

THE 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

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NEW WORKER COMBATIVITY IN THE UNITED STATES

For about 3 years now, the United States has been seeing a resurgent labor movement, with more extensive, frequent, hard-line strikes and a growing number of workers moving to organize themselves in unions. Such a situation is seemingly far removed from that experienced by the working class in Italy, which remains in a state of passivity and resignation. But even in the US the labor movement is coming out of decades of deep decline, even worse than what we are witnessing in Italy, not having known the struggles that in various sectors—in the railroads, airports, trams, schools, hospitals, fire brigades, metalworking—gave birth to rank-and-file unionism in the 1980s and 1990s, and, after 2010, in logistics.

This comforts the militants of combative trade unionism, as it confirms that, in capitalism, the class struggle is irrepressible, and that even from the most difficult conditions the proletariat will be compelled to return to struggle and organize, out of the very necessity of defending their lives, and on this material basis will tend to know and embrace, at its most advanced, the party of revolutionary communism.

In recent months the US federal government has directly intervened to force an agreement and avert a railroad workers' strike ("Among US Railroaders Grows Will to Struggle") and a dockers' strike. But there are many other categories which were or are still in ferment: school workers, healthcare workers, Amazon warehouse workers and couriers, railroad workers, metalworking factories (General Motors, Volvo, John Deere, New Holland, Ford, Stellantis), hotel workers, McDonald's and Walmart workers, all the way to workers in the film and television industries.

The epicenter of this resurgent labor movement is the massive Californian city of Los Angeles.

AT UPS

On August 1, the largest U.S. strike in decades, that of over 300,000 UPS workers, was supposed to begin. According to some

commentators in the bourgeois press, it was not since the 1959 steelworkers' strike that a mobilization on such a scale had occurred. By June, 97% of voting UPS workers, members of the Teamsters union, had come out in favor of a strike.

Our comrades wrote a flier to spread on the picket lines well in advance, so it could be printed and mailed to the cities where we are present—which was not easy, especially since the announcement of the strike had the effect of increasing and clogging postal traffic in anticipation of a stoppage.

In Portland, Oregon, where in the past few months our comrades, along with other union militants, have formed a committee to unite workers' struggles called the Class Struggle Action Network (CSAN), solidarity action was also expected at the USPS, the United States Postal Service.

But 6 days before the start of the strike, UPS returned to the bargaining table and an agreement was reached. Thus, a national strike was called off for the 3rd time in a year. The contract was approved through secret ballot by 86.3% of voters, with 58% of eligible workers participating.

The leadership of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)—which claims 1.4 million members among drivers, warehouse workers and other occupations in the logistics sector—called it a historic victory. The contract is ameliorative and was won without an hour's strike and only the threat of implementation.

If one follows the principle of "maximum profit with minimum effort", one can only agree with the Teamsters' leadership. But this principle is valid for the bourgeoisie, not the working class, which will be forced both into an extremely hard struggle to maintain its achievements over time and to free itself from the increasingly intolerable oppression of capitalism. For this reason, for workers to struggle is even more important than the results achieved—or not achieved—by such struggle; however, these obviously cannot be

neglected.

The UPS workers' strike could not only have led to a better result than the threat of strike action alone, but more importantly it would have provided additional fuel for the revival of the labor movement in the US and internationally by giving an example of a strike of hundreds of thousands of workers to tens of millions of other proletarians, from the US, Canada, Mexico and around the world.

Of course, even so, the strength of the working class was demonstrated, if in far lesser terms.

UPS
Vote NO with the strike!
No worker must be left behind!

Teamsters

On July 25, the Teamsters union reached a tentative agreement with UPS. The agreement betrayed the UPS workers and did not keep its promises. The Teamsters' opportunist leadership signed a contract that leaves behind not only part-time UPS workers, but workers in the entire logistics sector, including parcel services, FedEx and Amazon.

The IBT had a chance to raise wages and employment conditions across the industry, and blew it.

Teamsters President Sean O'Brien promised that no workers—especially not part-time workers—would be left behind. The tentative agreement leaves more than 180,000 part-time workers without the option of moving to full-time, with relative wages. Only 7,500 will move to full-time. And yet, on July 16, in the Teamsters' update webinar for UPS members, O'Brien declared that "this is unacceptable, UPS cannot give our part-timers crumbs, they must reward these people".

What was the cause of this sudden change of pace from the IBT leadership? The answer would seem to involve President Biden, who apparently pressured the union to settle the dispute a week before the deadline, in order to "avoid economic shocks". If true, this would be the third time the Biden administration has intervened to halt a major strike, following the

International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) dockworkers' strike and the railroad strike. One after another, the regime unions are acting as agents of the Democratic Party within the labor movement—a party that proudly proclaims itself "the true party of law and order"!

The concessions are truly unsatisfactory, and even these would not have been achieved without the workers' preparation for a strike, particularly part-time workers. It is precisely these part-time workers—who, as O'Brien said, are so numerous that "UPS cannot possibly hire enough scabs" to replace them—who IBT management has left behind. The request for \$25 as base pay was not met. There is nothing in the contract to eliminate forced overtime for part-time workers. UPS can still force part-timers to work nine and a half hours a day.

What will happen now? With SAG-AFTRA ready to strike for months to come and smaller strikes spreading like wildfire across the nation, it is time to strike while the iron is hot. UPS workers have an opportunity to set an example for all workers in the United States. For consistency, but also from a tactical standpoint, we support an immediate strike through a vigorous campaign to override the opportunists and their methods. Staying on the offensive and using the same bargaining tactics as the bosses by playing hardball not only guarantees gains for workers, but also sets an example for the struggles of others. This builds working-class unity and greater strength.

Of course, we realize that the conditions of the labor movement are such that it remains normal practice for strikes to be put to a vote. Under the current system, voting takes place online, where the voter remains anonymous and isolated.

Workers, organize with your comrades, demand that open discussion take place in the workplace and that voting take place in assemblies. Do whatever you have to do, and do it en masse!

Remember that the "best and final" offer is a bluff. They will not share their accumulated wealth without a fight. It was only through class struggle, in fact, that the victory of the 1997 UPS strike could be realized. Are you willing to participate in the battle to decide the conditions of your work and your life? Or will you let UPS and its opportunist

leaders keep you stuck "in your place"?

The United Auto Workers

In mid-August, 97% of voting workers of the United Auto Workers (UAW) came out in favor of a 10-day strike in the factories of the country's three largest auto companies—General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis—beginning September 14, if an agreement deemed satisfactory by the union was not reached beforehand. An agreement was not reached, but in the first few days UAW management limited itself to calling only 13,000 workers at 3 factories to strike: Wentzville, MO; Toledo, OH; and Wayne, MI.

Since September 25, it has extended the strike to some 40 logistics warehouses of the three automakers, bringing the number of strikers to 18,300. But in the entire American auto industry, the UAW numbers about 146,000 workers.

The union's demands are appreciable, but not as radical as the bourgeois press wants them to appear: for example, a 46% average wage increase and a 4-day work week.

UAW workers move for class unionism!

The International Communist Party salutes the United Auto Workers unionists who have decided to strike against the three major auto companies in the country.

In the early days after its founding in the 1930s, the UAW distinguished itself by radical strikes. Recall the struggle at GM by thousands of workers in Michigan, who occupied the Fisher Body plant in Cleveland, repelling the scabs for weeks. When the bourgeois State used armed force, wave after wave of workers pushed them back. But their real strength was the spread of the struggle beyond the confines of the factory. The strike spread to 17 GM plants within 44 days. As a result of this generalization of the struggle, the company was forced to capitulate.

Then, as now, our strength lies in acting as a united class, taking action beyond the boundaries of individual workplaces, companies, trades, and sectors. It was by these methods that workers historically wrested a decent standard of living from the hands of our class enemies.

However, after World War II, opportunist union leaderships, in collaboration with the bosses and the capitalist State, transformed

unions into pathetic associations similar to corporate human resource offices.

Auto industry workers, once held up as an example of middle-class American comfort, have now been driven back to distinctly proletarian living conditions. Everywhere the vacuous “American dream” has given way to the depressing reality of a rotting capitalist society.

The ruling class is increasingly pushing workers around the world toward a new world war, a new chauvinist bloodbath, in an attempt to save its social and political order from ever-deepening crisis.

Around the world, however, the working class is beginning to wake up, to question the collaborationist union leaderships, resuming the use of its great weapon—the strike. We salute the over 18,000 UAW workers currently on strike!

But the strike must keep growing in order to give workers the strength they need to win this battle. Some unions, such as Teamsters Section 299, have pledged to instruct their members not to violate picket lines. UAW workers must demand and force the union leadership to call all 146,000 members in the auto industry to strike.

We call on the workers not to accept a compromising agreement obtained without the full mobilization of their forces.

The UAW leadership claims that auto workers should receive a wage increase of 46% over a period of 4 ½ years, bringing wages to \$47 per hour from the current rate of \$32. But with such a long-term contract, given the current rate of inflation, at the end of its validity the real value of wages could very well be insufficient once again. Therefore, a reduction in the length of the contract must also be demanded.

Throughout the 1930s and ‘40s, the UAW fought for the reduction of the work week to 40 hours. Now the union leadership is claiming a reduction to 32 hours per week for equal pay. A reduced work week and an increase in overall wages are essential for workers to improve their standard of living. But in order for them to even maintain their current living conditions, a struggle of the appropriate strength must be deployed by extending the strike now!

The working class must overcome an approach to unionism which organizes only 10% of workers in the United States today. The need for a class union that unites all workers in common defense under “one big union”, beyond individual trades and jobs, has been the great aspiration of the labor movement, which recognized the need to centralize unions in order to make concerted attacks on the capitalist class.

Today, we need to promote a practical unity of action among existing unions to

achieve this goal. We need a united front of all the forces of class unionism, uniting the masses of workers in a common struggle, a necessary step toward a future class union.

As an immediate practical step, we call on workers to join other militants of class unionism within the Class Struggle Action Network in the effort to build a pole of class unionism within the labor movement.

For the class union!

Firenze, Italy
Wed. February 21st, 2024

STRUGGLE, ORGANIZATION AND UNITY OF ACTION OF CLASS UNIONISM WILL DEFEND THE LIVES AND HEALTH OF WORKERS

Five dead and three seriously injured is the toll of this umpteenth workers' massacre, a new blood sacrifice shed by the working class on the altar of profit. A massacre that could certainly have been avoided if the rule of economizing on everything, first and foremost on safety, was not in force.

As many as seven of the eight workers involved in the collapse were immigrants, confirming how the working class is an international class and at the same time how useful it is for the bosses to divide and oppose Italian and foreign workers in order to better exploit the entire working class.

Unlike the daily trickle of proletarians who die on the job—at least three a day—the massacre can excite and move the masses, reduced to resignation and indifference by decades of defeats resulting from the renunciatory and treacherous policies of the collaborationist trade unionism of CGIL, CISL and UIL. This is why the press in the hands of the big industrial groups carried out an infamous work of disinformation, trying as long as possible to conceal and reduce the number of workers involved and victims.

The Florence grassroots unionism reacted in the best way to this new dramatic manifestation of exploitation and oppression of the working class, proclaiming a unitary 24-hour provincial general strike for last Monday and a demonstration in front of the Florence Prefecture.

This unitary action must be strengthened and extended to the entire conflictual trade unionism, to the combative areas within the CGIL, because it is the necessary path to restore the workers' confidence in their ability to fight and defend themselves collectively, to get the workers' movement back on its feet and rebuild a true class union, which can only happen in Italy outside and against the regime trade unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL), which have been submitting their policies for decades to the needs of the capitalist economy and the compatibility imposed by this economic regime.

The trade unions rightly denounce the system of contracting and subcontracting and call for stricter laws to punish guilty company managers, as well as for more controls by the safety authorities. But it is not at the judicial level that the problem is solved, with the employers' parties able to deploy swarms of overpaid lawyers and a system that is inherently anti-worker. The deterrent effect of stricter legislation, if perhaps it can help, is not decisive where the political regime, with its state machinery, only masks with democracy its nature as an instrument of the bosses: as efficient at sending the police against pickets of strikers as it is inefficient at sending inspections in companies.

It is in the workplace, in the relations between workers and bosses, and thus in the general power relations between classes, that the heart of the problem lies. It is in a climate of social peace, i.e., of oppression of the working class, of resignation, of individualism that workers are forced to accept any working condition, or worse, they think they can protect themselves by themselves, running more and risking their lives and health.

The confederal trade unions limit themselves to hypocritically denouncing the umpteenth massacre, without ever organizing a decisive struggle in defense of working conditions, as is the case with today's national strike, limited to two hours and only for the construction and metalworker categories!

Only by extending the struggle to all categories of workers, public and private, only by re-appropriating the methods of the class struggle, of the general strike, only by rejecting the damned regulation of the strike (law 146 of 1990 wanted by CGIL, CISL and UIL and voted by DC, PSI and PCI), will the workers be able to regain their strength and unity, that is, the indispensable conditions to put a stop to capitalist exploitation. But to prevent them from taking this road they often find lined up precisely those trade union leaders who should instead guide and defend them.

It is only with the strengthening of the class struggle, with the strengthening of conflictual trade unionism, that workers will be able to find the tools and the courage to put their lives before the demands of profit against the bosses' and state arrogance!

And from these struggles, ever stronger and more extensive, will come the real protection of life and health only possible with the liberation of labor from the economic laws of profit, with the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

Genoa, Italy
Friday, November 24, 2023

ON THE ROAD TO THE REVIVAL OF THE CLASS UNION

Last Friday, workers returned to fill the streets in Genoa,

Florence, Rome and other cities in numbers not seen in years. This was the best response to the attack on workers by the Minister of Transport and the government: the strike is the fundamental weapon of wage-workers against capitalist exploitation and it is defended by utilizing it!

The success of the strike and demonstrations is also proof that workers are willing to fight when they feel it is for a goal that is important to them as workers. That is why workers should be called to a general strike, not for unrealistic and futile reforms of capitalism, but for precise and concrete goals: substantial wage increases, putting the worst paid categories and qualifications at the center; uniting different contacts in the same categories; massive hiring in public service sectors; abolition of contracting out (starting with the public sector); abolition of anti-strike laws.

Moreover, to be most effective, the strike must be truly general: including all categories, throughout the country and taking place on the same day. It should not be divided by sectors and territories and staggered over time. It must also last longer than a single day. In France, Germany, the United Kingdom, for example, workers in so-called essential services—including those in a sector as vital to the system of capitalist production as transportation—should strike for several consecutive days. In Italy, Laws 146 of 1990 (De Mita government) and 83 of 2000 (D'Alema government) prohibit strikes from lasting more than 24 hours, or even less, in some sectors. The CGIL, CISL and UIL invoked these laws to prevent the strengthening of rank-and-file unionism, and the CGIL has always defended them: the secretary of the CGIL even did so recently. These laws prevent a very large part of the working class from properly fighting and seriously weaken the general strike as a weapon. It is no coincidence that, thanks to these laws, precisely in 1990 the average real wage of the Italian worker began to fall!

The unwillingness of the CISL to participate in a general strike, for the third consecutive time in the last three years, confirms that unity between the CGIL, CISL and UIL against combative unionism is the mainstay of the collaborationist unions. The CGIL leadership has never questioned this anti-worker unity: Landini called those who wanted to do so at the time of the separate metalworkers' contracts “crazy” and the one in Marchionne's FCA, and signed the 2016 metalworkers' contract, the worst in decades but “unitary” all the same! Nor will he question it now, despite the fact that the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) stands by the government and the minister attacking the freedom to strike!

In order to defeat collaborationist trade unionism

—responsible for decades of backwardness and the very serious disrepute to which the trade union movement has been reduced among workers—we need to counter the trade union unity between CGIL, CISL and UIL with the unitary action of combative unionism, as well as in the contested areas within CGIL with rank-and-file unionism.

Joint opposition to bills which would further endanger the freedom to strike, threatened by the President of the Guarantee Commission and Confindustria (Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana), is a test of this necessary class unity. On Monday, November 27, the rank and file unions jointly proclaimed a national strike of bus and train drivers against this new attack on the freedom to strike. The Minister of Transport had already announced a new decree. The most militant elements in the CGIL must support this strike by committing themselves to the best outcome.

In all bodies of combative trade unionism—sections, currents, coordinations, trade union organizations, etc.—the most conscious workers must fight for them to prove themselves coherent and cohesive with the practical principle of unitary action in the trade union struggle, moving toward a United Trade Union Front from below as the basis for the rebirth of the Class Union that the working class desperately needs!

The strengthening of class unionism relates to the worsening of living conditions brought about by the crisis of the capitalist world economy, but the role of militants, currents, and union leaderships is certainly not a secondary component in this process. Decades of political and trade-union opportunism have prevented any unity of action among combative unions, in the rank and file unions as well as in the militant segments of the CGIL, delaying the rebirth of the class struggle union movement. Only a reborn class-union movement will be able to take on goals that will be increasingly necessary in the face of the precipitating crisis of capitalism, such as the general reduction of working hours for equal wages, full wages for unemployed workers and opposition to every militarist venture of the national bourgeoisies

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MAY DAY! AGAINST BOURGEOIS MILITARISM - FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL DEFENSE OF THE WORKING CLASS - IMPERIALIST BLOCS REARM IN PREPARATION FOR WORLD WAR

Annual military spending in the world has now surpassed \$2.2 trillion, the nuclear arms treaties between Russia and the US are crumbling, and powers like Germany and Japan are rearming for the first time since World War II; the war in Ukraine threatens to engulf the whole of Europe, and the South China Sea is becoming a huge militarized zone, a sampling of the US-China war that will most likely involve all of humanity.

The international bourgeoisie raises its worn-out nationalist banners and calls workers to slaughter each other by waving the deceptive specters of totalitarianism, fascism, and “communism”.

To the vile bourgeois propaganda the communists respond that the new massacre among proletarians that is being prepared has only one cause: the defense of the interests of the ruling class and its profits from capital! The general war will be imperialist on every front!

Despite the mounting economic crisis and the growing indebtedness of states and businesses, and as governments around the world increase military spending, the capitalist economy has been beset by turmoil of all kinds in the past three years; on the one hand, there is an overproduction of goods and difficulty in disposing of them, and on the other hand, it faces the impossibility of continuing capitalist production caused by the trend of declining profit rates, due to the declining profitability of investment and the growing gap between production, which is social, and consumption, which is exclusive.

Global capitalism, plagued by economic crisis, is approaching collapse. It is plunging into such a historic crisis that the old antithesis between socialism or capitalism is being transformed into that between communism or the total annihilation of humanity.

The last great economic crisis of capital, the one that originated in the United States in 1929, despite the New Deal, could only be resolved by the destruction and massacres of World War II. That imperialist massacre led to the annihilation of more than 70 million people, mostly proletarians, and the almost complete destruction of the productive capacity of entire

continents, from Europe to Asia.

The three decades following the war were a “golden age” for capitalism. As the two imperialist blocs of the Soviet Union and the United States shared the spoils of war and kept the proletariat in check in their respective zones of influence, the process of accumulation benefited from the momentum of rebuilding the infrastructure and cities destroyed by the war.

There were also then a series of bourgeois revolutions against the old rotten colonial and feudal regimes, with capitalism taking hold in all corners of the earth, especially in East and South Asia, India and China. But this supranational expansion of the capitalist system of production, while it has allowed the accumulation of enormous profits, has not brought prosperity to the working class; instead, it has only extended misery and exploitation to the entire world. Indeed, the majority of the world’s 3.3 billion wage earners still work for starvation wages, without any economic security or satisfactory living conditions.

However, the continuous technical development of the means of production collapses the profitability of capital in the production process, pushing it toward ephemeral and sterile investments in financial speculation.

But every measure by states to contain the crisis through public debt finally proves futile, and the bourgeoisie, in order not to go bankrupt, pushes the world into military action in order to wipe out all its debts. Arms production for war and war itself are the only means left for the bourgeoisie to escape the crisis of overproduction that strangles its economic system.

That is why the various states and their regime parties foment nationalism: to try to bind the workers to the suicidal fate of the bourgeois class, which is forced, in defense of its mode of production, to plunge the world further into the abyss of war, terror and starvation.

But it is the international proletariat, the billions of workers of the world, who possess the tool to free humanity from the fate sealed by the capitalists: the class struggle!

In the past weeks there have been extensive strike movements in some European countries: in France, Britain, Germany and Greece. In the US, too, we are witnessing extensive strikes affecting different categories of industry. These struggles are the example to follow.

Since capitalism is an economic system that is based on the exploitation of wage labor, it is through the struggles of the working class, in defense of their living and working conditions, that the capitalist regime can be opposed and the proletariat’s class forces begin to prepare to avert World War III. Every struggle against the exploitation of labor, every rejection of calls for sacrifice in the name of the national economy, is an embryonic struggle against capitalism and its wars. The struggle in

defense of the working class confronts capital and is the precondition for weakening its infamous political regime.

It is necessary to unite the class struggles of the working class. To this end, it is essential to reconstitute class unions in every country, to strengthen them where they already exist, to oppose regime unionism which collaborates with the state and the bosses. Only genuine class trade unions will be able to fight for the unity of action of the proletariat, both nationally and internationally.

Only in this way can the demands that unite the entire working class be put on the agenda of struggles:

- the defense and increase of wages, with higher increases for the worst paid;
- the reduction of rhythms, working hours and working life;

- full wages to the unemployed

It will be possible for workers’ strikes and demonstrations to converge on these goals, in time and space.

This is the indispensable premise so that the proletariat can once again return to struggle, under the leadership of its party, the International Communist Party, for the overthrow of the regime of wage labor, for communist revolution!

The party is a repository of all humanity’s need for communism, of feelings of class solidarity, of the science of revolutionary Marxism and the experience now of two centuries of glorious workers’ struggles against capital.

Down with war! Down with the regime of Capital, Long live Communism!

THE FREEDOM TO STRIKE AND THE THEATRICALS OF THE BOURGEOIS REGIME’S SERVANTS

The restriction on the general strike proclaimed by the CGIL and UIL unions on the part of the so-called Strike Guarantee Commission (CGS) and the subsequent injunction by the Ministry of Transport has been causing quite a stir in the media, all financed by the ruling class’ State and in the hands of groups of capitalists.

The puppets on the scene—their strings held from above by the bourgeoisie and its State—seek to use the occasion to their own advantage, having known perfectly well from the beginning how things would turn out and having no intention of changing their course.

On November 10, the Minister of Transport shouted from the rooftops that workers “can’t strike for 24 hours”, as if he did not know that the Guarantee Commission had already intervened—two days earlier—in exactly those terms, telling CGIL and UIL to reduce the duration of the public transit workers and railroad workers’ strike, and to annul the strike in aviation and environmental hygiene (garbage collectors).

The CGS carried out this

limitation of the strike proclaimed by the CGIL and UIL for Friday, November 17, not because of the minister’s rumblings, but simply because it applied the anti-strike laws passed in 1990 (Law 146) and 2000 (Law 83). However, by acting in this way, the Minister was able to appear as a winner in the tussle, which is what he really wanted.

His injunction order, issued on Tuesday, November 14, merely follows what the CGS had already decided, except for the railroad workers, whose strike is reduced not to 8 hours—as the CGS demanded—but to 4.

To avoid the intervention of the CGS, it would have sufficed, on the part of the CGIL and UIL leaderships, to proclaim a real general strike: that is, of all categories and throughout the country, on a single day. In this way, again under the terms of the law, the CGS could not have intervened with any restrictions. Instead, CGIL and UIL divided the general strike by sectors and territories: on November 17, all categories should have gone on strike only in central Italy, while at the national level only some sectors: transport, ports, logistics, environmental hygiene and civil service.

In recent days, government politicians have reintroduced a return to the gabbie salariali, i.e., what in Italian is called a “wage cage”. In other words, a local pay scale. The CGIL and UIL caged the non-general strike, divided by sectors and territories.

Landini cackles against the intervention of the CGS, but, like the Minister of Transport, he knew full well what he could do to avoid its intervention, and how it would have gone instead by proclaiming a watered-down general strike.

The anti-strike laws, now enforced by CGS to curtail the CGIL and UIL strike of November 17, were wanted precisely by CGIL, CISL and UIL to hinder the strengthening of rank-and-file unions underway throughout the 1980s, which proclaimed real strikes, allowing workers in so-called “essential services” to defend their wage and employment conditions.

The Minister’s injunction order is also fully within his powers as defined by Article 8 of that anti-worker law, which was desired by the CGIL and its cronies. Of course now the CGIL and UIL denounce the flimsiness of the reasons given by the minister in support of his action, but the injunction is there, and the strike has been struck.

Thanks to those laws, the fundamental weapon of the combative unions, the fundamental weapon of the workers themselves, was blunted. It is no coincidence that in those sectors, albeit gradually and partially, the advance of rank-and-file unionism was halted and a decline began.

It should be remembered that these laws were passed by a pentapartito central government (De Mita, 1990) and a center-left government (D’Alema, 2000). The Italian bourgeoisie did not have to wait for a “right-wing

government” to benefit from one of the most restrictive laws on the freedom to strike in Europe.

While even today, in Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, workers in the categories subject to the laws wanted by CGIL, CISL, and UIL strike for days, or even a whole week; in Italy, however, they cannot do so for more than a day, on pain of heavy economic penalties.

But the CGIL and UIL are not interested in the strength of mobilization and strike action. All this hubbub, just as it was useful to the minister, is equally useful to them

because it offers a varnish of radicalism to trade union organizations that have lost all credibility and authority among the working class; trade union organizations which owe their existence not to the strength they are given by the proletariat, but to the recognition that the bosses and their State give them as fundamental instruments of opposition to militant and combative unionism.

The regime unions wanted the anti-strike laws to fight class unionism and now they pretend to grieve over the enforcement of such laws. In the meantime, a handsome bourgeois—the CEO of Milan’s local public transport company (ATM), on the board of directors of the one in Rome (ATAC) and president of an employers’ association belonging to Confindustria (AGENS)—has sent to trusted parliamentarians a draft bill for a further crackdown on trade union struggle, limiting the power to call strikes (for now, only among railroad workers) to the most representative unions, that is, the CGIL, CISL, UIL, and, in this category, the autonomous FAISA-CISAL.

It is certainly not to be expected that the leadership of these regime unions will lift a finger: they would toast in the privacy of their rooms to the approval of such a law. The UIL’s Confederal Secretary himself, in his joint press conference with the CGIL’s Confederal Secretary, did not fail to take a swipe at rank-and-file unionism, claiming that the CGS would not affect strikes promoted by militant unionism but only those promoted by the CGIL and UIL. A good lie, but one that hints at where this whole set-up is going.

The chairwoman of the Guarantee Commission herself, after claiming that there needed to be a further tightening of the remaining freedom to strike as far as—for now—general strikes are concerned, said in the press on November 15 that, “[i]n reality, then, stricter rules would be to the advantage of the large traditional unions and to the disadvantage of the small unions”!

The current clash is thus the usual tired theater of bourgeois politics in which the various parties try to carry water to their own mill: the right as well as the bourgeois left, the collaborationist and regime unions, all speculate and profit from it.

The losers are the workers and their genuine organizations of class

struggle, the real target of all the puppets on stage.

For this operation to fail, the workers must tear down the puppet show, and they can only do so by uniting the forces of combative unionism.

The militant workers still in the collaborationist unions and the remaining combative sections in the CGIL cannot stand idly by as their leaderships assuredly will. They must join the rest of the combative unions in the struggle to oppose this looming attack on the freedom to strike.

The combative unions have finally regained unity of action by proclaiming a national rank-and-file strike for November 27—a first test of their resolve and ability to unite the actions of militant class unionism.

THE STEADY DECLINE OF WAGES IN ITALY

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In the economic insert of *Corriere della Sera* on February 13, as a corollary to an article titled “Young people trapped. Paid little, right from the start”, a graph was published on the historical series of workers’ wages in Italy that looks at the years between 1975 and 2018. The graph is interesting apart from the fact that it analyzes a fairly long time span, almost 50 years, because it divides workers into three age groups: 15 to 29, 30 to 49, 50 and above.

In the past months, OECD statistics have caused an uproar over the fact that the average wage in Italy is 2.9% lower than it was in 1990. The data in the graph confirms this picture by enriching it with some important elements.

For the youngest group of workers, ages 15 to 29, the average wage from 1975 to 2018 has never risen; in fact, it has fallen steadily! If, in 1975, the average wage was at an index of 80, in 2018 it was at roughly 58, which is more than a quarter less. So for proletarian youth, the average wage has not fallen by 2.9% since 1990, but by more than 27.5% since 1975!

A typical employer action, endorsed by the regime unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL), is to introduce dual-contracts allowing companies to introduce reduced pay for new hires, thereby dividing workers with a two-tiered pay system.

This has happened and continues to happen with company agreements and, on a general level, with the introduction of flexible contractual forms, which have made job insecurity rampant. Such it is that today, young people receive actual starvation wages and suffer the utmost from the blackmail of dismissal.

Our first age group This condition of proletarian youth is also mystified with the infamous ideological propaganda that portrays young people, naturally considered as a homogeneous social group above class divisions, with no desire to work: many of them toil harder than ever before

and the bosses can exploit them better all the better for it.

Let’s look at the second age group, 30-49

For these workers, we see that the average wage remained basically unchanged from 1975 to 1990: an index of 124, approximately. After 1990, a decline begins, until in 2018 we have an index of approximately 108. So even for these workers, the average wage in 2018 is lower than it was in 1975, roughly by a little over 15%! And today, after 4 years, it will certainly be worse, due to rising inflation.

The third age group: workers over the age of 50

This fraction of the working class is the only one that has seen the average wage rise appreciably after 1975, when the index was 120. Growth occurs until 2000, when it reaches an index of 148: an increase of 23.3%. Since 2000, a decline begins, bringing the average wage for workers over age 50 in 2018 to an index of 122. Just above the 1975 index, but we can assume by now—in 2023—equal to or below that.

The graph confirms our party’s assertion: with the 1973-74 economic crisis, the cycle of growth in capital accumulation for capitalistically mature—so-called Western—countries came to an end and the cycle of overproduction crises, manifested through the outbreak of periodic recessionary crises, opened.

This was reflected in the conditions of the proletarian class, in a halting of their progress and the beginning of their retreat, at first gradual and then increasingly pronounced.

Young proletarians, who until the year 2000, could hope, as the years went by, to remedy the early hard times of meager entry-level wages with increasing wages as seniority accrues, find that today even this faint hope has gradually faded away and they are left with the prospect of wages closer and closer to pure subsistence and with little hope for growth.

One can clearly see the long-term results of the employers’ tactic of dividing workers: first they hit at the young while leaving adults and the elderly unscathed. After 15 years, in 1990, those young people, having become adults, accustomed to decreasing wages, continued to receive decreasing wages compared to what workers in that age group received before. Since 2000, the descent has also begun to affect those over 50, who now join the other two age groups in falling to pre-1975 wage levels.

In this situation, which we expect will never be reversed, the return of working-class action in defense of wages is certain. Naturally this trend should be expected to affect wage-workers internationally (since capitalism is a global economic system and has been since its remote origins in 15th century mercantilism); indeed, we are already witnessing the first and most obvious symptoms with struggles in France, the United Kingdom, Turkey, and the United States, to list only a few.

The question naturally arises as to why in Italy, with wages below the European average, the working class still persists in a state of passivity.

This is not a simple question, and the factors are certainly numerous. One may be the strong propensity of Italian families to save, which has enabled them to accumulate a certain reserve that temporarily shelters at least part of the working class from the advancing misery. This is accompanied by a reduction in consumption, with young people “choosing” not to marry or reproduce, and to continue living with their families until age 30 and beyond.

Another factor explaining the Italian working class’s state of passivity may be the persistence of a large stratum of the petty bourgeoisie, which dampens the contrasts between proletariat and bourgeoisie, with its myriad ties that give the social environment an inter-class appearance. The fabric of small businesses, the majority struggling to survive the crisis, assures (beyond a difficulty in organizing and struggling of course) on the one hand low and precarious wages, and on the other hand—until the class struggle re-explodes—the subservience of employees to their employers’ paternalism.

There is a third factor to reflect on. In France and to some extent in Britain, the categories that have gone on strike the most in recent months and years are workers in schools, healthcare, transport, shipping ports and, for France in particular, the petrochemical sector. In order to obtain wage increases, French petrochemical workers in November went on strike for 20 consecutive days, led by one of the pugnacious trade federations of the CGT, which is instead majority collaborationist.

All of the above employment categories in Italy are subject to the anti-strike legislation, Law 146 of 1990, amended in 2000 by the D’Alema government. This law was invoked by the regime unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL) to stop in those categories—and not only in those categories—the advance of rank and file unionism, which rightly distinguished itself by promoting numerous strikes.

By virtue of that law, over time amended in a further restrictive sense, a large section of the working class—the same categories that are the protagonists of the ongoing struggles in France—can carry out strikes no longer than 24 hours, and in rare exceptions 48 hours. In addition to this, the strike must be announced well in advance. It cannot be decided, for example, by a workplace assembly. In addition, a certain amount of time, on average two weeks, must pass between strikes.

This law does not affect only state employees, as is mistakenly believed, but all workers, even employees of private companies, who find themselves working in a sector that falls under the so-called “essential public services”. For example, cafeteria attendants, cleaners, maintenance workers, gardeners, perhaps even employees of a

cooperative, operating within a hospital.

In fact, in Italy, the freedom to strike for a substantial portion of workers is denied by a fascist law passed under a democratic regime, led by a leftist government, and desired by the regime’s unions.

Thus, on closer inspection, Landini, in inviting Meloni to the CGIL Congress, performs an act fully consistent with the trade union political path of the CGIL reconstituted “from above” at the end of World War II. To justify himself he referred to the work of Bruno Trentin, General Secretary of the CGIL, from 1988-94 and previously General Secretary of Fiom, from 1962-77. He was the one who, two years after he had cashed in the law against strikes and against the rank and file unions, signed the agreement to finish dismantling the escalator and start the so-called “income policy”. In Florence, he received a punch in the face for this by a worker and then had to be protected by the police as he tried to speak from the stage under a shower of bolts.

Landini is a mournful, washed-out extra leading the barrow and carrying the coffin of regime unionism to its sad fate. For we know that the working class, driven by material conditions, will return to its struggle by breaking every constraint, including legislative ones, against all class repression. We wrote about this in the following issue of *Il Partito Comunista*, following the example of the strikes of March 1943, at the height of fascism.

[UK] STRIKES AND DEMONSTRATIONS ANNOUNCE THE REAWAKENING OF THE WORKING CLASS

On March 15, 2023, on the day the government announced its annual budget, a large strike took place which brought together workers in the healthcare, teaching, civil service and transport sectors. It marked a further consolidation, and intensification of the struggles which got underway in 2022.

The wave of protests, which is increasingly involving sectors of the professional classes and white-collar workers, has been caused by a massive rise in the cost of living, notably in the crucial areas of food, fuel and accommodation. To this can be added the reductions in pensions, and a generalized intensification of labor, with workers being asked to work at an increasingly inhumane pace, and subjected to demoralizing micro-management in the workplace.

With most of the striking sectors in the public sector, or closely linked to the State in some way, the government has been refusing to negotiate directly, thus drawing out the negotiations so that the unions are more likely to fall foul of trade union legislation, in particular on the expiry dates that legislation sets on the

validity of ballots for industrial action.

Strikes in the Schools

The National Education Union (NEU) is one of the unions that participated in the strike on March 15, receiving exceptionally strong support in the ballot for strike action from workers in 23,400 schools in England and Wales.

Last September, many teachers received a pay raise but lower than the high levels of inflation. On March 28, considering the solidity of the strike on the 15th, the NEU asked its members to reject the government’s offer of a 4.3% pay raise and an additional £1,000 payment.

On March 16, the teachers in the NEU were joined on strike by members of the University and College Union (UCU), which had already been calling strikes over the past 5 years, but this current action marks their biggest yet. In February they announced that 70,000 staff at 150 universities would strike for 18 days, commencing on February 1. On March 16 they announced that they would be balloting for further industrial action. This followed a provocative move on the part of the UCEA—the University and College Employers’ Association—which had instructed their members to go ahead with implementing an earlier 4-5% offer which the Union had already clearly rejected.

The NEU has been trying—unsuccessfully, like other sectors—to negotiate directly with the government, and has rejected the mediation of independent pay-review bodies, since in reality these bodies are not independent at all as the government appoints their members and establishes the “viability” of any wage increases.

So then. Generalized discontent is rampant across the educational sector and seems set to continue.

In the Health Sector March 15 also marked the final day of a 3-day strike by junior doctors organized in the British medical Association (BMA). Junior doctors make up 45% of the medical workforce and 2/3 of them are members of the British Medical Association (BMA) or of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA). The latter went on strike for the first time on the 15th.

The doctors denounce the dangerous levels of understaffing, increasing workloads and low salaries, reduced by more than a quarter since 2008. They are threatening that “without change they will leave the NHS or leave the country entirely for better-paid medical jobs elsewhere”.

And on top of that a junior doctor, at the end of his training, may be saddled with a £100,000 debt to pay off, due to the expenses incurred due to insufficient pay. It’s no wonder then that so many medical doctors are to be found among the ranks of the workers’ parties, from the time of Chartism onward!

Following the strike on the 15th, the BMA called another junior doctors’ strike, this time

lasting four days, from April 11-15. The previous strike had lasted 3 days. Adherence to the latter was almost unanimous and involved the postponement of almost 200 thousand non-urgent medical and surgical health appointments across the country. The BMA union is calling for the salaries of medical personnel to be tied to the levels of inflation. Similar requests have been made by the nurses, who were on strike a few weeks before. The government would like to settle the question with a miserable lump sum as a sweetener.

For the first time in many years the life expectancy of the less well-off is going down, associated with the growing economic divide and the relative impoverishment of large strata of the population, along with insufficient investment in healthcare. In the healthcare system the lack of staff is dramatic, including an estimated deficit of 10,000 doctors and 40,000 nurses. After the suspension of the activity of the local health authority and non-emergency visits during COVID there has been no large-scale recovery, the waiting lists are getting longer and visits by GPs are still below pre-pandemic levels. The result—as evidenced by further studies—is an increase in mortality associated with diverse pathologies, such as lung cancer (with mortalities within 90 days of diagnosis having increased from 20% to 30% in two years).

In the Civil Service
On March 15 civil servants from 123 government departments also joined the strike. In their tens of thousands they joined the picket lines and lunchtime rallies in Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester. In London they rallied outside Downing Street to call on the government to meet their demands for fair pay, adequate pensions and job security.

Thousands of members of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), which organizes workers in both the private and public sectors, then went on to Trafalgar Square to attend the joint union rally, where workers from the RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) and ASLEF (train operators) were also present.

The PCS went on to extend its strike throughout the month of April, which will include another all-out strike by 133,000 civil and public servants on April 28. Workers in the Passport Office went on strike for 5 weeks until May 6. On Monday members working for Ofgem in Canary Wharf and Glasgow announced 6 days of strike action from April 10-14 and on April 17 as well.

Strikes in the Transport Sector

ASLEF members on London Underground were also out on a 24-hour strike on March 15. The Tube train drivers voted by 99% in favor of strike action out of a turnout of 77%. ASLEF members in other roles on the Underground—including Test Train and Engineering train drivers and

those in management grades—also voted in favor of strikes by similar margins and will join in striking on the same day.

The management of TfL (Transport for London), pleading financial difficulties following the pandemic, has already forced through cuts to safety training under the guise of “modernization” and “flexibility” and wants to replace the agreed upon attendance and discipline policies, as well as slashing pension benefits.

The trade unionists however declare that they are “always prepared to discuss and negotiate on changes, but that their members want an unequivocal commitment from TfL that management will not continue to force through detrimental changes without agreement”.

The RMT also organizes on the tube, like ASLEF, and will take strike action on March 15 in a row over pensions, job losses and contractual agreements. London Underground Ltd (LUL) have started to impose 600 station staff job losses and have refused to rule out attacks on pensions or ripping up agreements on conditions of work, despite discussions with the union.

A common factor running through the disputes of the last month, in fact in almost all labor disputes, is the question of “affordability”: the employers argue that there simply isn’t enough money to pay for higher wages. Behind all these arguments there lurks a conflict between classes: workers have no choice but to fight for decent living and working conditions, but their needs stand in direct contradiction with capital’s need to squeeze as much surplus value as they possibly can out of the workers, in a word, to make a profit.

The current struggles, both in the UK and elsewhere, are making clear that the problem is a general one and must be addressed as such.

The capitalists, who had to organize themselves to throw off the shackles of feudalism and recruited the working classes to help them do it, now have nothing further to offer humanity, and they need to be overthrown in their turn.

Whatever the individual successes that emerge from the present wave of strikes in terms of immediate gains, they will have been achieved by class struggle. This struggle will grow by means of the increasing co-ordination between the different sectors of the working class, straddling sectoral, professional and craft limitations, cutting across local, regional and national barriers, because their problems are essentially the same. In fact, details aside, the demands made by all the sectors currently taking part in strike actions appear remarkably similar.

But for these demands to be met on a stable and long-term basis, this same complete solidarity will need to face the question of the need for a general social plan, a political one, that faces the necessity of overthrowing the current regime, which supports the needs of the capitalists but not of the workers. The workers, protagonists of ever-

broadening struggles, and today in the United Kingdom refusing to be discouraged by highly restrictive trade union laws, will need to link up their defensive struggles, rooted in economic factors, with the class party, the International Communist Party.

This organ of the working class is the essential instrument required to fight for a society that puts the needs of human beings front and center, and doesn’t say, as the opportunist Labour Party does, that all that is needed is to tinker with the capitalists’ laws in order to create a “fairer” capitalism. Capitalism cannot be fair and never has been!

Let us therefore maintain our nerves and prepare, in today’s struggles, to overthrow capitalism!

TO RECONSTRUCT THE CLASS ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

Il Partito Comunista, n. 16, 1975

The policy that workers’ unions have been carrying out for half a century has reached such a point that it arouses disgust and even revulsion among workers toward class organization, so that the revival of proletarian economic organs, capable of defending and organizing the working class against the greed of the landowning classes and their social and economic productive apparatuses, is difficult and vexing.

While from a psychological point of view this is understandable, it is not justifiable from the perspective of the immediate material interests and class-based framework of the proletariat. Hatred against enemies and traitors, a first-rate component for fighting them, cannot lead us to deny the indispensable necessity of the defense of economic functions that organized workers in particular must perform.

We are currently in the midst of economic organizations that control a large part of the working class, dictating their infamous policy of collaboration with the class enemy to the entire working class. This is true. And even more tragic is that such a policy prostrates the working class, and empowers the capitalist class and its political State. The problem, then, is for the class to wrest the management of this vital function out of the hands of the traitors, and it would be deadly and delusional if, in order to be rid of its traitorous leadership, this same function was denied or confused with the functions of the Party.

An economic defense organ of the proletariat, fit for this purpose, exclusively coordinating and ranking the forces of the working class in the ceaseless daily struggle for bread and labor, draws its strength, as an organization, from the number of its members. Today’s trade unions influence and direct the activity of the working masses because they organize and discipline millions of workers. If they did not, their influence would be negligible or naught.

Parties, on the other hand, can influence the labor movement while not having as large a force numerically. This capacity for mass organization rests on the principle that the union is open to all workers, regardless of political or ideological perspective; a principle that still presides in the regime unions, however much they wish to expel or exclude those few workers who refuse to submit, but which the unions themselves will repudiate when the struggle between classes assumes a visible and prominent danger. This principle cannot be abandoned by any class organization, whatever the form and name it takes.

Recruitment into proletarian economic defense organs is not done on the basis of party, ideology, gender, age or nationality, but exclusively on the basis of class, that is, one is permitted to join as a wage worker only.

Any other basis for recruitment would be specious or deceptive, coercive in the sense that membership in the organization meant the right to work (like the “bread card” in the fascist unions), and exclusionary due to the limitations and exclusions for those workers who remained outside of the organization. For example, it would be a serious and debilitating mistake to organize only “revolutionary” workers because the organization would be limited to representing a narrow minority, losing its efficiency and leaving the vast majority of the class in the hands of the enemy. These shortcomings can only lead to the fragmentation of proletarian class forces, precluding the primary goal to which class organization must strive: the generalization of proletarian forces in order to make them into a disciplined class army.

These considerations derive from the practical experience of working-class struggles and confirm that the class political party has no intent to exploit class organizations. The Party tends toward class action by winning decisive influence over its economic organs through free adherence of the proletarians organized within it to its revolutionary program, and not by means of coercion or deception (even if only because the Party does not have these means available to it).

The Party’s concept of the “transmission belt” is based precisely in this respect on the voluntary subordination of the class organization to the Communist Party’s political direction and leadership, and not on the coincidence of the economic organization with the Party, let alone the alliance between it and the Party. That is why the Party does not create unions in its own image, organizing only its adherents or only workers who accept its program.

This position is not the result of a tactical attitude, of a political cunning, but of demonstrating the realistic consideration that without a broad and powerful class economic framework, which in principle organizes all proletarians and only

proletarians, victorious revolutionary action is not possible. From this it follows that the resurgence of class struggle on a world scale is not the result of agreements, choices or quarrels between “workers” or “revolutionary” groups or parties.

Neither can the entrenchment of class organization result from such an arrangement.

In conclusion, if the goal of the class conflict is political power, the premise for achieving this goal is the struggle to remove proletarian forces from under the sway of the enemy camp and onto revolutionary terrain, leveraging the material conditions common to all proletarians. Any hindrance to the achievement of this aim—to the reorganization of the working class on class ground—prevents or delays the realization of a wide array of forces of proletarian economic defense.

Those groups or parties that call themselves “revolutionary” or “leftist” and that pose political or, even worse, partisan demands, behind which they hide group ambitions, or that claim party affiliations or dubious associations of a populist flavor, have not grasped that the economic condition of the workers is the terrain of class organization, on which all proletarians recognize themselves as equal to each other and different from the rest of the citizenry. By disregarding this elementary observation, they would, if it were in their power, make the process of reforming class organizations more painful or even impossible; and, at the same time, assuming and denying their “revolutionary” character, they would preclude themselves from the possibility to make their supposed revolutionary character triumph. But that is their business.

The fact is that revolutionary communists do not place party prejudices on those bodies that operate in the field of class struggle for the defense of class economic conditions because they see in them the embryo of a proletarian economic network and urge them to unite on an ever larger scale, to gain in organization and efficiency, to transform themselves from an embryo of the class organization into an extensive and powerful one. It’s practical demonstration is affirmed every day.

Whenever a group of workers rebel against the bosses by contravening official union practice, they are forced to give in by not having equal or greater strength than the union bosses’ control. A lack of numbers can’t be replaced by the impetus of heroism. It is necessary to carry our forces, the mass of workers, into the struggle in order to overcome the enemy’s resistance through action. The economic organ can be strengthened and its reach extended, even if a particular economic struggle is unsuccessful, since the power of the union lies within the mass of workers in the organization.

It is in no one’s power alone to create favorable conditions for the return to proletarian

class organization, but this return can be accelerated, delayed or even prevented depending on whether or not the movement of struggle extends to the entire working-class, mobilizing and framing it on the basis of the workers' immediate material interests.

The severe state of the class' prostration to the domination of the capitalists is not overcome "with the head", nor even by the Party; just as the dictatorship of opportunism over the labor movement is not overcome "with the head". The overcoming of these tremendous obstacles is contingent on the resumption of the workers' struggle and by the experience which, in the course of that struggle, the workers will come to understand the reactionary and treasonous character of the official leadership of their economic bodies and of the workers' movement itself. Therefore, it is futile to expect that the "consciousness" of a few wage earners, organizing themselves into groups elected by History, will overcome the present power relations between the classes. The tide will change in favor of the working class, under the growing pressure of the struggling proletarian masses, organized for their contingent needs, and under the direction of which the class political party will have been able to conquer power.

THE ILLUSION OF THE MINIMUM WAGE AND WORKERS COMBATIVENESS

The aggravation of the economic crisis and inflation back in some European countries has resulted in a wave of trade union agitation. In France, Great Britain and Greece, and to a lesser extent in Germany as well, powerful strike movements have been underway for several months. The same cannot be said for Italy where, despite an evident decline in proletarian living standards, the regime trade unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL) are not calling on workers to strike in order to try and halt the reduction in real wages consequent on the higher cost of living, which, even before the rise in inflation (see "Il declino costante dei salari in Italia" in *Il Partito Comunista*, no.421) has been underway for the last thirty years.

In order to conceal their cowardly and traitorous conduct the CGIL, CISL and UIL called for three inter-regional demonstrations on 3 Saturdays in May [2023]—in Bologna (May 6), Milan (May 13) and Naples (May 20)—"to obtain changes to industrial, social and economic policy".

In so doing, the regime unions are renouncing, in fact trying to prevent, a struggle from developing; a struggle, that is, which is conducted by means of strikes, and which calls for

wage increases in both private and state enterprises. In such a way the defense of the purchasing power of wages is postponed until a hypothetical fiscal reform to reduce how heavily wages are taxed is passed. Such a demagogic maneuver, plotted by government and corporatist trade unions in concert, mustn't deceive us. There are indeed various factors which discourage any proletarian acquiescence with this practice of trade union collaborationism.

It is necessary to consider that, even if the taxation on wages was reduced, it must be accounted for the fact that, whereas a strike could impose a pay raise on the employers in a matter of weeks, the dilatory strategy of trade union opportunism would delay, for as long as possible, how long it took for any parliamentary reform to get passed, stretching it out, even in the best case scenario, for years at the very least. And meanwhile, workers' wages would continue to be cut. If it was decided to try and speed things up, mobilizations would need to be organized that were powerful enough to impose those reforms on the bourgeois government. All of which is highly unlikely, given that such an outcome would require strikes that were even more widespread and powerful than those currently underway in France.

We know that the CGIL—for the CISL and UIL this goes without saying—is totally opposed to which mobilizations on such a scale. And there is an illustrious historical precedent: when faced with the Fornero pension reforms—much tougher on workers than the one just passed in France—all the CGIL did about it was promote a miserable 3 hours of general strike in the private sector and eight hours for civil servants.

Another aspect of the issue is that increasing net wages by cutting taxes on gross wages is a way of avoiding clashes with the bosses and of maintaining social peace, thus postponing any reignition of the class struggle. The industrialists are highly in favor of such a scheme, which would see them temporarily relieved of any pressure on them arising from the discontent of their own work force.

The hypothesis that increasing wages in such a way also avoids the so-called spiral of inflation was a concern underlined on April 11 by the Ministry of Economics and Finances (MEF) in its comment on the 'Documento di Programmazione Finanziaria del Governo': "[a] cut in the social contributions paid by employees on middle to low earnings [...] will sustain the spending power of families and contribute to the moderation of wage increases [...] This decision

bears witness to the attention the government is paying to the protection of the spending power of workers and, meanwhile, to wage moderation in order to prevent a dangerous spiral of inflation".

Therefore the CGIL, the government and the industrialists are all agreed on the way "to increase wages": by reducing taxes without touching profits. The vice-minister of Economics confirmed this in the *Corriere della Sera* on April 13, regarding the cutting of three billion from the fiscal wedge for gross annual salaries under €35,000: "an intervention which [...] is moving in the direction requested by both the unions and Confindustria".

From certain preliminary remarks it appears evident how modest the wage increases to be obtained in this way are likely to be, and, taken together with the reduction of real wages which has been happening over many years, they will only make a very small impact. The two latest measures adopted by the government to cut the personal income tax on salaries, taken together, barely amount to an average monthly increase of 50 €.

The demand to reduce fiscal pressure on salaries poses other disadvantages. By reducing the tax on salaries, the fiscal yield is reduced in favor of the bourgeois state, and the ruling classes will seek to offset the loss by reducing the social spending which favors the working class. This does not however mean that the opposite is the case, that by increasing the tax yield social spending will automatically increase as well, and that therefore workers should get behind demands of this sort, such as the famous "tassa patrimoniale" ("La Patrimoniale", or wealth tax).

In a historic phase of crises of overproduction in the capitalist economy, such as the one which began in the capitalistically-mature countries in the mid-1970s, in the absence of a trade union struggle to defend the availability of free social services (school, health, transport, care services) based around the demand for more job roles and higher wages in these sectors, any increased tax yield would favor the bourgeoisie, and be spent on propping up businesses, the banking system, and the State's repressive and military apparatus.

Vice versa, even in the presence of a reduced tax yield, a trade union struggle of sufficient strength, that is, a general struggle of the waged class as a whole, could still impose improvements in the social services that favored the workers, and was to the detriment of the other social classes, and of the military and repressive power of the state.

At the final session of the

CGIL's 19th Congress on March 16, 2023 in Rimini, the Piccard Extraordinaire ("bonzo generale") Landini declared that "[t]axation is the mother of all battles". The ex-secretary general of the metalworkers' union Italian Federation of Metalworkers (FIOM)—exponent of a group within it which wants the union to be a Leninist class union—said he agreed! This is a case instead of yet another diversion with which to disguise how averse this regime union is to fighting genuine battles, for objectives that actually serve the interests of the workers. Such struggles should be fought for significant wage increases, for the reduction of the working day, for a full wage for the unemployed. To use Lenin's expression, Landini is an agent of the bourgeoisie inside the proletariat and anyone who doesn't recognize that is an opportunist.

What is more, by signaling as a goal of the trade union movement "a changing of industrial, economic, social and occupational policies"—instead of strictly trade union objectives—the CGIL is offering sustenance to the bourgeois parties currently in opposition, with the prospect of a possible sudden change of political alliances, or of future political elections, in which the proletariat will be guaranteed the not-much-appreciated right of choosing which gang of bourgeois politicians they want to oppress them.

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Along with tax reform, there is another theme that is being discussed by the bourgeois opposition parties and which has sparked a debate in the trade union organizations, including the combative ones: the minimum wage.

Also applicable here is what we said above: the workers who would benefit from the law would have to wait for the policy to be approved by parliament, far too long a time to resolve a problem which affects workers in the lowest wage brackets right now, and which is thus extremely urgent.

For the bourgeois parties debating the question, it's a handy demagogic propaganda tool, and is useful in elections. The vagueness of the proposals confirms this, with a figure hovering around about 9 € an hour, but without it being made clear if that is net of national insurance and social security contributions or not. Of one thing we can be sure, however: that when they get back into government, the political parties that are now supporting the passing of such a law will suddenly rediscover their sense of responsibility towards the national economy and towards the capitalists they are putting at risk thanks to the higher salaries, and they will settle on a

compromise that is lower.

Here, as well as in the case of a small increase in wages due to a cut in taxes, or to an increase in the "basic citizen's income", it is not so much about being for or against these proposals, but rather of explaining what we should do about measures whose aim, at the least possible cost, is to prevent an explosion of social discontent.

So, rather than useful solutions that truly defend working-class living standards, what we are actually dealing with here are schemes advocated for by that part of the bourgeoisie which takes a longer view of bourgeois interests, and which are useful in terms of guaranteeing social peace, moderating wage settlements, and defending profits. And all the more so with regard to the minimum wage and the "basic citizen's income" since we are dealing with measures proposed by the institutions of the European Union. And joining in the chorus we find Tridico, the president of the INPS (The National Institute for Social Security which deals with state pensions), in the meantime recommending "not touching the Fornero [pension] reform [of 2012]" (*La Stampa*, April 18, 2023).

But there are additional considerations that pertain to this question. The CGIL, formerly against it, then possibilist, is now linking the proposal for a legal minimum wage to the question of the so-called "pirate contracts" and attaching it to a law on representation.

The pirate contracts are those national collective labor agreements (CCNL) signed by unions with fewer members, in any case not signed by the CGIL, CISL and UIL, and which, according to the CGIL, will negatively impact wage earners by undermining their conditions of employment.

But it is a document from last February from the CGIL itself—by the Giuseppe Di Vittorio Foundation—relating to the year 2022, which shows how out of 14.5 million workers on a wage in the private sector, excluding domestic and agricultural workers, 96.6% were covered by collective agreements signed by the CGIL, CISL and UIL, and only 3.4% (474,755 workers) by collective agreements signed by other unions. According to the same document, in December 2022, according to the Consiglio Nazionale dell' Economia e del Lavoro (CNEL - National Council of Economics and Labor), 959 national collective agreements were signed in the private sector. Of these, 211 underwritten by the CGIL, CISL and UIL, and 748 by other trade union organizations. According to *Affari e Finanza* of March 27, 2023, reporting figures that differ little from those in

the Vittorio Foundation document, of the 750 or so agreements not signed by the CGIL, CISL and UIL, around half were signed by the UGL, CISAL and CONFSAL (the latter of which are Italian trade union confederations) “often identical or very similar to those of the confederal unions”.

Therefore, the so-called question of the “pirate contracts” only concerns 3.4% of the workers and seems to be a pretext for the CGIL to call for a law on representation which would ultimately guarantee to it, the CISL and the UIL, a monopoly on the negotiation of contracts; with which to defend itself against not the UGL and the other pliable unions created by employers’ organizations to obtain even worse contracts for the workers, but against the class trade unions.

What is more, it turns out that the FISASCAT CISL (Federazione Italiana Sindacati Addetti Servizi Commerciali, Affini e del Turismo—Federation of Commercial Service and Tourism Personnel, plus related occupations, part of the CISL union federation), for example, do not support a law on representation. Also, over the last ten years, the representation measure anticipated in the Testo Unico [One Text] of January 2014, as certified by the INPS, and which involves averaging out the votes cast by the trade union representatives elected directly by employees (or RSUs), and by trade union members, has never once been put into practice. Therefore, not even the different components of the CGIL, CISL and UIL agree on the law on representation, maybe because, up to a point and depending on the category, one union might be favored to the detriment of the others.

The matter of the “pirate contracts” also begins to look increasingly like a way of justifying the miserable results of the greatly extolled CGIL, CISL and UIL contract negotiations.

In fact, there are around 4 million workers covered by the national collective labor agreements signed by the CGIL, CISL and UIL which fix minimum wages below the 9 € per hour gross rate:

- Tourism: minimum hourly rate of 7.48 €
- Cooperative social care services: 7.18 €
- State-owned shops, catering and tourism: 7.28 €
- Textiles and clothing: 7.09 €
- Social care services: 6.69 €
- Contract cleaning, integrated and multi-services: 6.52 €
- Security and caretaking services (vigilanza e servizi fiduciari): 4.60 € per hour for those in the “trust services” (servizi fiduciari) department, and not much more for private security guards at 6 €.

On April 6, a firm was

found guilty by the Milan labor tribunal following an action brought by the ADL Cobas to compensate a female worker, because the applicable CCNL labor contract did not guarantee “remuneration proportional to the quantity and quality of work and sufficient to ensure to the worker and their family a free and dignified existence” (Article 36 of the Italian Constitution). The contract referred to was the security and caretaking services agreement signed by the CGIL, CISL and UIL. So, the CGIL, which defends the bourgeois constitution as an absolute and inviolable political principle, is signing contracts which the bourgeois judiciary declares to be in direct violation of it!

To this can be added another factor. The average time it takes to renew the national collective labor agreements in the private sector is 33.9 months, or almost three years.

All this serves to show how the elephantine apparatus of these regime unions, with its thousands of officials, is entirely useless when it comes to defending workers, and serves instead to control and immobilize the working class.

On the question of wages, and in particular on the question of the minimum wage, the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) organized a convention on March 31 last year in Rome, with Conte, the head of the Five Stars Movement, and Tridico, the president of INPS, invited as guests.

On the one hand, the USB leaders are right in stating that wages can only be defended by means of struggle, and they are promoting a general strike for the 26th of May with the main demand being an average wage increase of 300 €. On the other hand, they are offering support to and seeking sustenance from a bourgeois political party which is agitating the demand for a minimum wage.

But this demand as well would have to be fought for by a strong workers’ movement in order to prevent it being settled within bourgeois and parliamentary parameters, with a paltry law which would end up proving far more useful as a means of maintaining social peace than it would defending wages. Besides, if it was within our power to finally cobble together a fighting trade union movement which was really strong, why would we need to demand a minimum wage rather than a major pay hike for everybody instead?

If, as is the case, the struggle aspect is the main problem, we need to focus on the fact that in France, and in England, the categories which have been out on strike over the last months are ones which in Italy are subject to anti-strike legislation (Law 146 of 1990, and 83 of 2000).

These laws that had been anticipated by the codes of self-regulation subscribed to by the “tricolor” (or national/patriotic) unions with a view to preventing the proletarian economic struggle from slipping out of their control. Thus, a substantial part of the wage-earning class in Italy is effectively forbidden from striking by two fascist laws, referred to by the regime unions and approved, under full democracy, by both a Christian Democrat government and D’Alema’s center-left one.

A party which really wanted to show it was on the side of the working class would have to set as a central objective not a minimum wage, but the repeal of such laws, along with the full reinstatement of the freedom to strike. And that is something which, not by chance, no party present today in parliament would ever contemplate doing, even at some distant point in the future. Their thoroughly bourgeois nature is thereby clear. For many decades now, it has been impossible for any party present in parliament to express the interests of anything other than the capitalist class.

The leaders of the USB, therefore, instead of persisting in their opportunist conduct by trying to forge alliances with such parties, should be promoting instead unity of action with all of the forces of combative trade unionism, that is, with the rank-and-file (“base”) unions and the “combative areas” inside the CGIL, and move beyond their correct wage demands at the strike on May 26, by bringing to the fore the issue of defending the freedom to strike. But the head honchos of the USB are instead promoting this strike without involving the other base unions, returning to the practice of “every union for itself” strikes, which was the pattern that existed before the efforts to engage in unitary strikes over the last two years. A nice step backwards then, and those responsible for it are, of course, the opportunist leaders of the major base unions.

The fight against politico-trade union opportunism is a crucial aspect of the class struggle and confirms the necessity and the role of revolutionary communism, of its Party and its activity within the heart of the trade union movement, in order to finally make available to workers the theoretical and organizational weapons it

Communist Revolution
and the Emancipation
of Women
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY



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International Working Women’s Day PATRIARCHY IS A PILLAR OF CAPITALISM AND WILL FALL WITH IT

Societies divided into classes – slave society, feudalism, capitalism, succeeding each other to the present day after the much longer historical epoch of primitive communism – have been inevitable states in the passing of human history, which, while allowing the development of productive forces, have also alienated and temporarily deadened the social instinct of humanity to unite and work in common, to ensure the happy perpetuation and betterment of the species.

Women, who were held in the highest esteem in pre-class communist societies, were placed in bondage in the patriarchal order established with the development of private property, the family, and the state.

While the development of industrial production, i.e., capitalism, has partially improved the condition of women, it does not allow their emancipation from patriarchy, since patriarchy is inextricably intertwined with private property: as long as there is wealth to be passed on in inheritance or the market for labor power, patriarchy cannot be eliminated.

When the gears of the capitalist machine began to turn, proletarian women, who had been crushed for centuries in ancient societies, were given the false emancipation of wage labor, that is, the addition of a new condition of exploitation: becoming proletarian.

The emancipation of women coincides in part with the achievements of the bourgeois revolution, namely wage labor and equal civil rights, and with the demands of the proletarian class, such as reducing the length of the working day. But it remains incomplete without the suppression of domestic work by converting it into free, public services (e.g., catering and collective laundries); recognition of the importance of motherhood to the reproduction of the species with dispensation from work, crèches, and kindergartens; and the right to full reproductive choice.

The struggle for these goals begins with the struggle of the working class against capitalist exploitation – for significant wage increases, against layoffs, for full wages to the unemployed, for the reduction of the workday and working life (lowering the retirement age) – and is

completed only with the abolition of capitalism, because the satisfaction of workers’ needs is incompatible with the law of profit!

For the sake of profit – which bourgeois politicians call “the good of the country” or “the good of the nation,” depending on whether they are on the left or the right – capitalism now threatens the very survival of the human species. Innumerable workers die on the job every day, while imperialist war, in which proletarians are sent to slaughter behind national flags for the interests of their respective bourgeoisies, inexorably progresses toward world war.

While the appearance of agriculture, which was the economic basis of the class division of society, of private property and the family, and of the establishment of patriarchy, marked the end of primitive communism, the development of industry in the bosom of capitalism, with its overwhelming historical progress, makes modern communism possible again: society now has all the material means for the real welfare of all its members, but it is prevented from producing to meet human needs because it is subject to the economic laws of capital, defended by the bourgeois state and its political machinery.

Only the international revolution of the working class, organized in strong class unions and led by the authentic Communist Party, can overthrow the bourgeois political regimes that prevent this historical passage, that keep humanity chained to the historical prison of a society rent by individual and familial egoism, a society torn asunder by ethnic, xenophobic, and religious hatred; of which the oppression of women is a pillar and necessary product.

Only in a society liberated from the last form of slavery, that of wage labor, will patriarchy be superceded, and the final blow will at last be dealt to the already moribund family, founded on monogamic matrimony. Women will return to the center of social consideration and humanity will reconcile itself with its natural instinct to live socially, with its longing for communism

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 Resistenza (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 Ferrovieri.

- 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 the 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 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 CFTD, 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.

MORE UNREST EXPECTED FROM CHINA'S WORKING CLASS

Reports are coming in from China of a resumption of strikes and worker protests in all sectors after the decline in labor unrest during the pandemic. The China Labor Bulletin, a social democratic organization that collects data on labor struggles in China, recorded 741 in the first half of 2023, almost as

many as in the whole of 2022, which was 830. It seems to increase from month to month, from 86 in January to 165 in May. If the trend holds, it would reach at least 1,300 within the year, the highest since the pandemic began and approaching that of 2019.

The sector with the largest number of protests is manufacturing, where struggles have been triggered by a wave of closures, re-locations, and unpaid wages. The bosses are offloading onto the workers the contraction in production related to a decrease in orders from Europe and the United States, a consequence of the economic slowdown in these areas, and the trade war between the imperial blocs. Compared with the last quarter of 2022, unrest in the manufacturing sector in the first quarter of 2023 has increased tenfold. But the bad situation of Chinese capitalism affects all sectors, such as in construction where the contraction of the housing market is driving workers to protest against unpaid wages.

Supporting the bosses' action against the working class are the regime's trade union and police repression. China's official trade union grouping, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), which is tied to the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State, and acts to stabilize the bourgeois economic and social systems. It dampens the combativeness of struggles in various ways: by channeling them into the meanderings of bureaucratic procedures as well as encouraging the resumption of labor in times of direct opposition to workers' interests. The police, then, as in other bourgeois countries, keep the proletariat subdued, arrest striking workers and persecute proletarians who attempt to organize alternative union networks to that of the regime's unions.

The CPC, the regime unions, and the Chinese State with its repressive apparatus are all instruments of oppression on the proletariat, while false socialism is the ideology that covers up capitalist exploitation in China. Worker combativeness is proof that, despite attempts to color the bourgeois order red, the real content of China's economic and social structure is irreconcilable class antagonism, as in all countries.

The recent workers' struggles in China belie the nationalist propaganda of Beijing's leadership and lash out against attempts to reconcile proletarian interests with those of capital through the myth of the nation's rebirth, of the "New Era", of the "Chinese Dream", to be realized by 2049, the centennial of the People's Republic: formulas the bourgeoisie uses to tighten its grip on the working masses around its ambition for a new imperialist partition of the world.

Although these strikes represent the best refutation of Chinese society's supposed (class) "harmony", their real scope still remains narrow in numbers and extent. They are defensive workers' struggles in response to employers' attempts to shift the difficulties of the national economy onto workers.

Far more is expected of the Chinese proletariat! This is not wishful thinking but rather the certainty that comes from the

convulsions of the social movement expended in that great country for more than a century.

Looking back we see that the changed class relations make the Chinese proletariat an overflowing force that when, tomorrow, organized into class unions and led by the genuine communist party can bring down the bourgeois order.

The international struggle of the proletariat, which now throughout the world involves only one class revolution, is the product of a long and bloody development of capitalism on an international scale. A century ago, the first Asian communists, who came in contact with the force unleashed by the October Revolution and Marxist doctrine, were faced with the need to take on the great task of forming communist parties, but in contexts where the proletariat was still in its infancy, immersed in a boundless pre-capitalist world dominated by masses of the peasantry.

Despite this, the reborn International had realized the importance of struggle in colonial and semi-colonial countries. In September 1920, the Congress of the Peoples of the East was held in Baku. The delegates were mainly Turks, Persians, Armenians, Georgians, and those from other regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia that had been part of the tsarist empire. Those delegates, in a blaze of applause and with swords and daggers raised aloft, had shouted "we swear it" in response to Zinoviev's call to struggle against imperialism. In Baku, the International was realizing in deed what it had proclaimed in the weeks before its Second Congress: the unity of a single-class revolution in the countries where capitalism had matured with the national revolution in the underdeveloped countries.

The Communist International, which had arisen against the betrayal of the parties of the Second International, whose social-imperialist nature it had unmasked, saw the national and colonial question as a decisive factor in the development of world revolution. For world capitalism was also maintaining itself through the super-exploitation of the colonies and underdeveloped countries, and by raining the crumbs of these profits onto the corrupt leaders of the proletariat in the imperialist countries to maintain a social peace. Breaking imperialist domination over the peoples of the East would thus also foster class struggle in the capitalist metropolises.

It was carved out in the Theses of the Communist International on the National And Colonial Question: "[t]he breaking up of the colonial empire, together with the proletarian revolution in the home country, will overthrow the capitalist system in Europe. Consequently, the Communist International must widen the sphere of its activities. It must establish relations with those revolutionary forces that are working for the overthrow of imperialism in the countries subjected politically and economically".

At Baku, the presence of delegates from the Far East were few; the Chinese delegation probably numbered eight. By 1920, Communists in East Asian countries numbered in the order of a few dozen, and revolutionary Russia was still a long ways away, the distances separated

by counterrevolutionary armies pressing on Communist power from the east. It was not until early 1922 that the First Congress of Communist and Revolutionary Organizations of the Far East would bring together those communists and revolutionaries who could make reports on the situation in their countries and receive from the leadership of the International the directives of the world communist movement.

It was a matter for the young communist parties of the East to understand that the revolutionary task in an underdeveloped context consisted of putting themselves at the head of a national-revolutionary movement composed mainly of peasants: "[t]he hegemony of the proletariat over the whole revolutionary movement and more so the dictatorship of the proletariat are impossible unless the proletariat can get the peasant masses who groan under the oppression of landowners, warmongers and bureaucrats and are barbarously exploited by capitalism to side with it. In countries with predominantly primitive rural economies or weak industrial levels—as is the case in the greater part of the Far East—a vast revolutionary movement is conceivable only with the premise of a close alliance between workers and peasants, an alliance in which the working class is called upon to sustain a leading role".

That was 1922, over a century ago now. The history of the class struggle in this last century has seen the growth of counterrevolution on a world scale, which has imposed itself on the revolutionary movements that had developed since the October Revolution. Since then, the proletariat has been subjugated to the brutality of bourgeois rule.

But at the same time, it has increased its numerical strength, as the development of capitalism in underdeveloped countries has turned huge masses of peasants into proletarians. The establishment of capitalism in Asia has created the emergence of a huge proletariat massed in sprawling metropolises. "[t]he bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life," it was announced, in a world still almost entirely rural, by our doctrine as early as 1848.

According to official statistics, China only saw its urban population surpass that of the countryside in 2011. But, in more recent years, the movement of peasants to the metropolises has continued, and more than 200 million peasants are still expected to be added to the urban population in the coming years. This momentous process of proletarianization has created the world's strongest proletariat in China, at least quantitatively.

For our doctrine, statistics alone are not sufficient to define a social class, since "when we detect a social tendency, or a movement oriented towards a given end, the class exists in the true sense of the word". Only when it is possible to discern a doctrine and a method, a tendency towards a purpose, will we have a class, and only

in the Class Party are these features condensed. The international communist revolution will take a giant step forward only when a vanguard in the East rediscovers the integral and unchanging Marxist doctrine: "Light will come from the East when revolutionary Marxism has returned there in all its splendor," we wrote in 1967.

This doctrine will not repeat what it predicted for the past century, because today the Chinese proletariat, like the proletariat in all other corners of the world, no longer has the obligation of a double revolution to lead, at the head of and in alliance with the peasant masses. The revolutionary perspective is now clear and unambiguous: the proletariat alone struggles for the violent overthrow of bourgeois power. The revolutionary movement of the proletariat rejects any democratic and inter-class organization. No longer is national revolution to be completed, nor democratic conquests to be claimed, nor alliances with other social classes to be forged.

Looming over the Chinese proletariat is the threat posed by the deniers, modernizers and falsifiers of Marxism, who would like to dampen its strength by channeling it into ends compatible with the bourgeois order. To end class exploitation and subjugation, the only road the Chinese proletariat can take is to embrace the only program that calls it to a social revolution capable of destroying the social relations between classes, subverts the capitalist system of production and exchange, and incites it to fight for its own dictatorship!

The Chinese proletariat has already proven that it can fight bravely—at the cost of immense sacrifice—and win, as it did for a brief but dazzling period in Shanghai and Guangzhou in 1927.

This is what revolutionary communists continue to expect from the Chinese proletariat. "In 1927, in the great debates within the International on China, it was said that from a proletariat like the Chinese proletariat, accustomed for long years to 'look death in the eye,' any sacrifice, any heroism could be expected. With the formidable weapon of Marxist doctrine and party, this proletariat will be able to attempt once again the 'assault on heaven,' and win for itself and for its brothers in all countries!"

THE PARTY'S TRADE UNION ACTIVITY IN ITALY

This article was originally published in Italian in September-October, 2023

From the beginning of February to the present, trade union activity in Italy has continued to take place in the different spheres that we have already listed in our last report:

- the propaganda on the trade union-political positions and direction in the streets, with leaflets and newspaper stunts, favoring places frequented by workers;
- the same propaganda in front of workplaces;
- intervention at trade union events with Party leaflets;

- activity within the inter-union body known as the Coordination of Self-Convended Workers, to fight for the unitary action of combative unionism;
- activity within the grassroots trade union organizations;
- writing articles for the trade union segment of the Party newspaper.

As already mentioned, we go up from a general level—propaganda among the masses in the streets—gradually to more and more characterized and specific levels, up to our press, where the class union line is made explicit in all its aspects and in its connection with and descent from the communist program and theory.

We also organized a public meeting of the Party, in Turin, on April 30, the day before May Day, at the headquarters of the Cobas Confederation, on the theme of trade unions: "The strikes in France, Britain, Germany, and Greece are the beginning of the inevitable extension of the international class struggle. Soon workers in Italy too will have to mobilize. What are the conditions for demonstrating all their strength and determination?"

In general, the workers' movement in Italy remains in a state of weakness and passivity, and this is reflected in our activity in the areas listed above.

If we take a look at the overall situation of the class struggle in Italy, the last general movements of a certain strength—inter-categorical, involving the majority of the class—were in 1992, against the agreement that completed the revocation of the "escalator"—which provoked protest from the top of the regime unions and a strengthening of rank-and-file unionism—and that of 1994, against the first pension reform of the Berlusconi government.

The last strong, national branch strike movement, which developed spontaneously with so-called "wildcat" strikes that repeatedly violated anti-strike legislation, was that of the tram drivers from December 2002 to January 2003, which also developed outside and against the regime unions and which strengthened rank-and-file unionism in the sector ("Review and Balance Sheet of the Tram Drivers' Strike").

As for factory strikes, there were the 21 days at Fiat in Melfi in April 2004 ("Cobas and FIOM at the Melfi Retrial"), and ten years later the 35-day strike at Thyssen Krupp in Terni from October to November 2014 ("Terni, A 35-day Strike Betrayed by the Regime Unions").

Since 2011, there has been the development and reorganization of rank-and-file unionism in the logistics sector, mainly in SI Cobas but not exclusively. This movement has been

considerable, leading to the formation of what is now the second largest rank and file union, the SI Cobas, with approximately 20,000 members, but has remained confined to this category with only minor exceptions.

The first rank and file union has become the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB), born in 2010 from the merger of the previous Rappresentanze Sindacali di Base (RdB) with parts of the Confederazione Unitaria di Base (CUB) and the smaller Sindacato dei Lavoratori (SdL). Membership is estimated to be around 40,000. Compared to its origins in 2010 and to the tradition of the principal founding organization—the RdB—the USB has partially changed its character over the past 13 years, reducing the number of members it organizes in the public sector (down to around 16,000, a category which was organized almost exclusively by the RdB) while expanding in the private sector.

Generally speaking, faced with the advance of capitalism's worldwide crisis of overproduction, we have witnessed regime trade unionism's march of towards an increasingly open corporatism, resulting in workers' discouragement, further individualism and resignation, and therefore a lowering of the level of class combativeness, progressing since the late 1970s and reaching a level that has perhaps never been witnessed in the history of the workers' movement in Italy.

It seems the social peace always coveted by the bourgeoisie has triumphed. However, we know it to be the prelude to a new explosion of class struggle, whose material conditions the advancing crisis of capitalism prepares daily in the social underground and whose first manifestations are already well observed internationally, both in the social movements of revolt that, for now, have maintained an inter-class character—as in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru—and in the strengthening of the trade union struggle's movement in France, Great Britain, Greece, Turkey and the United States.

All of these countries have experienced the same process of the weakening of the trade union movement that we have described for Italy, albeit in different forms and to different degrees, but in each of them there seems to have already been a reversal of the trend which is not yet evident in Italy.

The weakening of the workers' struggle has been reflected in the regime's trade unions themselves, which in Italy have seen both a decrease in their membership and an increasing difficulty in mobilizing the workers in the rare actions they do take, which are mostly

demonstrations instead of strikes. But apparently only the CGIL, CISL and UIL leaderships complain about this. After all, the weakness of the working class is, in fact, the best guarantee of their control over it.

On the whole, rank-and-file unionism—both for adverse objective reasons, and for the damaging action of its opportunist leaderships—was unable to counter this progressive weakening of workers' struggles, and, like the regime unions, suffered a decline in membership and its capacity to mobilize workers.

In those categories where it had been most affirmed in the 1980s and 1990s, on the wave of struggle movements outside and against the regime unions, it lost most of its members: among them, school workers, railway workers, healthcare workers, tram drivers, airport workers and firefighters.

However, the picture is varied among the existing trade union organizations.

The Cobas School, and in general the Cobas Confederation to which they belong, appear to be in serious decline.

The Fiat offensive, started in June 2010 by then CEO Marchionne, led to the almost complete destruction of the SLAI Cobas, which had developed in the Arese (closed in 2005), Termoli and Pomigliano plants. Small rank-and-file groups remain in the factories in Melfi, Termoli, Pratola Serra and Atezza.

The Confederazione Unitaria di Base (CUB), founded in 1992 and since then present in various categories and industries, and which had made an amalgamation agreement with the RdB, giving rise to the joint RdB-CUB federation, has also suffered a sharp decline, as a result of two factors in particular: one, the birth in 2010 of the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB), which acquired parts of the CUB; and two, the agreement between the bosses and the regime unions called the "Testo Unico sulla Rappresentanza" of January 2014, first accepted by the Cobas Confederation, then by the USB, then by other minor rank and file unions, but not by the CUB, resulting in its exclusion from the Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie, or RSU (a joint representative body).

The crisis of overproduction, in the absence of an already established and robust class union movement, had a depressive effect on workers' combativity, especially in the manufacturing industry, leading to a retreat of rank-and-file unionism from the positions it had previously gained.

As mentioned, in contrast to what has been outlined so far, a movement developed in the logistics

sector that gave rise to the formation of the SI Cobas, and the smaller ADL Cobas. Even the USB is partly at odds with the general regression of rank-and-file unionism.

After this minimal review we come to the trade union activity of the last four months. The low level of conflict was reaffirmed. As in previous years, once the already weak autumn mobilizations had taken place, the following months showed an even lower overall level of coordination.

Added to this was the breakdown of the fragile unity of action of rank-and-file unionism, between the leaderships of the USB and

SI Cobas, in the national demonstration in Rome on December 3, in which we participated by carrying out propaganda and direction work.

This led the USB leadership to proclaim a general strike for Friday, May 26, called and organized without involving any other rank and file unions, the outcome of which was, despite the leadership's proclamations, resoundingly negative.

Now let's summarize our activity from February to the present.

On Saturday, February 25, the USB called a national anti-war demonstration in Genoa with the slogan: "Down with weapons, up with wages!" Behind the slogan, however admirable, is the ill-concealed pro-Russian stance of its leadership group.

Five days earlier, on Monday, February 20, we took part in the joint coordination of USB Liguria, in preparation for the demonstration on the 25th. In it we reiterated that the war going on in Ukraine is imperialist on both fronts; that only the workers will be able to stop the generalized imperialist war that is developing; that the strikes and demonstrations against the war and in defense of wages are only a first step on this road.

Two days earlier, on Saturday, February 18, we had spoken at an assembly called by the Genoa SI Cobas in the dockers' hall. The assembly had as its theme the war in Ukraine and a book written by the political front that leads the SI Cobas was being presented there. This was, therefore, a case of a political grouping using the trade union as an organizational tool for a function unrelated to it, a fact displeasing to many members of the union.

We intervened by explaining that the unitary action of the workers and, to this end, the unitary action of combative trade unionism itself, is fundamental at the trade union level; instead, opportunism is characterized by an inversion of the struggle: it creates political frontism (the leadership of the SI

Cobas has composed a political front with Stalinist groups) and trade union sectarianism, dividing and weakening the workers' actions in struggle.

Also on February 25, we took part in the successful national anti-war demonstration called by the USB, distributing a Party leaflet entitled "The Massacre of Ukrainian and Russian Proletarians Continues and Prefigures the Worldwide One to which Capitalism Wants to Lead All Humanity. Only the International Workers' Revolution Can Prevent It!"

With a trade union militant from the opposition tendency in CGIL, we distributed the leaflet calling for the national assembly of the CLA ("Public Assembly – Health Security Repression in the Workplace and On the Ground"), scheduled for Sunday, March 3 in Genoa, which was attended by some 30 people. It was an opportunity to set out in some detail important issues concerning the relationship between the union and the Party and the question of the unitary action of combative unionism. This was done with the introductory speech given by our comrade ("Crucial Questions of Class Unionism Discussed at a CLA Assembly"). The text of this speech was translated by our comrades into English and was published in The Communist Party, n. 54 (as well as republished in this issue). The speech was an opportunity to counter the flimsy arguments of the speaker at the February 18 assembly, also organized by the Genoa SI Cobas.

On March 8, 2023 in Genoa we took part in the demonstration for International Women's Day, distributing the Party's leaflet, translated into our press in 16 languages ("It is capitalism that prevents the liberation of women").

We paid special attention to following the strike movements in France and the UK, reporting on them in our press. This was done in the May-June issue with two articles titled: "In France the General Class Struggle Overwhelms the CGT Bonzes" and "In the UK Strikes and Demonstrations Herald the Awakening of the Working Class".

What happened there, and especially in France, had a certain reflection among militants of combative unionism in Italy. Delegations, one from USB and one from the Federation of Metalworkers (FIOM), each went—separately—to one of the demonstrations in Marseilles.

In France, the movement was led by a coalition comprising all the unions: those openly collaborationist and regime, such as the CFDT; those covertly so, which was basically the CGT; and

the only one that can be considered rank and file, the SUD. The most combative parts of the CGT, Force Ouvriere and the SUD distinguished themselves by not breaking the unity of the strikes called by the "Intersyndacale", trying to prolong them in the sectors and companies where they were able to do so.

This example was repeatedly used by us—at the assembly of the Genoese SI Cobas, at the confederal Coordination of the USB Liguria, and at the assembly of the CLA—to explain that in Italy it was necessary to indicate, not necessarily a united front with the regime unions, but at least unitary action of the combative unions, which was absolutely necessary. All the trade union-political opportunists who run the rank and file unions ignored this need, despite filling their mouths with fancy-sounding phrases like "do as in France".

On March 25, in Genoa, we published an appeal by the Genoa CLA for rank-and-file trade unionism in the city to promote a unitary garrison in solidarity with the class struggle movement in France, which was reaching its peak in those days, even facing some repression in some instances (See "For a Unitary Action of Combative Trade Unionism in Solidarity with the Working Class in France"). This appeal, sent to all local union leaders and circulated among our union contacts, also went unheeded.

On March 30 in Rome, the USB organized a national conference centered on the issue of wages. We followed the entire conference, broadcast on the union's facebook page. Guests and speakers included former INPS President Tridico, a retired university professor of economics who is close to the "5 Star Movement" and head of the bourgeois political party Giuseppe Conte. The conference showed the patently contradictory trade union-political line of the USB leadership, typical of their brand of opportunism.

On the one hand, the USB leaders correctly state that the current crisis is a "systemic" crisis of capitalism and overproduction, and that the only way to defend and increase wages is through struggle. On the other hand, they delude themselves, and the workers, that the way out of the economic crisis of capitalism lies in a return to a policy of strong State intervention, which for them is not bourgeois but democratic. They claim, as does a part of the left within the CGIL, the establishment of a new Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, which was set up in 1933 during the height of fascism and the Great Depression, and which, in the post-war

period, progressively expanded its areas of intervention to include some 1,000 companies and with more than 500,000 employees by 1980.

This policy, which relies on the nationalization of companies crushed by the weight of the crisis, has nothing anti-capitalist about it; in fact, it was a project undertaken by Italian fascism, as well as by Nazism and the Anglo-Saxon democracies. It is a path practiced—and a posteriori justified with ideological patches—by every bourgeois state in the face of catastrophic crisis in order to make productive structures barely survive at the expense of the public treasury.

The bourgeois state's policies of intervention in the economy to "save strategic companies for the country"—as repeated by both regime trade unionism and the opportunism at the head of the rank and file unions—through nationalization, have the aim of leading the proletariat towards the slaughterhouse of imperialist war, the only political-economic policy capable of saving bourgeois privileges and domination. To this end, political nationalism, the basis of which is economic nationalism, is fundamental, as well as maintaining certain factories and production structures in operation. The nationalization of industries under capitalist rule "nationalizes" the proletarian masses, in the sense that it regiments them in nationalist ideology. It brings us closer not to socialism but to imperialist war.

Therefore, while the USB leadership correctly claims strong wage increases and indicates the path of struggle to achieve them, it contradicts this battle with a political direction that is nothing more than the classic social-democratic one, which failed already with the first and second world wars.

The USB conference in Rome, rather than highlighting how to obtain wage increases, focused instead on the question of the "legal minimum wage", for which the USB leaders trust not in the mobilization of workers, but in the demagogic support of bourgeois politicking. It is in this sense that Tridico's and Conte's invitations and interventions are

framed.

This is why we have published two articles in our press: the first on the decline of wages in Italy ("The Steady Decline of Wages in Italy"), the second on the issue of the "legal minimum wage", which we called a mirage to divert workers from the necessary fight for wages (See "The Combativeness of the Workers is Deflected by the Illusion of the Minimum Wage").

Many will recognize, even within the USB, that without a general struggle of the entire working class, of the appropriate strength, a law on the legal minimum wage would resolve itself into a downward compromise between the bourgeois parties, who ride this bourgeois utopia for mere electoral purposes. On the other hand, if the conditions were in place for a movement of such strength to express itself, then it would not be convenient to channel the expectation of such a law into parliamentary politics, but rather to leave the obtainment of wage increases to direct confrontation with the employers.

It is true what the regime unions claim, that wage levels should be regulated not by law but by bargaining. But they do this because, conducted in their own way, i.e., without a fight, collective bargaining guarantees the bosses the ability to keep wages low. The solution, however, does not lie in the illusion that the downward bargaining of the regime's trade unions can be circumvented by imposing, with supposed support from parties of the bourgeois left, a law to protect wages. This fully social-democratic and corporatist illusion rests on the idea that capitalism can be conditioned by democratic means, with rules that come to protect the living conditions of proletarians and their class unions.

On this plan rests the other erroneous claim of the restoration of the escalator, advanced by the USB and other trade union currents, e.g., the Trotskyist opposition within the CGIL. Yet another plan is that of a law on union representation, which, according to USB leaders, would guarantee class unions the right to be recognized.

These opportunist

currents perpetuate the falsehood that democracy is what it says it is, rather than a form of bourgeois class rule—"the best political envelope of capitalism" said Lenin—complementary to despotic and openly fascist forms of government, and which does not change the bourgeois nature of the state at all.

In response to the USB leadership's most recent address at the March 30th conference, we stated that if it is true that the only way to defend wages is through struggle, then those bourgeois left-wing parties that the USB leadership misguidedly thinks can help the workers should be put to the test as to their real intentions. And not with the demand for a minimum wage, but with the abolition of the anti-strike laws, which prevent a large part of the working class from fighting, particularly those categories of workers that have been fighting in recent months in France and the UK.

Our article on the minimum wage in Italy addressed another diversion used, in this case by regime unionism, to keep workers from returning to the struggle: that of "tax reform". At the final assembly of the 19th CGIL congress in Rimini, General Secretary Landini called it "the mother of all battles". The main proponent of the trade union fraction that heads the FIOM in Genoa, which declares itself combative and held its congress in Genoa in December 2022 under the slogan "for a class union", agreed with the piecard extraordinaire's statement. In the same article we also denounced this opportunism masquerading as class unionism.

On May Day we distributed the Party's newspaper at a large demonstration in Turin.

On May 13 in Florence, we took part in a demonstration called by the SI Cobas of Prato against police repression of two of its young local leaders. We distributed a specially drafted leaflet to the 600 or so participants ("For the Rebirth of a Strong Class Union Movement Against Exploitation and Repression"). The marching workers showed great attachment to and trust in their union.

In the logistics sector there were three major strikes. One on April 7

in the main shipping companies (BRT, GLS and SDA), members of the employers' association Fedit, which succeeded in causing substantial delays in their activities. A second took place at a cooperative warehouse in Pieve Emanuele, south of Milan. A third important strike was conducted by the smaller ADL Cobas, which has been supporting the SI Cobas for years, at the warehouse of Commit Siderurgica, a steel company in Veggiano, in the province of Padua. A fourth major strike took place at the Stellantis plant (formerly Fiat) in Pomigliano d'Arco, in the province of Naples. We reported and commented on these struggles in the July-August issue ("Latest From Regime Unionism in Italy").

ONE YEAR OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE ACTION NETWORK (CSAN)

One year after its establishment, the two-day meeting of the Class Struggle Action Network (CSAN) Organizing Committee was held in Portland.

The many interventions at strikes, the daily work within unions and in workplaces, the many leaflets, the contact work and much more have brought the work of CSAN to appreciable results. Weekly meetings of workers are held in Portland.

We dealt with the following points as obstacles to the development of the labor movement in the United States:

- the historic racial divisions, which are still an obstacle to the building of true class unions, dividing large sections of workers and restraining their cooperation;
- the obscurity of the history of the labor movement, which serves the bourgeoisie to prevent workers from having an awareness of what they can achieve through struggle;
- employers' espionage and intimidation;
- use of "tipping" as a master manipulation of the natural inclination toward social solidarity in order to cut wages.

We then discussed the following points:

- The need to engage the labor movement more in organizing the unorganized and unskilled workers of

the "gig economy."

One of the focal points is the way work is organized through applications in the style of social media, where customers rate workers. The organization of labor through these technologies is done with the intention of disorganizing workers and destroying unions. You want to go ahead and identify where these workers stop and leaflet, building organizing committees with them, as we have already done elsewhere successfully. Contact will be made with a grassroots union.

- A statement of commitment will be drafted for union militants and a campaign aimed at fighting within unions to bring bargaining dates in line with May Day [of which year?], so that general strike action will be possible.

- How to lend support to CSAN comrades involved in Caucuses (committees at the base of unions that are generally formed for the purpose of changing their direction) in local branches of the UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers: the main union for commercial restaurant workers in the U.S.) outside Portland.
- How to support CSAN's growth in the Mid-West and South through organizing in-person events in these regions.

REFLECTIONS BY PARTY COMRADES ON ACTIVITY IN CSAN.

We Party militants struggle as communist workers within the labor movement, directly alongside other workers. We learn the concrete reality of this struggle, day by day, and intervene in it with the methods of the revolutionary science of dialectical materialism, strengthened and perfected in this practical use of them.

Of this activity of our trade union fraction, we keep the Party Center constantly informed and, in periodic Anglophone meetings, and in general and intercalary international meetings, the entire Party. A summary of them is then reported in the press organs in the various languages, and on the party website, which serve as a central organizing tool for our entire network of militants, in keeping with our historical tradition, with

the party's method of operation of organic centralism.

The work in the Class Struggle Action Network is aimed at bringing the labor movement back to the terrain of class struggle, linking and strengthening the class-based union currents in the current unions. In a little less than a year, we have produced several fruits and, at least for the time being, in the natural tides of the class struggle, we have won some enemy positions, casting aside the rotting corpses of the old opportunist leaderships. We contributed to the formation of a caucus, linked to CSAN, in one of the main regime unions in the country. Organized explicitly on class union principles it has two factory committees and has created a united front with another combative, national-level caucus in the UFCW.

It is through connection with workers' defense organizations organized on class lines, their development into genuine mass organizations in which vast numbers of proletarians are organized, that the Party will be able to grow.

Our Party is the only living political organ that guards in its collective heart and brain the light of revolutionary Marxism, and this is also denoted by the correct method by which it knows how to direct the new forces that come to it, which as a whole are neither rigidly confined to theoretical work nor squandered in hysterical activism, but integrated into an organic work in keeping with the motto "to each according to his ability." The second part of which - "to each according to his needs" - in the Communist Party, which is a pre-figuration of the future communist society, means the satisfaction of the need to be, that is, to act, communist, in the only possible way, working impersonally for the revolution.