 47,500 liras for big cities and 45,000 liras for other cities. KESK demands that wages be determined based on the poverty line, not the figures of the Turkish Statistical Institute. Accordingly, they demand that the lowest civil servant salary be raised above the poverty line for a family of four, spouse allowance to 3,310 liras, child allowance to 2,220 liras per child, and rent allowance of 7,500 liras in metropolitan cities as well as 5,000 liras in other cities for public laborers who do not own a house.

On August 14, the government announced its first offer. It proposed a 14% raise for the first 6 months of 2024, 9% for the second 6 months, 6% for the first 6 months of 2025 and 5% for the last half of the year. In response, KESK announced that it would go on strike on August 16th. KESK’s general strike comes at a time when class struggles are on the rise in Turkey. Therefore, it would be appropriate to mention the biggest strikes of the recent period.

On July 11th, a one-day national municipal warning strike organized by DISK-affiliated General Labor took place in Turkey. Striking municipal workers in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Mersin, Eskişehir, Aydın, Dersim, Artvin, Kırşehir and possibly other cities took action. The demands are for higher wages and an end to discrimination against workers in municipal companies. In İzmir Metropolitan Municipality alone, there are 18,000 Genel İş members working in two separate municipal companies. DEDAŞ (Dicle Electricity

Distribution Corporation) workers in Northern Kurdistan went on strike on July 21. Workers demonstrated in six provinces (Diyarbakır, Urfa, Mardin, Batman, Siirt and Şırnak) and 70 districts. The largest demonstration took place in the center of Diyarbakır, where about a thousand workers gathered. Workers demanded unionization and better living and working conditions. More than 200 workers were dismissed. Although in previous years Tes-İş (Türk-İş) and Enerji-Sen (DİSK) had members among the workers, no union is currently recognized at DEDAŞ. While Tes-İş has remained silent on the struggle, Enerji-Sen tweeted about the demands and struggles of DEDAŞ workers on July 18 and 19 and held meetings with workers. DEDAŞ pressured the dismissed workers to resign from Enerji Sen and join the regime union Hak İş.

In the last days of July, 18,000 workers of İZELMAN and İZENERJİ companies staged a half-day strike against the İzmir Municipality, followed by a similar strike by other municipality workers (bus drivers, firefighters, kindergarten teachers, etc.) demanding the payment of past rights promised in the contract but not paid by the municipality. The workers, all affiliated to Genel-İş (DİSK), later staged a one-day strike. Among the slogans they chanted was “İzmir metro workers are not alone”, referring to the ongoing strike in the İzmir metro. The 625 İzmir metro workers, members of Demiryol İş (Türk-İş), went on strike indefinitely. The İzmir metro strike was to result in partial gains a few days later.

Workers in the municipalities of Bornova, Buca and Bayraklı in İzmir demanded an additional protocol for their wages, which have been eroded by inflation. In Ankara, workers from Çankaya, Mamak, Etimesgut and Yenimahalle municipalities belonging to different political parties also joined the municipal struggles with demonstrations. In Çankaya Municipality, union officials attacked workers who refused to accept the protocol signed by Genel-İş. In İstanbul, hundreds of workers from the ruling party-controlled Hizmet-İş (Hak İş) in 23 local municipalities organized a demonstration calling for a strike. The heads of Hizmet-İş were forced to criticize the government in their speeches, a rare occurrence in Turkey.

Public sector health workers organized on a platform led by the Health and Social Service Workers’ Union (KESK) decided to go on strike on August 1 and 2. Health workers organized in SES and many other health workers’ unions went on strike in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, Antalya, Muğla, Eskişehir, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Batman and Dersim, mainly in Western metropolitan areas and northern Kurdistan.

Workers in the Gaziantep Başpınar Organized Industrial Zone (OSB) began a strike over low pay. Şireci textile workers went on strike on August 8, demanding a 40% raise against a proposed 34% raise. Seeing that the struggle was spreading, the bosses dismissed 2,000 workers with a text message. The workers then marched towards the city center and were stopped by the police force. The president of the combative textile union BİRTEK-SEN, which is not a member of any confederation, was detained on the complaint of the Şireci boss. The strike resulted in partial but important gains in terms of workers’ material demands. They were also promised that no worker would be fired and that the dismissed workers would be reinstated. The speeches of one of the union representatives who came for the talks praising the boss also drew angry reactions.

What needs to be done to strengthen the struggle under these conditions are the following:

We are confronted by a bourgeoisie that can act as a class in the global sense, using all kinds of legal privileges to usurp our rights, relying on its own capitalist state and its apparatus of violence. We, on the other hand, are unable to act and think as a class with our trade union structures that have become the bosses’ puppets or have been set up by them to control us. The two most fundamental elements that will enable the working class to assume a class identity are the party and the trade union front. Since its foundation, the ICP has been carrying the torch of knowledge that sheds light on the struggle for rights of the working class and the class struggle that will eventually escalate; as a part of the class, it connects the working class globally with the trade union fronts wherever it is present. The organic unity of the class is the only way to world revolution! As time is running out and life is getting heavier and heavier on the shoulders of workers, we are after permanent gains, not gains that melt away in two days!

The way to win is through a trade union front from below that will unite the struggles of workers in both the public and private sectors!

In Brazil, as in Every Country, a Friendlier Government is still not a Friend of the Working Class

In the ten months since Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, commonly referred to as Lula, assumed the presidency of Brazil, Brazilian leftism has been celebrating what they perceive as a triumphant victory over fascism. They championed his electoral campaign, which centered on nostalgia and criticism of Bolsonaro's government, especially its handling of the pandemic and anti-vaccine stance. Bolsonaro's response to his electoral defeat was far from graceful, and his overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois supporters resorted to desperate measures, staging encampments around army headquarters across the country. Bolsonaro maintained an ominous silence for several days, only to later express gratitude to his followers without explicitly acknowledging his electoral loss. Instead, he and his supporters initiated a series of attacks against the electoral system, alleging tampering with the voting machines.

Communists must not be swayed by the democratic façade presented by this supposed victory. In reality, what transpired on January 8th, when these same supporters invaded the Federal Congress, amounted to nothing less than an attempted coup d'état. It is now increasingly apparent, as revealed by investigations conducted by the Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito (CPI), that this event was meticulously orchestrated by the Army High Command and financed by businessmen who mobilized supporters to Brasília.

The leftist establishment seems to have pinned all its hopes on the possibility of arresting Jair Bolsonaro, echoing the fervent desire of American leftists to see Donald Trump behind bars after the events of January 6th. This fixation on individuals as the root of all problems, whether Bolsonaro or Trump, is a perilous illusion which diverts the working class's attention from the source of all problems facing the working class: the capitalist system.

Lula's government, despite its grandiose promises of social rights and an improved quality of life for Brazilian workers, is unlikely to fulfill these commitments. This is not due to Lula's personal shortcomings, but because bourgeois democracy, by its very nature, is incompatible with genuine socialist change. Lula's ascent to power did not challenge the capitalist order; instead, it aimed to manage it more efficiently. The capitalist system remains fundamentally intact, with the interests of the bourgeoisie still in power.

The workers' movement in Brazil, much like in any other nation, should not place reliance on a single leader. The strength of the working class lies in collective organization, not in the charm of an individual figure. Putting faith in leaders who do not fundamentally challenge the capitalist order only serves to paralyze the masses and restrict the potential for substantial change.

It is vital to recognize that only the proletariat, organized under the banner of the Communist Party, can lead the international struggle against capitalism. The working class must unite across borders, transcending nationalistic divisions that serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. Lula's government, with its alliances and friendships with right-wing factions, does not—indeed, it never could—provide a genuine alternative to the capitalist system and operate within the confines of bourgeois politics.

A glaring example of Lula's alignment with the bourgeois establishment is his decision to appoint his own lawyer, Zanin, as a minister of the Supreme Court. Zanin's track record on the Court has consistently been reactionary, voting against the interests of the working class. This move exemplifies how Lula's government prioritizes maintaining a semblance of unity with the right rather than championing the cause of the workers.

Lula's cozy relationships with right-wing elements not only undermine the potential for meaningful change but also paralyze the masses. The illusion of progress created by his government serves to pacify the working class, deflecting their attention from the underlying issues of capitalism that continue to exploit and oppress them.

The Brazilian workers must exercise caution to avoid falling for the democratic illusions propagated by Lula's government. Whether Bolsonaro is in power or not, the fundamental structures of capitalism and bourgeois democracy remain untouched. Genuine change can only come through the organized power of the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party. Relying on leaders who do not challenge the capitalist order will only perpetuate the exploitation and misery of the Brazilian working class. It is high time for the workers of Brazil to transcend the illusions of bourgeois democracy and join the international struggle to dismantle capitalism once and for all.

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS OF CLASS TRADE UNIONISM DISCUSSED AT A MEETING OF THE CLA

On Sunday 5 March in Genoa the Coordinamento Lavoratori e Lavoratrici Autoconvocati (Self-convoked Workers' Committee held another meeting at the Circolo dell' Autorita' Portuale (Port Authority Club), on the subject of "health, safety and repression in the workplace and at the regional level". This matter is now all the more relevant given the recent rail disasters in Greece and the United States (see articles in Il Partito Comunista No. 421 on both of these disasters. The one on the Ohio disaster has been translated into English, and can be found in issue 51 of The Communist Party).

Various trade union militants addressed the meeting, giving speeches which were useful and interesting in terms of their quality and their variety. Following the opening speech, the first to speak was the mother of one of the victims of the Viareggio train derailment, which happened on June 29, 2009, resulting in 32 deaths and 26 injuries.. It was a speech in which pain and anger gave rise to a lucid and courageous line of argument, explaining how the struggle for health and safety, which is also of concern in those incidents that occur outside the workplace—as happened, tragically, in Viareggio—is bound to see workers actively involved. Take for example the activity of the families of the victims of that railway disaster, who took up the cause of the railway workers—just as the relatives of the victims of industrial accidents need to help workers overcome any passivity, fear, resignation, and divisions between them.

The opening speech was given by one of our comrades. The transcript given here is however slightly longer than the speech itself, which had to be truncated due to time constraints, and which can be viewed on the Facebook page of the CLA, along with the other speeches.

Subsequent speeches were given by:

- A railway worker from the Coordinamento Macchinisti Cargo, who related his experience in this organism of transport trade union struggle within the trade union organizations—one which focuses principally on safety, and which has already promoted 8 national strikes;
- The mother of Emanuella, the 21-year-old young woman who lost her life in the Viareggio derailment;
- A docker from the Genoa CGIL, Representative of the Workers for Safety, who—in addition to expressing his agreement with the opening speech—talked about his experiences in the workplace as regards safety, something the dockworkers feel particularly strongly about; two dockers died on February 10 last year, one at Gioia Tauro, one at Trieste.

- A leader of the Genoan SI Cobas, a worker who retired due to ill health, and who rebutted the opening speech as regards the question of the relationship between the trade union-political milieu and the party-political milieu; he then talked about his activity and the aims of the Rete Nazionale Lavoro Sicuro, which is due to meet on Monday, March 13 in Ravenna, and which has a following among various CLA militants;

- A militant from the 'area di Opposizione' in the Genoa CGIL, who as well as recording how "everything interacts"—that is, how the question of health and safety is linked to wages, job insecurity, the length of the working day and of working life—spoke about the recent local struggle of female workers in the pre-school (from 0 to 6 years old) educational sector.

- A retired railway worker who, adhering to the CLA, related his experiences of the railway workers' Cassa di Resistanza (war chest), an important instrument of solidarity between workers which provides support to trade union militants subjected to the bosses' repression.

- A female worker and CLA supporter working in the health sector, from Massa in Tuscany, who spoke about the dramatic events of the COVID-19 pandemic from the point of view of workers in the sector; with regard to this she proposed a day of mobilization on March 18 in memory of the workers in the health sector who died of COVID. Further, she insisted that "there can be no humanization of the hospitals if there is no humanization of the working conditions", and that this must begin with the recruitment of more staff. She concluded by mentioning that she had been repressed by the bosses but had been supported by the Cassa di resistenza Ferroviari.
- Another CLA comrade from the CGIL area in Tuscany: an ex-railwayman who was sacked for his activity supporting the families of the victims of the Viareggio railway disaster.

What is the CLA and what are its fundamental characteristics?

First, we will say what the CLA is not. We do not want to be, to build, or to propose a new trade union acronym.

What we are putting forward is a work proposal: the formation of a network, of a coordinating committee of militants and workers who identify with combative trade unionism (sindacalismo conflittuale), as opposed to collaborationist trade unionism, which supports the national government. We envisage a network which is formed and functions with the aim of favoring unity of action between all of the forces of combative, class-based trade unionism, but one which fully respects the trade union membership and participation in trade union activity of all those who share the CLA's objectives and agree on its role.

The CLA began as a small group of trade union militants from various organizations—from some rank and file unions and the area of opposition in the CGIL—who united on the basis of having identified what we see as a trade union emergency.

Faced with a continual degradation in their living and working conditions, workers are still gripped by a state of passivity and lack of faith in collective action and the unions.

Combative trade unionism has still not found the strength to dispel this state of mind which currently characterizes the working masses, and to roll out movements of general struggle that are capable of putting a stop to the attacks which the bosses and their political regime, through governments of various colors, are continuing to make.

There are, however, positive signs, and rather than underestimating them we should value and appreciate them: the latest one being the demonstration 8 days ago, convoked by the dockworkers of the CALP.

But there is a long way to go between what is being done, and what needs to be done to defend the workers.

We think one of the key elements for overcoming this situation resides in the unity of action between the different organizations, between the forces of combative trade unionism.

We must not, and do not wish to, underestimate the problem by oversimplifying it. But we maintain that such unity of action would be a factor capable of significantly amplifying both the force of the struggles being waged by combative trade unionism and their impact on workers who currently remain passive and do not take part in them.

Let us get to the whys and wherefores of pursuing the objective of unity of action within combative trade unionism.

The first question is whether or not such unity of action should be realized by rank-and-file organs within the combative trade unions, or by their leaders, and if, therefore, in pursuance of that aim, we should rely on the one or the other.

To us it seems clear that the current leaders of the combative unions have not situated themselves well in pursuit of this objective. When such unity of action has been achieved, as it has over the last two years in a few general mobilizations, it has always been contingent, and has achieved a far from definitive result—one, in fact, has rapidly gone into reverse.

Furthermore, unity of action cannot be confined to general mobilization but should rather permeate trade union activity at all levels: in the places of work, in the regions, in the different categories, at the national level, in order to be crowned with unitary, inter-trade, national actions.

As to what has happened over these last two years—from the first strike of the rank-and-file unions/base unions in logistics in June 2021, passing through the general strikes in October 2021, in May 2022 against the war, and on October 2 last year—it seems to us to fully confirm what we had already been saying before this weak new unitary course was set in motion by the leading bodies of rank-and-file trade unionism. That is: that the unity of action of rank-and-file trade unionism will be realized only on the basis of being pushed from below by the most combative and determined workers and militants in these organizations. And it is for this reason that the CLA formed: to unite, coordinate and by this to potentialize trade union militants who, heterogeneously with respect to the organizations they belong to, believe it is necessary to favor a movement that urges them to act together, in the broadest, most extended and most organic way possible.

And yet such action cannot be carried out by ignoring the present leaders of the unions, of the "areas", and of the combative currents: we think it is necessary to appeal to both the rank and file members of the organizations of combative trade unionism, and to their leaders.

There are various reasons for this. First of all, it is important to respect the sense workers and trade union militants have of belonging to their particular organization. When you invite a trade union organization to take part in a joint action you cannot simply ignore their leadership. The latter, in fact, would with good cause find it easier to advise his members not to participate. And members of an organization,

up to a point, have good reasons for feeling they should abide by its decisions. Therefore, calls for joint actions that don't include the formal and substantive involvement of the leaders are often only a crafty way of going through the motions of appealing for unity, knowing perfectly well that they will meet with refusal. The call, the invitation to take part in unitary actions, has to be addressed to the rank and file and to the leadership of the combative trade union organizations in such a way that, if met with a refusal on the part of the leadership, the invitation to the rank and file from outside the trade union organization will carry more weight, and thus be more likely to be received. As for the trade union leaders, they must be co-involved, invited, in order to put them to the test, first and foremost, in full view of their rank and file.

This is a first point on how to pursue unity of action within combative trade unionism, and how the CLA acts and proposes to act; indeed, on how we think all the trade union leaders should act.

However, regarding the latter, we are fully aware that this is not the way things stand at the moment. Long indeed is the list of initiatives that have been promoted with absolutely no reciprocal involvement of other organizations in the given sector of workers, or of crafty calls for unitary action addressed only to the workers of the other organizations, without any previous dialogue with their leaders.

What's more, when after much effort a unitary action is finally decided upon, we are faced with a whole range of other problems. For example, those relating to the organization of demonstrations, as was unfortunately confirmed at the, nevertheless very successful, national demonstration in Rome on December 3 last year.

Now that we have dealt with the issue of the relationship between the rank and file and leadership, a second thorny problem raises its head: how to pursue the goal of unity of action within the sphere of combative trade unionism. Almost always, the fully or partially incorrect behavior of a union's leadership is used as a pretext by the other leaderships for not sticking to a joint course that has temporarily been embarked upon. While reaffirming that we are not naïve and know only too well the many and various ways there are of sowing division, including those in which attempts are made to dissuade, we say that the right way of reacting to such conduct is not to respond "symmetrically", in a like-for-like way. The best favor you can do for a union leadership that does not want to construct a unitary action, and which therefore promotes it in an incorrect way, is to react by supporting its declared objective. Two unions' leaderships who are not inspired by the objective of unity of action but by their reciprocal rivalry, as expressed in their separate actions, find they have a shared interest in that action/reaction which undermines the construction of joint actions.

What the CLA upholds is that the workers within each of the organizations that subscribe to combative trade unionism should signal to their own leadership that it is necessary to break this vicious circle which prevents unitary actions, and promote those actions instead, urging them to resist any action by the other leaders which could potentially sabotage such unity, because the objective of uniting the workers in common actions exceeds in importance all other considerations. The objective of getting workers to act together is more important than any consideration regarding the union leaderships that mobilize only a part of these workers.

It is necessary to support strikes and street rallies even when not directly involved, demonstrating thereby that we are the organization which most coherently and consistently sticks to the practical principle of workers' united action, by showing that we are following it through by not going along with actions that could sabotage it. From acting in such a way, no force that truly subscribes to class unionism has anything to fear and indeed has everything to gain, because it will obtain the workers' appreciation and esteem by showing that it has risen above the small-mindedness of the leaders who have acted in a divisive way.

Let's give a concrete example. In Rome on December 3 last year, there was a great labor demonstration, with almost 10,000 workers proceeding through the streets of the capital, but it was split in two because of disagreements between the leaders. These disagreements kept other forces of class trade unionism away, and thus prevented an even better outcome with regards to the numbers in the mobilization.

It seems that the disagreements were about who should lead the procession. We believe it is best if workers processions are not divided into organizational sections, at least not rigidly, and that the different trades and professions, factories and trade unions should mingle and interact. This happened at the national demonstration in Piacenza, contrary to the mean-spirited machinations of the local public prosecutor against 8 local leaders of the USB and SI Cobas. Workers from the two unions marched along with no clear demarcations between different groups. We think that the workers in both of these organizations should state loud and clear that they don't care about such petty issues and that a much more important issue than who leads the procession is that it should be united and strong; if there are leaders who are so petty that they want to squabble about such things, then let them do it together at the front of the procession. A labor movement that is finally rediscovering its strength will certainly be mature enough to draw its own conclusions about such conduct.

We now come to a third, very important point, which is that of the relationship between union and parties, between trade-union policy and political party policy, using "political" in the strict sense of the word.

One criticism that has often been leveled against us is that we want to keep trade union action and politics separate. To affirm that we could think such a thing certainly does not flatter our intelligence. But more than that, it is a rather sly objection, because our critics know very well that we do not hold such an outdated view. It is indeed very clear that trade union actions have a political value, and that at the heart of every economic struggle is also to be found, at varying levels of intensity, a political struggle.

What the CLA maintains is that each trade union organization should remain distinct from the sphere of politics, which is something very different. We will quickly explain.

Due to the weakness of the workers' movement, we have today workers' parties that are very small, and combative trade unions which in terms of their numerical strength could be considered fairly large in comparison with the workers' parties. To think of obviating this problem by getting the unions to carry out the tasks of a political party is a reaction that is as naïve as it is dangerous because it causes confusion about their respective functions on both sides.

Workers must be able to join a union regardless of the political opinions they hold. If a given union starts propagandizing and mobilizing on behalf of a political party, it damages itself twice over: first of all, the workers within it who hold different political views are made to feel uncomfortable; and secondly, it lays itself open to the propaganda of the collaborationist unions who admonish the workers to keep away from unions which really want to use them for party-political purposes.

But this does not mean that within the unions there is not, or that there should not be, politics or political struggle. It is simply that this contest, this struggle, within the bounds of the trade union must be translated into its policy as a trade union, into a practical line of struggle to be followed.

Engels used to say that "theoretical problems are tomorrow's practical problems". Well, we could say the union is only asking itself about practical problems—that is, they are currently theoretical problems. Within it are being confronted and fought over various courses of practical action.

In any case this choice between different courses of action must always pay due consideration to united action on the part of the workers and their trade union organizations, for without this unity the movement will never acquire that necessary strength to make today's theoretical problems tomorrow's practical problems.

Another aspect of the relationship between trade-union politics and party politics: a trade union front must not allow itself to be adulterated with party bodies or get involved in political fronts. The two areas must remain distinct. Our reasoning is as follows: a front between trade unions interlaced with parties will be sabotaged by those parties that don't adhere to that political front, and therefore by the trade union organizations directed by them. If the trade union front has political bodies mixed in with it, the result will be more opposing trade union fronts, divided along the lines that separate the workers' parties.

There can be only one class trade union front, and one alone, and within it the various parties and groups must confront each other and demonstrate the capacity and maturity to translate their political positions into a coherent and consistent practical course of trade union action.

So what characterizes the CLA, aside from having been formed to promote unity of action among those who subscribe to combative unionism, as well as the ways that it believes necessary in order to promote and achieve such an urgent objective, is that it believes all political militants who are also trade union militants have a duty to the working class to put themselves at the service of the rebirth of the labor movement by making a dual effort. They must both translate their own

party-political positions into a trade-union-political course of action, and also fight for its affirmation at the heart of the trade union struggle while continuing to respect the need for unity of action.

A fourth characterization of the CLA

In the few concrete examples, both positive and negative, which we have provided up to now, we have referred only to rank-and-file trade unionism. But we believe that unity of action is also of concern to combative trade unionism as a whole, which extends beyond the parameter of rank-and-file unionism, and involves combative areas and currents within the CGIL and the groups of combative workers present within it, as well as in other collaborationist unions.

Unity of action between the rank-and-file unions as a general rule is the premise for spreading unity of action beyond them. In its absence the combative currents and areas within the CGIL will understandably have qualms about stepping over their own boundaries, which the majority of that union would like to remain inviolable; that is, the hallowed unity within the CISL and UIL, the cornerstone of collaborationist trade unionism. In the two years of feeble, shaky and incomplete unity of action, the leaders of the rank-and-file unions have never posed the question of extending the unity of action to the combative groups and areas within the CGIL.

The attitude of the CLA when faced with this problem, which is certainly one we don't want to avoid, is that everyone in the CLA is free to have their own opinion on it, but we consider that this knotty issue will only be resolved empirically, on the basis of a labor movement that has rediscovered its strength.

As such, the unity of action of combative trade unionism must be open-ended. That is why we have intervened in various demonstrations promoted by the CGIL, and even on the margins of some of their congresses held by particular categories within the CGIL, promoting to the combative areas within them the line of replacing the collaborationist trade union unity of the CGIL-CISL-UIL with the unity of action of all combative trade unions.

The final point that characterizes the CLA

Unity of action of combative trade unionism is not an end in itself but a means: a fundamental instrument for obtaining, to the maximum degree possible, the objective of the unification of workers' action.

The criticism that has been leveled against us of just wanting to get as many trade unions to sign up as possible is as superficial as the intention behind it: to sow political and trade union division.

To promote the maximum unity of workers when engaged in a struggle it is right and necessary to directly address the masses as well, but the role and the function carried out by the labor movement's organizations is essential.

Consistent with the aim of achieving workers' unity in the trade union struggle, the CLA has become the promoter of another practical and coherent line that is consistent with and characteristic of it: maintaining the support of the rank-and-file unions—in a unitary way within them—for strikes promoted by the CGIL, CISL and UIL.

Strikes shouldn't be sabotaged, but reinforced. The best way to remove the control of collaborationist trade unionism over the working class is to extend the strikes and to radicalize them. The shifting of workers towards the methods and the demands of combative trade unionism is more to do with considerations of force and instinct than intellectual decisions. When the workers feel stronger they will be more open to engaging in more radical methods of struggle. Therefore, contrary to appearances, to bring the forces of rank-and-file trade unionism out in support of strikes promoted by CGIL-CISL-UIL is not about supplying further grist to the mill of regime trade unionism, but is the best way of fighting it.

With this we have given an account of the points characterizing the CLA and what it is proposing to the workers and militants of class trade unionism.

In conclusion, we do not want it to be thought that we believe that unity of action of combative trade unionism is some kind of miracle-cure to the weakness of the working class, but we do consider that it is a fundamental instrument for remedying the current situation.

It must be practiced and pursued in a way that is not contingent, but organic and enduring, at all levels of trade union action, from the lowest to the highest and most general.

It seems to us that we can learn a lot from what has been happening in France over recent weeks. Here again we do not want to trivialize things. There are major differences between the French and Italian trade union movements. The workers have

kept up a high level of combativeness. The CGT, which for years was comparable to the CGIL in Italy, and in part still is, has within it entire trade and professional federations that are combative—like the chemists, who a few months ago promoted an all-out strike, of over twenty days' duration, in the country's six refineries. To confront the new attack on pensions by the Macron government, an inter-trade union agreement, an intersindicale, was forged which also included the CFDT, the most collaborationist trade union in France.

For us, in Italy, we do not think we should propose an intersindicale with the CISL. However, between the forces of combative trade unionism, it is absolutely necessary. This is the CLA's work proposal: to promote this objective within and across our organizations.

Firm Points of Trade Union Action

from Il Programma Comunista, issue no 19, 1962

For the hard vicissitudes of world proletarian battles only Marxist offensive theory is the inflexible directive that binds the great traditions to a tomorrow of powerful rescue.

Dwelling on the intense activity carried out in the early post- WW1 period by the II Soviet group in workers' economic organizations and in the heat of fierce class battles, the speaker on History of the Communist Left (see the last issue of Il Programma) bridged a direct connection with the theme of the Party's trade union action.

In June 1920, at the conference of the Abstentionist Fraction, this action was outlined as follows: "The Party conducts its activity and propaganda among the proletarian masses and works to polarise them around it, particularly at those times when they are set in motion in reaction against the conditions capitalism imposes upon them, and especially within organisations formed by proletarians to defend their immediate interests. Communists therefore penetrate proletarian cooperatives, unions, factory councils, and form groups of communist workers within them. They strive to win a majority and posts of leadership so that the mass of proletarians mobilised by these associations subordinate their action to the highest political and revolutionary ends of the struggle for communism". Alien to any improvisation, with strict continuity of program that's at the same time continuity of action, we move today – apart from the limitations of a situation far removed from the heated 1919- 20 – in the same track, which is the very one of the Communist Manifesto of 1848 and the General Statutes of the First International Workingmen's Association of 1864.

Recalling theory

When it came, certainly not to inaugurate a "new" activity, but to give an initial beginning of coordination to an activity which the Party had always claimed as its own, even if the general external situation imposed on it narrow and occasional limits, our groups and sections were reminded of the classical Marxist formulations of the process by which proletarians are impelled by the economic struggle and its imperious demands to overcome the artificial barriers of interest and category created by the capitalist regime of production and to give themselves a general unitary organization, which historically finds its first expression in the trade leagues, the immediate form of the "growing (but always threatened with corrosion by competition among workers) solidarity of the workers", and its ultimate crowning achievement in the political party; that "independent political party, opposed to all other parties constituted by the properred classes", in which and only in which "the proletariat can act as a class".

This process is not the consequence of consciousness; it's a real and physical fact, which has as its scene not the "brains" of men considered individually or collectively, but the clash between classes, which originates from material economic determinations and continually surpasses them; and has for its historical content the making and refinement of weapons of battle, of instruments of open struggle against bourgeois society; as appears most clearly to anyone who looks not just at the tamed organizations of today, nor, conversely, at those born or to be born in the fire of the great revolutionary battles, but even only at the struggles and organisms of proletarian economic struggle in the early days of the workers' movement, when Marx could call workers' trade unions "schools of civil war" and Engels smiled at the astonishment of bourgeois economists at the sight of workers sacrificing weeks and weeks of wages to defend in the streets and in clashes with the police and the army the bodies created to defend the level reached by the wage and, if possible, raise it; when, in short, the immediate organizations had, even in normal times, what today would be called a gigantic "revolutionary charge", and this was not – as it will never be even in phases of high social tension – the product of the acquisition of a consciousness of the ultimate aims and objectives of proletarian motion, but of the immediate material necessities of its unfolding.

This applies to the class as well as to the individual; the relation is not consciousness first and action later, but rather economic drive first, action later, consciousness finally, and consciousness that is realized not in the individual, but in the party, which the militants, however few they may be (and they will always be a minority of the working class) join not because they have previously acquired a complete consciousness of the program but by a selection process

that took place in the struggle and through the struggle, and only in the course of their party militia will they be able, again not as individuals but as an organized body, to "overthrow praxis" and make revolutionary theory the sine qua non in revolutionary action.

Just as the process of organizing the proletariat as a class is not, on the other hand, a gradual evolutionary fact, a slow and progressive maturing; it's a tumultuous succession of qualitative leaps corresponding to violent and often bloody clashes between classes, through which the proletariat of the destitute overcomes in a single stroke the more coarse and immediate forms of organization, divided by locality and sector, discontinuous in time and space, breaks through the narrow limits of the parochial and company, subordinates the personal, local and corporate interests of individuals and groups to ever broader interests and aims, until in the political party every boundary of group, category, nation is obliterated and every act obeys the imperatives of the ultimate and general aims of the class.

A dialectical process that has nothing to do with the idealistic interpretation of history, whereby each stage is annulled by the next and, having reached the summit of "consciousness", humanity enters once and for all the "reign of reason".

The party, itself a product of material determinations, is a battle order, which, possessing superior theoretical and organizational weapons, is called upon not only to defend them against the converging attacks of capitalist society and even against the nagging of those material determinations to which it owes its life, but to carry them as instruments of decisive action within the immediate organizations into which they continually flow, driven by the pressure of the facts of capitalist society and the motion of incessant proletarianization of the middle classes, new levels of wage- earners; the party is therefore called to radiate therein what, in periods of reflux of class struggle, may be only the "light" of the historic revolutionary program but which is destined to become, in fiery periods of social conflict, the great "magnetic field" of polarization of all the subversive forces unleashed from the underground of the bourgeois social and political order.

The party is neither the Spirit hovering above the waters of biblical mythology, watching from on high the confused moving and stirring of a humanity imprisoned in the fetters of the flesh, nor the Demiurge who, at the X hour, descends into the arena and single-handedly changes the face of the world: it's a material force whose decisive action in the great unfoldings of history is possible on the sole condition of meeting with the gigantic thrust that comes "from below", raw and "uncultivated" as a natural and physical phenomenon, not directed and not determined by conscious ideologies or distinct concepts (Engels 1890: "it will be the non- socialists who will make the socialist revolution"), but led irresistibly to move on the terrain of the program which, even in its darkest hours, the party will have been able to proclaim and defend against all and in spite of all, in the ranks and organizations of the wage- earners struggling against capital.

There's no contradiction (except for those who have understood nothing of the materialist dialectic) between the superb proclamation of the theses of the Third International on the role of the communist party in the proletarian revolution: "The Communist Party differs from the whole working class because it has an overall view of the whole historical road of the working class in its totality and because at every turn in this road it strives to defend not just the interests of a single group or a single trade, but the interests of the working class in its totality", and the task which the same theses assign to it of working within the proletarian economic organizations (and they specify: "The task of communism does not lie in accommodating to these backward parts of the working class, but in raising the whole of the working class to the level of the communist vanguard"), since "Every class struggle is a political struggle. The aim of this struggle, which inevitably turns into civil war, is the conquest of political power. Political power can only be seized, organized and led by a political party, and in no other way". Or, in other words, "The class struggle of the proletariat demands a concerted agitation that illuminates the different stages of the struggle from a uniform point of view and at every given moment directs the attention of the proletariat towards specific tasks common to the whole class. That cannot be done without a centralized political apparatus, that is to say outside of a political party".

Practical tasks of the movement

The connection between economic struggle and political struggle, between wage- earning masses moving under the impetus of immediate interests and the party fighting for the ultimate goals of communist revolution, and, as a logical corollary, our active presence in trade union organizations and workers' agitations, is thus a matter of principle; and in reaffirming it we merely reiterate one of our "characteristic theses", enunciated at the Florence meeting in December 1951: "The Party recognises without any reserve that not only the situation which precedes insurrectional struggle but also all phases of substantial growth of Party influence amongst the masses cannot arise without the expansion between the Party and the working class of a series of organisations with short term economic objectives and with a large number of participants. Within such organisations the party will set a network of communist cells and groups, as well as a communist fraction in the union. (...) Although it could never be free of all enemy influence and has often acted as the vehicle of deep deviations; although it is not specifically a revolutionary instrument, the union cannot remain indifferent to the party, who never gives up willingly to work there, in this distinguishing itself clearly from all other political groups".

If thus today we seek to extend and better coordinate this work, it's not because some "new and original idea" has passed through the head of anyone, but because the general situation, the development, albeit disorganized, of class struggles, and the process of consolidation of the party network required us to translate, into as continuous and systematic action as possible, a task recognized as permanent even when "events, and not the desire or the decision of militants" limited it (as they still partly limit it) "to a small part of its activity". It was the necessary response to questions that came to us, on the periphery as well as in the center of the party, from the ongoing agitations; a response we could give on a larger scale than in the past precisely because, in the long and not yet completed phase of "re- establishment of the theory of Marxist communism", which occupied the last decade of our organizational life, the relations between our ideologically strengthened network and albeit slender strata of proletarians, were widening and strengthening. Not a "turning point", then, but the strengthening of a work that never stopped even when external circumstances, beyond the will or desires of even the most combative and enthusiastic militant, limited its range.

The infamous policy of fragmenting the struggles of such militant categories as metalworkers or agricultural wage workers re- proposed and re- proposes to the revolutionary party the imperative of reaffirming – before, during and after agitations that not infrequently reach the level of open and direct clashes between proletarians and the forces of law and order backed by union piecards – the fundamental principles of class struggle. To remind workers that no economic victory is lasting and doesn't serve the general interests of the class if it doesn't result in growing solidarity among the exploited; that therefore, the abandonment of the general strike without time limits and without distinction of factory, sector and category, while it doesn't even serve to wrest immediate economic gains, crumbles and destroys the future and general chances of the proletarian attack on the capitalist regime of exploitation; that the "tactics" of articulate bargaining, of demanding additional qualifications by category, of productivity bonuses and company incentives, of striking for ridiculously short times, increases instead of lessening the competition among workers and their isolation from each other; that the theory of the "apoliticism of the union" actually conceals the union's abandonment of class politics in favor of a policy of backing up central bourgeois power; and that there are no "particular""issues to which a solution can be found outside the general vision of the historical interests of the working class.

For this answer to be (now, and increasingly more in the future) given by the whole party to the entire array of forces of opportunism, it became necessary to add to the central party organ, Il Programma Comunista, a supplement of a central bulletin of programmatic and battle character, Spartaco, while in various groups and sections the long work of connecting to proletarians in struggle bore positive fruit and made it urgent to coordinate the general Party activity according to clear and uniform directives.

This coordination did not and does not set itself goals that the situation not only in Italy but (and especially) internationally forbids: it does not set itself to achieve rapid and radical shifts in the direction that a forty- year period of super-opportunism has inevitably imprinted on the albeit lively struggles of entire sectors of the industrial and agricultural proletariat; it does not dream of short- term possibilities of liberating the trade union from the tutelage of counter-revolutionary parties, even if, locally and for a short time, it doesn't exclude (as has in fact occurred) that the leadership of agitations and even of workers' economic bodies be taken and kept by our comrades. It aims to weave and strengthen our network of physical connection with the proletariat by making use of a slowly recovering situation, but in the full knowledge that the fruits of this methodical and, as is our custom, stubborn work can and must be reaped only at an advanced and certainly not soon-to-be stage of the workers' movement.

At the meeting in Rome, April 1, 1951, it was reaffirmed, "The correct Marxist praxis asserts that the consciousness of both the individual and the mass follow action; and that action follows the thrust of economic interest. Only within the class party does consciousness, and, in given circumstances, the decision to act, precede class conflict; but this possibility is organically inseparable from the molecular interplay of the initial physical and economic impulses. (...) According to all the traditions of Marxism and of the Italian and International Left working and struggling inside the proletarian economic organizations is one of the indispensable conditions for successful revolutionary struggle; along with the pressure of the productive forces on production relations, and with the correct theoretical, organizational and tactical continuity of the political party".

To separate these three inseparable terms, to isolate the possibilities for success that the theoretical and organizational strengthening of the party on the one hand, and the work and struggle in economic associations on the other, offer us from the objective reality of the maturing process of internal contradictions in capitalist society, would be to undermine precisely that theoretical, organizational and tactical continuity that the party has painstakingly reconstructed in recent years. As therefore must be fought with the utmost energy any attitude of aristocratic disinterest in struggles for economic demands, any claim – even if inspired by a healthy fear of taking opportunist paths – that the party

merely proclaims and defends "general" postulates while refusing to go down to the examination of "particular" questions (as if there were "particular" questions that could be isolated from the "general" questions of the proletarian movement, or vice versa, and as if the separation of its "areas" were not precisely the dominant characteristic of opportunism), so must the opposite claim be vigorously combated, even when inspired by generous enthusiasm, to assign to the party tasks that the actual development of class struggles prevents it from fulfilling, or to set itself goals that can only take shape and substance thanks to events of international relevance (by which the very development of the international revolutionary party is conditioned).

Let's then take care to carry out our work of penetration and proselytizing among the proletarian masses serenely, methodically, continuously, without allowing ourselves to be caught up either in discouragement over failures that we must foresee and discount in advance, or in the hysterics of "action for the sake of action", and above all without indulging in the illusion that the "times" of revolutionary recovery can be accelerated by means of tactical recipes or organizational expedients that isolate the work conventionally labeled as "trade union work" from the general and political work of the movement.

It's a responsibility we are proud to have finally been able to take upon ourselves, and which we must carry forward in the knowledge that we are fulfilling not a national but an international task, and that we are working for the future of a proletarian movement and a class party that have and recognize no time limits or State borders.

LIFE OF THE PARTY

United Auto Workers – as you can read elsewhere in this newspaper, the United Auto Workers trade union is on strike. In its commitment to bring the principles of class unionism to the working class the ICP has joined pickets in the states of Colorado; Georgia; Missouri, Minnesota; 2 locations in Ohio; Oregon; and Texas.

On September 15th, auto workers from General Motors and Stellantis in the United Auto Workers union (UAW) went on strike. After study and analysis comrades compiled a lively leaflet applauding the 18,300 UAW workers currently on strike for taking strike action against the auto giants, reminding workers of their militant history, the importance of spreading the strike to other workplaces and sectors, stating the necessity of the International Communist Party in the fight for the emancipation of the working class, and calling for the building of a class unionist curent and encouraging workers to join the Class Struggle Action Network. Comrades have been reacquainting each other and skilling up for conducting these interventions so as to show up as principled communists in shared struggle on the lines. A few months ago, a training for intervention work was made that has continued to be a tool for acquainting comrades in the US to that work. So far Party comrades and sympathizers in 9 states have attended picket lines and distributed Party and sometimes Class Struggle Action Network propaganda.

New Publications

There are several new ICP publications available from cpublishers.com

First is ***The Communist Party in the Tradition of the Left***. A collection of readings which are fundamental to our Party.

Second is Issue 51 ***of our Journal, Communist Left***, which contains historic writings of our current as well as reports from our party's general meetings.

Speaking Tour

There was a short ICP speaking tour in September, with stops in Chicago, Olympia, WA and Portland, OR. Talks were given on Organic Centralism, the Party's positions on Trade Unions and the History of the Party

A recording of the central talk; "On Marxism and the History of the Communist Left" is available on the ICP's English webpage

INFORMAL MEETINGS.

Meet Local ICP over coffee and casually discuss the party or issues

Charlotte, NC - Oct 7th, Mecklenburg Library South Center: 5801 Rea Road: 3 pm

Chicago, IL - Oct 7th, Bourgeois Pig Cafe, 738 W Fullerton Ave: 2pm

Denver, CO - Oct, 14th; at Copper Door Cafe, 2890 Fairfax St: 11 am.

Minneapolis - Oct 7th, Uptown Diner, 2548 Hennepin Ave: Noon

Milwaukee, WI - October 23rd, Cream City Social Eatery, Riverwest, 432 E Center St

New Brunswick, NJ - Oct 7th, Barnes and Noble, 100 Somerset St 12 noon

Portland, OR – Oct 7th, at Honey Latte Cafe, 1033 SE Main St: 11 am

Yakima, WA – Oct 6th, at Northtown Coffeehouse, 32 N Front St: 6 pm

Meetings can be arranged in: Albuquerque, Akron/Cleveland, Bethlehem, New York City, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Raleigh, Ventura.

The Communist Party is printed and produced by
Associazione La Sinistra Comunista – Casella Postale 1157 – 50121 Firenze – Italy
I.C.P. Editions – c/o 96 Bold Street – Liverpool L1 4HY – United Kingdom
C.L. Publishing – POBox 14344. – Portland,OR 97214. – U.S.A

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