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

Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss: On the US Elections

The day after Trump's election an unprecedented stock market boom erupted with the fortunes of the ten richest capitalists in the country growing by \$84 billion, an amount greater than any other single day in the history of Wall Street. The bonanza emerged due to a glut of speculative investments, some in expectation of Trump's tariffs, cronyist dispersal of government contracts, and shooting down the potential regulation of Bitcoin which has become an easily manipulated free market cash cow for big capital to milk the savings of middle class investors. As sections of the big bourgeois salivate over the prospect of dismantling huge swaths of the Federal Government, liquidating its assets, and freeing up more government funds for their own capital accumulation, the continued trimming of regulations to allow for more freewheeling financial speculation, it all only works to hasten the eventual economic catastrophe. Yet in light of the momentary gains in the stock market following the election, the triumphant Trump has been hailed by the bourgeois as the most friendly president to Wall Street ever! This statement was made just weeks after over a dozen former Trump administration loyalists and John Kelly, a former military general and Secretary of Homeland Security under the President Elect, disclosed his open and repeated praise of Adolph Hitler while in office.

Thus in 2024, the capitalist class enthusiastically elected an out-and-out Hitler idolizer as their high chieftain, for the second time in the last decade. Despite the leftist howls and the raising of the bloody shirt of anti-fascism to defend democracy, we know that democracy is fascism and fascism is democracy, the two go hand in hand and are both as American as apple pie. The only way to stop the dictatorship of capital is through the dictatorship of the proletariat. What we have here is a perfect demonstration of the fusion of capital, democracy, and fascism. No matter if it unfolds in its fascistic or democratic veneer, for Capital's continued accumulation the bourgeois will sacrifice all alleged high ideals & noble principles unleashing untold cruelty, carnage, destruction, and misery upon all life on the planet to ensure steady returns on their sacred dollars investments. For democracy has always only served as a means to the end of extending the absolute and totalitarian domination of their class dictatorship and justifying their imperialist military adventures as such nothing fundamentally changes with the return of Trump, only the continuation of a trajectory long set out before him.

The Republican Victory & The Election Casino

Beyond the billions invested into disgusting political propaganda to brainwash the working class into wasting their time voting for either of the capitalist class candidates, outside the hundreds of millions of dollars of speculative stock market investments, the sickening circus in 2024 also gave witness to the newly relegalized practice of outright gambling on elections which had been outlawed for many decades. As a result, hundreds of millions of dollars of bets were placed on both candidates through online election betting markets. On their own, the bourgeois elections have become sources of casino-like speculation and capital accumulation, where an individual capitalist can make or lose tens of millions of dollars based on their chosen candidate being announced the winner.

In this way, the process of the elections has become increasingly commercialized and more directly tied to market dynamics, they reflect the divergent interests of the capitalist class voting with its dollars, expecting electoral returns on their investments, within the prevailing anarchy of production. For the capitalist class as a whole, it is callous economic calculations that drive and determine their ever shifting political commitments. In the policies of Trump, big capital best sees its interests of continued profit accumulation served at the moment, thus the once maligned Trump was elected head honcho of the bourgeoisie alongside his new sidekick Elon Musk who has been appointed leader of Trump's presently only imaginary Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) a tongue in cheek nod to the humorous "meme" crypto-currency which was transformed into another speculative investment ponzi scheme by big capital investors to fleece working class and petit-bourgeois investors. The two are fitting leaders for the sleazy shakedown racket taking place by their clique of billionaires within the decrepit casino that is becoming the American bourgeois state.

Back in 2021, as we reported in TCP

36, the big bourgeois had made a huge vault to Biden and the Democrats, to the extent that Democrats were outpacing the Trump campaign by an unheard of rate of three to one during the 2020 election. Amid the instability brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the arrival of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression that followed, and mass protests against police violence across the country, Biden was a candidate for the bourgeois who represented stability and certainty in economics and politics at the time; however, the immediate interests of the bourgeois have since shifted back over to the Republicans who have painted the state of the economy under Trump in delusional flowery colors, continuing to propagandize the working class masses with their deception that the state of the economy ebbs and flows almost completely dependent upon the policies of this or that president every 4-8 years so that increasing economic discontent of the working class masses is funneled back into one or the other of the two bourgeois parties every other election cycle.

Big Capital & Tech Swing to the Right

The Republican's victory came amid a sharp swing in this electoral cycle of big capital from the Democratic Party camp to the MAGA platform mainly on account of Trump's proposed protectionist trade policies and promises of tax cuts. The sharpest swing in support emerged from the wealthiest capitalists in the world within the tech sector who favor his hands off policies to artificial intelligence (AI) and Bitcoin amid his other deregulatory policies. Unlike the 2016 and 2020 elections, Trump's Republican Party agenda has now earned the support of the leaders of Silicon Valley, who have historically been staunch members of the Democratic Party's "blue wall". Elon Musk, owner of SpaceX and Tesla, who has become the richest man on earth (mostly from obtaining lucrative government contracts that propelled his companies), in 2018 described himself as a moderate who tended to lean Democrat, however in 2024 he personally stumped for Trump and donated over \$140 million to the campaign. Providing incentive for Musk's right turn, under the Biden administration Musk's X social media network, Tesla, SpaceX, and Neuralink companies have all increasingly become subjects of dozens of regulatory battles and overlapping federal investigations from all corners of the government putting them in jeopardy of losing lucrative government contracts they are dependent upon.

After the events of January 6th, 2021, Trump was removed from one of the largest social media platforms in the world, Twitter. Elon Musk subsequently purchased the platform in October 2022, rebranding it to X and adjusting its algorithm to propagandize and spread his rightist views and Trump loyalties and advance his personal celebrity status to which he, like Trump, has achieved a cult like following. Other Silicon Valley magnates such as Mark Zuckerberg who had previously booted Trump from his Facebook social network and Jeff Bezos and Sundar Pichai CEO of Google lined up to kiss the Trump ring, congratulating him on his election win amid more subtle positive comments made during his campaign, despite the three not officially choosing to endorse either party. In a shift in policy, they all cracked down on leftist activism within their own companies this election and disallowed their social media and multimedia outlets from endorsing or expressing positive support for the Democrats.

This in itself represented a major shift to the right from these former extremely powerful bulwarks of "resistance" to Trump within the bourgeois, adding to a growing list of formerly liberal and "moderate" media outlets coming under the control of a small group of far right billionaires disinterested in liberal petit-bourgeois sentimentality and who wish to use their control of these communications technologies to reshape the society to more firmly conform to their bourgeois ideals. Drunk on power, many in the bourgeois now entertain lunatic dreams of attaining immortality through advanced medical procedures, transhumanist technologies, or, like Elon Musk only half jokingly aspires to become, "Imperator of Mars" as he receives billions in government grants to begin building a massive space infrastructure with his SpaceX program to start resource extraction projects in space. A slew of other lesser known but powerful venture capitalists within the tech industry such as David Sacks, Chamath Palihapitiya, and Marc Andreessen moved their support of the Democratic Party to the Republicans.

The Faltering & False Democratic "Resistance"

The initial election of Trump in 2016 shocked the liberal establishment, not because anything he proposed to do was in substance radically different than the policies of the Obama administration but because he frankly and openly embraced the crude violent power games at the core of the bourgeois order and laughed off its hypocritical liberal veneer. The pacifying snake oil delirium of the Obama administration that was applied after the 2008 economic crash which exchanged the disastrous imperialist adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq for the clandestine program of targeted drone assassinations, was again exchanged for Trump's program of hunting of the "enemy within". The presidency of the first Black Commander in Chief, would see the rise of riotous street rebellions against the murder of Black and brown proletarians across the country, that eventually became known as the "Black Lives Matter" movement. The election of Trump in 2016 only threw fuel on this fire, and led to spontaneous street demonstrations across the country. The rage of these hyper exploited youth as a result for the inhumane senselessness of their murder in defense of property by the bourgeois police forces, transferred into rage against an entire system now openly demonstrating its hostility as Trump focused his tough on crime polemics against the BLM "terrorists".

Of course, as happened with the Black lives matters movement, the rage following Trumps election was all quickly tamed and diverted into reformist avenues by the grassroots elements of the Democratic Party apparatus, students and the liberal non-profit activist organizations who sought to profit off the situation and establish their political careers on the false hopes and dreams of "defunding the police" and other pie-in the sky solutions; however, a repeat of these events did not emerge in 2024, not because "no body cares anymore" as the pathetic liberals have been sobbing about, but because no one is surprised.

The last Trump term gave rise to the development of massive activist encampments attempting to surround and shut down Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities in many cities, the return of the spontaneous mass action against police violence in the form of the rise of the 2020 George Floyd which left entire police departments burnt to the ground, amid a raging pandemic that resulted in a massive economic crisis and led to millions of workers being unemployed and living off of government subsidy checks. In addition to four long years of roving street brawls, with Trump supporters and anti-fascist frequently overrunning large sections of major American cities leaving thousands injured and many dead alongside them. The ultimate result of these years of dramatic activist, anti-fascist, and "abolitionist" street antics against the armadas of Trump supporting paramilitaries such as Proud Boys & Oath Keepers? Little more than stirring up more votes for their respective bourgeois candidates. The ensuing election of Biden allowed the illusion of bourgeois social peace to be restored and it was "back to brunch" for the middle class liberal intelligentsia, activists, anarchists, and anti-fascist adventurists who saw no reason to keep up their heroic resolve. Those who are serious about addressing the ensuing social crisis of capital know that it is only through the establishment of class unionism, via the active work within workers defensive organizations, diligently struggling to rebuild them with a classist character uniting our struggles and defending the most highly exploited, can we oppose the capitalist class offensive in a serious way that connects with the masses of workers on the grounds of the material economic struggle to see that ultimately it is synonymous with the political struggle between classes.

The Republican's Agenda 47

The 2024 elections in the United States led to a sweeping victory for the Republican Party over the presidency and obtaining majorities in the Legislative Branch along with their continued retention of a majority in the Supreme Court. The program of the Republican Party under Trump is a platform called Agenda 47. The platform puts forward a program founded on a number of points. We will review them here to get a sense of the direction the Republican faction of the bourgeoisie wishes to move in with the understanding that what they are actually able to accomplish remains to be seen.

A central focus repeated throughout the Republican's manifesto is the political persecution of "Marxists" and "leftists". The document focuses on creating systems to verify the "patriotic" commitments of school teachers before providing licensure. Additionally, it aims to create systems to overhaul the university accreditation system removing funding for campuses that endorse leftist views, while threatening to deport all immigrant students who engage in protests against the Israeli bourgeois states' actions in Gaza. The platform is also replete with condemnations of the "deep state", which represents established figures indoctrinated with the traditional bourgeois values within the state bureaucracies, who opposed Trump's illegal methods in his previous presidency. He threatens to use his administration to imprison his former opponents and prosecute media outlets that censor Republican Party propaganda and its countless factual fabrications. He is calling for special councils to organize the purge of his political enemies within the bourgeois state with a particular focus on the mass firing of generals and admirals in the military and cleaning house within the intelligence agencies. Additionally, he promises to defund "sanctuary cities", which became a thorn in his immigration policies in his last term from Federal government support.

We can see in these proposed policies a parallel to the two historical "Red Scares" in America which have been perpetuated under both Democratic and Republican administrations. The same methods were employed by the bourgeoisie during the international revolutionary wave following the Bolshevik Revolution, and again under McCarthyism in response to the rising proletarian struggles after the conclusion of World War Two, to purge communist and leftist leadership from the universities, Hollywood, the government and of most importantly of the unions. Acts such as the Communist Control Act of 1954, outlawed the Stalinist Communist Party and criminalized participation in affiliation with "communist-action" groups.

How far reaching the political purges will be able to go under Trump is highly questionable, the effective execution of his measures would also likely create a brain drain within the bourgeois state and military structures making them increasingly ineffective and unstable. Additionally, his current list of proposed loyalist appointees features individuals with minimal experience in managing large organizations, which could likely lead to bogging down and complete dysfunction of critical institutions for maintaining bourgeois class repressive power as they are swallowed in internal fighting between the warring factions.

They aspire to realize the long standing Republican aim of abolishing the federal Department of Education and moving the education system to a private system in addition to calling for the funding of new pathways to obtain higher education through the creation of new patriotic universities backed by private financing and taxes put on the existing universities, that would offer free college alongside a nationalist indoctrination. Beyond this, they plan to roll back the Biden era SAVE plan which will result in many cases the doubling of student loan debt repayment costs for millions something that is virtually guaranteed to happen.

Central to their platform is the promise of organizing the largest mass deportation in US history. Trump boasts of immediately deporting millions of immigrants; however, his plan for implementing such a promise seems distant as was his promise of building a large wall on the southern border during his last term and he currently has no realistic plan for funding the project which would cost hundreds of billions of dollars. In fact, his administration in his first term proved unable to deport more immigrants than other administrations, and his cruel policy of family separation, he was ultimately forced to reverse.

According to the Pew Research Center, "The share of workers who are immigrants increased slightly from 17% in 2007 to 18% in 2022. By contrast, the share of immigrant workers who are unauthorized declined from a peak of 5.4% in 2007 to 4.8% in 2022". Despite the fact that immigration levels in the United States have more or less remained stable over the last two decades, a manufactured hysteria over a number of falsified stories such as Haitian immigrants eating pets in Springfield Ohio which are consistently spread on the media to stir up the ages old racist misdirection of class antagonism onto immigrants stealing jobs, raping and murdering women and as the source of the drug epidemic and crisis. The actions by the Fed to crush the wages of workers by creating more competition for jobs and thus more unemployment through raising interest rates after the opening of the War on Ukraine is misdirected onto the

immigrant who is blamed for "stealing jobs". The Republican Party machine and its associated media conglomerates stir up panic in their followers; however, as we have mentioned the true aim of this policy is not to actually stop immigration but to create a section of hyper-exploited immigrants stripped of all bourgeois rights that can be utilized in a matter analogous to slave labor. The mobilization of the military to assist with deportations would likely be used to assist with the building of more immigrant detention centers of which the state has only a limited number and can only deport as many as it can house in such facilities. Of course often immigrants will end up languishing in these centers for years and becoming subjected to years of prison slave labor. Corporations such as the GEO group run almost all of the states immigrant detention centers and like the planter class of old, require a constant expansion of hard on crime policies to keep fresh supply of slave labor and lucrative state contracts coming in.

In regards to race and gender issues, the Republicans renew their attack against their longstanding strawman of "equity and inclusion" policies, affirmative action, and the teaching of America's history with racism in schools which the Republicans have titled "Critical Race Theory". They also aim at banning the teaching of "gender ideology" within schools and aim for reversal on gender affirming healthcare practices within the US government that will further limit healthcare access for millions of transgender and gender non-conforming people. The hard on crime policies that advocate for giving the death penalty to drug dealers alongside boosteristic comments regarding the police, and with his policies against minority groups and immigrants, it aims to keep some ethnic and gender groups in a position to be extra exploited layers for Capital, while the select few of vetted conformists are elevated to the ranks of the shrinking middle classes and labor aristocracies to serve capital. He has taken a more moderate position on abortion, while he now is peddling the idea of providing "baby bonuses" to increase the birth rate. Trump has departed from traditional Republican positions in regards to his support for fully funding Medicaid and Social Security.

As we discussed in TCP 60 a central component of Trump's campaign has been the weaponizing of tariffs to wage economic warfare across the world in an acclaimed attempt to reshore industry back to the United States. For the national capital, reshoring industry is essential if the United States wishes to go to war with the world's workshop, China; however, their success in doing this in a thorough way remains questionable. The likelihood of massive inflation if these policies are applied as presented in the campaign is guaranteed. To what extent Trump actually leverages the tariffs or merely uses them as a threat is yet to be seen; however, his promise of lowering inflation is highly contradicted by his promise of implementing astronomical tariffs on the U.S.'s two largest trading partners early in his presidency.

The Trump platform explicitly promises to prevent World War Three by bringing about a rapid end to the conflict in Ukraine. As we have reviewed also in TCP 60, it is already largely a lost cause with Russia's eventual victory guaranteed, so for the bourgeois, a reversal in position on Ukraine is necessary at this moment. For U.S. imperialism a total victory in Ukraine is not necessary. Its larger objective of keeping German capital to the side of the US has been accomplished and a rapid escalation of the imperialist war at this very moment does not suit the interest of US imperialism, which is busying itself with an attempt to build up its productive industries ahead of war with China. Under Trump, he promises a whole scale re-evaluation of the use of the NATO coalition itself as it seems that some in the bourgeois hope to rekindle ties with Russia in possible hopes of isolating it from China by allowing Russia to develop more fully as its own regional imperialist power. A notion violently rejected by the established military heads within the bourgeois government. And it was for his position on Ukraine that he was initially charged and impeached by the Democrats during his presidency as we reported in TCP 18. Trump's apparent "isolationist" agenda is built upon higher funding for the military and a doubling down on the Reagan era promises of weaponizing space and creating a missile defense "iron dome" around the United States.

The Trump campaign attempted to win over workers by flirting with the Teamsters and dressing Trump up like a McDonald's worker and then a garbage man. His platform throws a bone at workers in promising to exempt service workers from taxation of their tips. Thus while the Trump campaign has signaled tolerance for the established regime trade unions, both capitalist parties

increasingly courting them in expectation of the need for pacified labor in advance of an inflating economy, the threats of a renewed Red Scare by Trump also aim at ensuring their subordination for Capital as it continues to develop its war economy. Likewise, he has also put forward plans radically breaking with established Republican policies by promising to create social programs to end homelessness, “clean up American cities”, and has vague proposals for building new mega structure monuments to “patriotic” historical figures.

Another major focus of the manifesto is in regard to deregulations that benefit the US oil industry, and ending tax credits for electric vehicles to benefit US automanufacturers. While the presence of Elon Musk in the Trump administration, owner of the largest electric vehicle company in the United States, would seem to be contrary to this policy Tesla’s “unmatched” scale and longer history of making profitable EVs, could give it “a clear competitive advantage in a non-EV subsidy environment.” Tesla’s lead in the U.S. market may also be buffered by higher tariffs on Chinese imports, which could “continue to push away cheaper Chinese EV players (BYD, Nio, etc.) from flooding the US market over the coming years.”

The Revolutionary Catastrophe

As the bourgeois continue to expose the naked reality of the totalitarian nature of their fascist democratic states and move forward their preparation for the next general inter-imperialist war, we do not despair because it is on this path that the historical stage for the revolutionary catastrophe will eventually be set and from the inherent instability of the capitalist economy, its unavoidable boom and bust cycles, the re-emergence of the class struggle on a mass scale is inevitable, if not immediate but assisted by the ever advancing communications technologies which when the time is right will provide the basis for a qualitative leap of the class struggle and the unification of the of proletarians masses under the revolutionary Marxist program. The continued liquidation of the democratic illusion will only help make the revolutionary necessity all the more obvious to the masses when this unhealthy capitalism finally explodes and the next general inter-imperialist war emerges. The re-establishment of a combative class unionism and its development into a generalized classist civil war united behind the slogans of revolutionary defeatism advanced by its international communist party will eventually result in the victorious dictatorship of the proletariat and the exit of the vicious domination of capital from history, even if today it seems a far off prospect. For now, the organized forces of the proletariat remain small, scattered, and disorganized; however, the rising waves of strike action and combative unionism across the globe show that the sparks of the live wire of proletarian struggle are re-energizing in a way that is already horrifying to the bourgeoisie.

Thus as big capital mobilizes itself for a speeding up of the liquidation of the middle classes that service its state and the creation of an enlarged section of hyper-exploited workers with precarious legal rights through its attacks on immigrants, amid the reorganization of its production system within its national territories in preparation for the next inter-imperialist war, it is completely rational how at this juncture Capital would move to take off its democratic velvet glove to take back up its iron hammer of fascism; however, as the forefathers of our Party in the Communist Party of Italy said when fascism first emerged in Italy to curb the revolutionary threat raised by the workers movement of the time, fascism is not a maneuver that will prolong the existence of this rotten putrefying system; to the contrary, it foreshadows its last act.

The Bourgeois Poison Economy: Workers Crushed in the Expansion of the Opiate Markets

According to the recent numbers from the Center for Disease Control(CDC), for the first time in the many years since the crisis began, the yearly opioid related death rate in the US has finally started to decrease instead of increase- from 84,181 deaths in 2022, to 81,083 in 2023. Yet, these numbers still represent a staggering amount of dead proletarians caught in the impersonal steamroller of a developing market. What has been called the "opioid crisis" has been ravaging working class families for over two decades, accumulating in the deaths of over a million Americans.

The first wave of the crisis began in the 1990s with the emergence of new pharmaceutical drugs that claimed to address "the fifth vital sign" of pain. These drugs– like the now infamous Oxycontin produced by Purdue Pharma– were marketed directly towards workers who struggled with work-related injuries and the long term bodily deterioration that results from a lifetime of compulsory labor. It is no coincidence that studies have shown that workers employed in industries that have higher reports of work injuries are also more likely to die from an opioid related overdose. (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report).

The new drugs were attempting to

extend the natural limits of the disposal of the workers labor-power under the demanding control of capital and numb the pain of the beaten down proletariat, pacifying any discontent towards their miserable condition; but the primary purpose was to secure a new market that turned a favorable profit- it is inconsequential to the bourgeoisie what the outcomes of emerging markets have on entire nations (war, embargo, sanctions), much less an individual consumer.

In order to continuously expand this promising market, the pharmaceutical industry conjured an alliance of bourgeois "scientists" to engineer a scientific legitimacy for their proposed "fifth vital sign", and eventually the bourgeois state had all the "evidence" needed to begin relaxing regulations on the production and distribution of the drugs– fully releasing the capital that was gnawing at the bit to prescribe as much as it could to as many as it could. By 2001, Purdue Pharma had already amassed a fortune of \$2.8 Billion in revenue and between 2000 and 2010, opiate sales had quadrupled in number.

All the while, the masses were continuing to develop a growing opiate addiction through legal Oxycontin prescriptions in the home market, coupled with the rise of petty bourgeois "pill mills", whose sole purpose was to exploit the semi-legal ambiguity of the market and cash-out on the high demand. Within this stage of the crisis, the effects of over-prescribing and the consequential legal disputes over the bogus data from the drug manufacturers led to the slow reintroduction of some slight restrictions again; but the damage was already done– between 1999 and 2019, opiate related overdoses increased by 519.38%.

The flooding of opiates in the legal market resulted in a sharp decline in the prices of street opiates like heroin in the "illegal" markets. A combination of cheaper illicit opiates, increasing restrictions on the legal market, and a booming demand from addicts resulted in what is now known as the "second wave" of the opioid crisis approximately around 2010. Mexican drug cartels were able to simultaneously increase their heroin production and keep a steady supply of a low-cost product going into the US. This significantly increased the capital able to be advanced into their production, improving their stake in the global market of heroin and helping them become the 5th largest employer in Mexico. This led to a general rise in their integration into the established Mexican bourgeoisie, with allegations that Mexico's previous president, López Obrador, had received \$2 Million from cartels towards his first presidential campaign in hopes that he would treat them favorably.

New horrific heights of the crisis began to appear with the introduction of fentanyl– a synthetic opiate with a higher potency per weight than other opiates– into the now thriving illicit opioid markets, doubling the rate of opioid related deaths in the US from 10.4 to 21.4 per 100,000, and bringing us to the current "third wave" that has lasted from approximately 2016 until now. Because of its cheaper cost in production (no longer reliant on the time constraints and natural reproductive limits of agriculture) and its increased potency per weight compared to other opiates, the synthetic opiate caused a reduction in the necessary labor time to meet the growing market demand, yielding a far greater rate of profit for the enterprising Mexican cartels.

China is the largest supplier of the necessary components in making fentanyl and although the country has "banned" the production and sale of fully synthesized fentanyl since 2019, the precursors that are used in fentanyl production are still made through largely petty bourgeois manufacturers and are less regulated; the shipments then make their way into Mexican cartel laboratories where the components are synthesized and set out for distribution in the US.

It is at this point, the entry of the drugs into the country, where the limits of the American bourgeois political analysis begins and ends, being a frequent topic for the bourgeois parties and their rhetoric on immigration from the southern border. Trump's infamous wall strategy, that the Democrats have all but formally adopted as their own, is their proposed "answer" to the illegal drug distribution routes as well as increased funding for drug enforcement, immigration, and border agents; but the mythical bourgeois "invisible hand of the market" passes through all physical barriers and aims to accumulate capital around the prevailing centers of gravity. Most illegal drugs come through legal points of entry, sometimes even with the aid of border agents, and the wall is nothing but a laughable symbolic failure of the bourgeoisie in being able to address the crisis from within.

The overall response to the crisis from the various bourgeoisies has been largely focused on the suppression or criticism of certain markets in favor of their own; with the bourgeoisie of the United States hypocritically only blaming the cartels, the Chinese government, and the Mexican government for the immense American deaths, while the Sackler family– the architects of the "first wave"-- dealt with only mild symbolic gestures of public shame, all while "gifting" their family \$325 million from Purdue's assets before filing bankruptcy. The Mexican bourgeoisie blames the high American demand for opiates for the rise in the power of the cartels, while their police and politicians have frequently been found to have collaborated with the organizations. The cartels wage turf wars amongst themselves for a seat on the throne of the national monopoly, sometimes resolving to consolidate into trusts instead when conditions are more

profitable to do so. The Chinese bourgeoisie have left the production of fentanyl precursors untouched, as they suspended any counter-narcotic negotiations with the US in light of growing tensions between the two imperial powers, and although new regulations were promised starting in September, it's unlikely they will completely damper a major export, seeing as they're the second largest pharmaceutical market in the world after the US and capital never moves benevolently.

The United States funnels the majority of its resources into the DEA, FBI, and police in order to crack down on supply lines, while leaving the workers and masses struggling with addiction to the private rehab industry, which has naturally grown into a sizable multi-billion dollar industry itself:

"And just as the worn-out parts from machines or industrial experiments are utilized in some other productive process, so the energy locked up in human corpses can also be used. From this viewpoint, which is unique to the imperialist state, the work of doctors, sisters of mercy, the Red Cross, and similar organizations represents a repair job done on those instruments of imperialist competition that are worn out, but are still suitable for further use. As for the scholars, who are struggling with gum diseases, typhus, and cholera, their work is that of a lubricator who applies the oil and eliminates excessive friction in an enormous, death-dealing machine." Comrade Bukharin rightfully examined how the bourgeoisie can repurpose the "wastes" of capital back into productive elements, even the dead or dying bodies of proletarians; and the state's reincorporation of workers tossed indefinitely into the relative surplus population while struggling with addiction are turned into profitable dependents of the rehab industry when the only other options are death or jail time.

The plight of the masses is never truly the concern of the bourgeoisie as long as the markets are favorable; all the better that the suffering is "for nothing" in their eyes. The bourgeoisie has never once hesitated to meddle in the illegal markets themselves. Beyond the everyday corruption of individual politicians and policemen in the petty drug trade, the tradition of organized action of the imperialist bourgeoisie in the drug market can be seen as far back as the first Opium War.

By 1813, the Chinese government had fully banned opium due to the rising concern that increased opium trade was causing the country to import more than it was exporting, hemorrhaging the national circulation of silver. Imperialist Britain, acting here as the smuggler of the illegal drugs, hired private merchants (often American) to continue the flow of product into China despite restrictions. In 1834, the British East India Company's monopoly on the opium market ceased; the small dealers, now able to better compete amongst each other, began slashing drug prices, and opium usage among the Chinese masses skyrocketed.

With so many of the working peasants now paralyzed from addiction and the threat of insufficient economic reproduction necessary for the Chinese ruling class to continue to operate, the government's decision to destroy offshore shipments and stockpiles of British opium set to be distributed in China was made; the British bourgeoisie, outraged by the loss of their precious capital, had all the casus belli needed to flex their imperialist might and send the two countries into armed conflict, with Britain eventually capturing Hong Kong and forcing Chinese markets to continue to open through further imperial pressure and conflicts.

But the bourgeoisie's participation in the illegal drug markets and their imperialist appetites have anything but ceased. In the 1980s, in what has infamously been dubbed the Iran-Contra Affair, the Reagan administration revealed the backroom cooperation of bourgeois powers when they violated their own arms embargo on Iran and facilitated the illegal trade of US-made weapons in fear that the Soviet Union might utilize the market vacuum for their own imperialist needs. The US bourgeoisie decided to "kill two birds with one stone" and funnel profits from the illegal arms deal into the reactionary Nicaraguan paramilitary militia, known as the Contras, in an effort to overthrow the Nicaraguan government and secure American influence in the country. The Contras were involved in numerous clandestine enterprises, including the distribution of cocaine into the US, notably at a time when the crack cocaine epidemic was at an all time high.

Similarly in the 1980s, the CIA– in a proxy war against the Soviet Union– was also involved in funding the Mujahideen forces in Afghanistan, who were relying on opium and heroin exports to fund their arms procurements. These "drugs for arms" transactions developed into quite lucrative enterprises, and once Iran restricted the production of poppy seeds, Afghanistan became the natural choice for the primary supplier. Afghanistan now has almost a complete monopoly on global heroin production at approximately 85% of all heroin and morphine supplied worldwide, with many Afghan farmers completely economically reliant on the export of the poppy cash crop.

What this current opioid crisis has taught us, is that capital– in both the "legal" and "illegal" markets– has operated, continues to operate, and will operate by its one compelling motive: profit. The independent bourgeoisies, though engaged in a competitive struggle for monopolization, have mutually flourished in the plight of the working class in the opioid crisis, whether it be the imperial powers– China and the US being the largest

pharmaceutical markets in the world with trade agreements between the two collectively raking in \$700 Billion in 2022; or the smaller countries caught in the imperial vice of the global market, becoming more and more subordinate to either the developed imperial powers or collaborating with the rising drug lords; or the cartels, who from lumpen and petty bourgeois origins and with the aid of foreign capital, are becoming formidable bourgeois powers within their countries.

All the while, the working class has become more addicted, incarcerated, left to the mercy of the rehab industry, and unfortunately killed in mass by the bourgeois poison economy; reflecting the cynical reality of capitalism's ultimate logic and the effects of the deep alienation of workers living in the absence of a strong workers movement and the hopelessness many feel outside of sensual pleasure and individual consumption in the face of capitalistic brutality.

While the rate of opioid deaths has indeed started to fall– for reasons still largely unknown– the rate is still drastically higher than pre-pandemic rates and is still an ongoing tragedy. One potential reason proposed for the decline is that new tranquilizer drugs like Xylazine are replacing opiates as the drug of choice for addicts and has a lower overdose percentage compared to fentanyl; its own consequences have yet to be fully realized. Another reason could be the accessibility of naloxone has helped save people from overdose situations while they continue to struggle with day-to-day addiction; but the most grim possible reason could be that the population most at risk of dying, simply has already died, leaving a smaller pool of at-risk addicts.

We can really only believe that through the realization of a strong workers movement, alongside the restoration of the historical Communist Party, that the poisons of the bourgeoisie will no longer be the only option to soothe the bodily pain of compulsory labor, to fill the inner voids created by bourgeois society, that we will no longer be the guinea pigs of bourgeois science, and that we are able to develop our senses and employ our labor in a way that is not alien, but natural and life affirming to us, and that we will see no reason to escape material reality in favor of sense-altering commodities peddled by the various bourgeoisies.

The War Between States And Classes in the Middle East

Fourteen months after the beginning of the conflict in Gaza, the rapidly unfolding events come to confirm it is a clash between regional and world imperialisms. On the blood and unspeakable suffering of the Palestinian people speculate the bourgeois powers for their purposes of mere capitalist profit. In Gaza, it is not a Palestinian national struggle but a resistance to survive of a population held hostage in a war between bourgeois states, and militias in their pay, kept imprisoned in the Strip by many jailers, including the bourgeois Israeli, Egyptian states and Hamas militias.

Since early September, IDF operations have extended north into Lebanon against pro-Iranian Shiite Hezbollah militias. These, in support of Hamas militias, had since Oct. 8, 2023, taken to striking Israel daily with missiles and drones, forcing the evacuation of some 70,000 Israelis from the northern area bordering Lebanon. On July 27, a Hezbollah missile hit Majdal Shams, in the Israeli-occupied Golan since 1967, a Druze-majority town, killing 12 children. Majdal Shams lies on the slopes of Mount Hermon, whose 2,800-meter-plus summit, the highest from the entire Syria to Sinai, is in Syrian territory.

Israeli operations against Hezbollah began with daily air force bombardments targeting areas of the country and the capital Beirut controlled by the Shiite party. These were joined on Sept. 17 and 18 by explosions of pagers and portable radios carried by militiamen and men in the service of the Shiite party, killing dozens and wounding thousands, some seriously, even the Iranian ambassador in Beirut. On Sept. 27, a very violent bombing hit the bunker in the Lebanese capital where Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah was staying, killing him. A substantial part of the Shiite party's leadership structure was eliminated.

In the meantime, the State of Israel has massed troops on the border and since October 1 has begun a ground operation. This, however, has been limited, with penetrations into Lebanese territory no more than about ten kilometers, aimed at targeting military infrastructure built by Hezbollah after the previous conflict with Israel in 2006.

Operations in southern Lebanon have been far more limited than those carried out in Gaza since the end of October 2023, due to the superior warfare strength of Hezbollah militias compared to Hamas militias, both in terms of equipment and training. This fact manifested itself immediately, with several casualties among Israeli soldiers. However, between air, spy and ground actions, the Israeli operation against Hezbollah has been an undoubted success, weakening it greatly.

Hezbollah's missile launches against northern Israel since the day after the Oct. 7 massacre by Hamas militias in the kibbutzim in the south, established a link between the two forces and the two conflicts, within the

more general framework of Iran's strategy to strengthen its imperialist interests, which conflict with the rest in the region, using pro-Iranian militias in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon with Hezbollah and in Yemen with the Houthis.

All these fighting forces constituted the so-called “circle of fire” of the bourgeois regime in Tehran, as well as the so-called “Shiite corridor,” which ran from Iran to the Mediterranean coast of Lebanon via northeastern Iraq and Syria.

Israel's operation against Hezbollah led to a fragile truce as of Nov. 27. Regardless of its duration, the first result of this agreement was to break the link between Hezbollah's action and that of Hamas, which thus finds itself more isolated in Gaza.

Above the outcomes of the conflicts between the capitalist powers and their militias, what is important to note is that the proletariat if it took part in these conflicts would not gain any useful results for itself. There is nothing revolutionary or even progressive about the terrain of inter-imperialist confrontation. The nationalist, i.e., bourgeois, Palestinian and Kurdish parties that are part of these war fronts do not represent any positive historical gains.

The weakening of Hezbollah in Lebanon was quickly reflected in Syria, with similar subsidence of the pro-Iranian forces that had helped save the Assad regime during the years of the civil war from 2011 until its temporary halt in 2018. This benefited Turkey, which supported the lightning-fast military action that led to the fall of the Syrian regime within a dozen days.

With the fall of the Assad regime, Israel occupied the demilitarized area of the Golan, the summit of Mount Hermon and its Syrian side, and thereby widened the encirclement of Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon, a strategic disadvantage that added to the disruption of land supply routes from Iran through Syria.

Turkish President Erdoğan, who in the Islamic and Middle Eastern world has always paid lip service to the “Palestinian cause” by pursuing Turkish imperialist aims, has struck at Iranian ones, helping to isolate Hamas in Gaza and strengthen the State of Israel.

When Israel began operations against Hezbollah in September, opportunist parties in Western countries took to flying the Lebanese flag along with the Palestinian flag. But it is first the Lebanese bourgeois parties opposed to Hezbollah that are benefiting and felicitating the Israeli offensive. The idea of a Lebanese population united against Israel is one of the fantasies that excite the feeble minds of opportunists who have replaced class struggle with war between bourgeois states. The only movement in Lebanon that went in the direction of overcoming religious and ethnic divisions was the one that arose in 2019 out of the economic crisis, which set in motion squares that finally united the working class in the struggle for its vital needs, certainly not to support one of the fronts of the many wars tearing the Middle East apart.

Even the bourgeois Iranian regime shows that it supports the Palestinian cause only for the purposes of its imperialist diplomacy: the actions of Hezbollah, the militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Houtis, directed against Israel after October 7, 2023, have remained disconnected from each other, and always at low intensity.

Even the Moscow regime, an advocate of a “new multipolar world,” has held fast to a tacit agreement whereby it has never stood in the way of Israeli air force actions that in 14 months of conflict have repeatedly struck pro-Iranian forces in Syria, contributing to the result of the fall of the Assad regime, the weakening of Hezbollah, and the further isolation of Hamas.

In Gaza

Since mid-October, the Israeli army has begun a new operation in the northern area of the Strip, focusing on the towns of Jabalya, Beit Lahia and Beit Hanun, north of Gaza City.

The population, which had been pushed en masse to the south of the Strip, had then partly returned to the north, in the order of several hundred thousand people. This new operation has largely pushed them back out again.

Living conditions have deteriorated further, health-wise and food-wise, with winter and malnutrition advancing. On November 28, three women were killed when crushed by crowds massed to receive bread. Supply convoys, dozens of trucks, are struggling to arrive either because they are being looted by gangs or because the Israeli army is stopping their entry.

The former Chief of Staff of the Israeli army himself, Moshe Yaalon, has declared that “ethnic cleansing” is underway in Gaza, through the destruction of homes, hospitals, schools, the shutting down of food, electricity and water supplies, and bombings.

The Hamas military force appears to have been largely destroyed for several months. However it remains, difficult to say to what extent, its control over the population, with police forces and other salaried personnel. The Israeli government's proclaimed goal of the “total destruction” of Hamas appears dosed just right to allow its control over the population and an indefinite continuation of military operations in the Strip.

Because the underlying problem, not only of the Israeli bourgeoisie but of all states in the area, is social control.

In 2000 there were 1.5 million inhabitants of the Strip. By the start of the conflict in 2023 they had increased to 2.3 million. An article in Haaretz on Dec. 5, showed how Israeli State Archives records show that “the current aspiration of the far right to ‘encourage the emigration’ of Palestinians from the

Gaza Strip merely echoes ideas and proposals discussed in the past by prime ministers, ministers and leaders of leftist governments who were among the country's founding fathers." Such proposals were made at the time of the occupation of the Gaza Strip with the "six-day war" in 1967, when 400,000 Palestinian Arabs lived there.

The continuity for more than half a century of the goals of Israel's bourgeois left and right parties and among their governments does not demonstrate - as the supporters of the "Palestinian resistance" argue - the peculiar character of the Israeli state due to its Zionist ideological matrix, but the marked course of every bourgeois state under given material conditions. Oppression of minorities, ethnic cleansing, genocide are not traits peculiar to certain cultures or ideologies but the determined outcome of capitalism and its social control over its national state machinery: in order to stand upright they must necessarily resort to these methods.

In controlling the Gaza proletariat, Hamas and the Israeli bourgeois state act in objective concord. Insoluble task, however, as much for the Israeli state as for all the bourgeois states in the area, so much so that no one wants its inhabitants. It is the entire concert of regional and world powers, it is capitalism as a whole, that keeps more than two million Gazawis imprisoned, stricken by bombs, hunger, cold and disease.

Fourteen months into the conflict, the Hamas Ministry of Health claims nearly 45,000 victims, half of whom died in the first three months of the conflict. Hamas is interested in not distinguishing between militiamen and civilians and inflating the numbers to feed the propaganda theme of "martyred people," but the massacre is admitted by the Israeli government itself, which in fact provides similar numbers.

The conflict that arose there and extended far beyond the Strip, however, is one of the pieces that make up the picture of capitalism's march toward a new world conflict.

In this perspective, the proletarians and dispossessed of Gaza are today reserved for the first and worst suffering. The way out, for them and for proletarians in all countries, is to struggle and free themselves from the bourgeois parties and regimes that have led them to the present slaughter, and would like them to participate and take sides in this war between imperialisms.

This in Gaza means fighting against Hamas and the other Palestinian nationalist parties. They go in the opposite direction to the search for international solidarity of the working class, the actions against the Israeli civilian population, which alienates the support of those workers who are fighting against the imperialist policy of their bourgeois regime in the name of proletarian internationalism and anti-capitalist struggle.

This is the political direction-the only one that can be called communist-that will be established internationally and also among the Palestinian proletarian masses.

In Israel

On the Israeli side, the casualties of this war are about 1,650, including 1,200 in the Oct. 7 attack and about 450 among the soldiers, at least according to official figures, after the start in late October 2023 of the ground invasion of the Gaza Strip and then a year later of southern Lebanon: one soldier a day. To these must be added about 100 of the 200 abducted on Oct. 7 still in Hamas hands.

These numbers are not certain. For example, former Israeli Army Major General Yitzhak Brik, interviewed Sept. 3 in Haaretz, said the war in Gaza was "driving the army to collapse ... before long we will no longer be able to carry out those repeated raids, because with each passing day the Israel Defense Forces are weakening and the number of dead and wounded in action among our soldiers is increasing."

On Sept. 17, still in Haaretz, he reiterated, "Hamas still controls the entire Strip, including the tunnel city and all Gaza residents, in every sector of life. The IDF has no way to end its rule, even though the organization is weaker than in the past. The constant fighting has lost all purpose, and the war of attrition is destroying everything good in Israel: its economy, its international relations, its social resilience and the motivation of its fighters. Many reservists refuse to be recalled again and again."

A leader of the group "Parents of Soldiers Who Shot Enough" said on Sept. 22, "We are patriotic Zionist families. Our children are sacrificing their lives, bodies and souls in a war that has no end ... We started in an attempt to prevent the invasion of Rafah in May and we continue to shout today ... My son is in the town of Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip ... his mandatory military service was extended by four months after he spent 10 months straight fighting in the Gaza Strip. Not even during the Vietnam War were soldiers left on the battlefield for so long without a break."

Still on December 9, 3 Israeli soldiers were killed in Jabalia. Hamas is therefore still able to carry out sorties.

It is necessary for Israel-as it would be for any bourgeois state-to hand over social and political control of the Gaza masses to local bourgeois parties. Short of resorting to a genocidal policy of ethnic cleansing.

Hamas is a party that has a petty-bourgeois heart - with a layer of political cadres drawn from well-presented strata of Palestinian society, particularly students at Islamic universities; it has a body made up of the dispossessed and the underclass - enlisted as laborers through the system of welfare from Islamic charity, following a model similar to that of Hezbollah in Lebanon and drawing historical origins from the Muslim

Brotherhood, as well as profitable UN aid management; and it has a bourgeois head, in the highest echelons of the organization, commanded with the strings of international funding by the regional and world bourgeois powers, of which the known ones are Iran, Qatar and Turkey. Moreover, one cannot overlook the fact that it was the Israeli intelligence services themselves who foraged the Islamist Hamas movement to reduce the influence of the secular P.L.O. This is the reality of the nature and survival of Hamas.

The difficulties experienced by the Israeli army in ground operations in Gaza are reflected in its control of the working class inside Israel. The September 1, 2024 rallies brought hundreds of thousands of protesters to the streets of Tel Aviv and other cities. They have been demanding a truce with Hamas and the release of hostages for months. Moving them is the growing malaise over the endless continuation of the war, the hostages, the trickle of dead soldiers and the economic hardship generated by the conflict, the effects of which companies naturally pass on to wage earners.

As much as the working class is still firmly shackled to the policies of its bourgeois state as expressed by successive governments, these demonstrations stood against the war, thereby against the imperialist policy of the Israeli bourgeois state and its submission to the American master.

The Histadrut regime union, the largest labor confederation in the country, has called for a general strike on September 3 in support of a negotiated settlement to bring the hostages home. The Histadrut has a deep-rooted tradition of class collaborationism. For years it has run cooperatives, companies, banks, schools with a turnover of 20 percent of the national GDP. As the overproduction crisis of capitalism progressed, which the international bourgeoisie temporarily remedied with so-called neo-liberal economic policies, "Zionist socialism" also fell into decline. The Histadrut has lost its economic empire and membership has plummeted from 1,800,000 to 200,000, only to rise again in recent years to 800,000, out of a labor force of 4.5 million wage earners in 2023.

The Sept. 3 general strike was supported by the country's industrialists. The president of the Employers' Association, said, "The Association supports the strike and accuses the government of failing in its 'moral duty' to bring the prisoners home safely. Without the return of the hostages, we will not be able to end the war or rehabilitate ourselves as a society and begin to rehabilitate the Israeli economy."

In the intentions of the propadronal leadership of the Histadrut, the strike was certainly not intended to crack national solidarity between the working class and the bourgeoisie, but rather to support a political deployment of the ruling class and to give vent to the workers' unease over their worsening conditions by preventing actions beyond its control.

But for the workers, the motive for the strike is their living conditions, and going on strike in a country at war is a lesson that can serve the proletariat of Israel in the future when the Israeli bourgeoisie, having regained unity about the line to conduct its class politics, wants to involve the workers more and more in its warmongering and imperialist policy.

Moreover, the strike brought Arab-Israeli workers closer to Jewish workers, cracking the wall erected by the Israeli, Iranian and Arab bourgeoisies to divide them.

After the September 3 strike, the demonstrations returned to their previous size, with several thousand participants. Obviously, military "successes" carry with them the poisoned fruit of pacifying the home front. But difficulties have become apparent even for the most prosperous of the imperialist countries in the area.

The working class cannot get out of the imperialist war, or prevent its ripening and growth, by taking sides on one of its fronts, but by working in each country on the workers' struggle against the militarism and imperialism of its own bourgeois regime--whether democratic or authoritarian--and on this basis to weave a bond of union, solidarity and brotherhood above national, religious and ethnic divisions among workers all over the world.

The key to historical progress is no longer, as indicated by opportunist parties, in national accommodation struggles that set themselves the goal of a "just accommodation" among states within the framework of capitalism. In the Middle East it is not in the struggle of the Palestinians for their own nation-state - exploited for decades by all the powers in the area for their own ends - but in the proletarian uprising that brings down the regimes of all the countries in the area, in Iran, Egypt, Turkey and in Israel. The Palestinian question is used in the various countries, in Iran as in Turkey, to divert proletarians from the struggle for their immediate and political interests and to bind them to their national bourgeois regime.

Only after the proletarian revolution will the national questions left unresolved in the course of the historical development of capitalism, from its ascendant phase to the current putrescent one of imperialism, find a solution.

The Syrian Civil War from Yesterday to Today

The recent conclusion of the Syrian Civil War, at least in the form of the sectarian struggle between the government and the opposition in the

broadest sense, shocked not only the international public but even many of the actors involved. We invoke our historical materialist, that is Marxist method in order to make sense of the unfolding of the imperialist civil war in Syria, a country which our party has been following especially closely since the beginning of the civil war as well as recently.

Brief History of the Civil War

It would be in order to briefly trace the background and history of the Syrian Civil War, referring to our texts "Syria Between Class Clash and Imperialist Lusts" (il Partito Comunista, 351-2, 2012), "The Imperialist War Being Fought in Syria" (il Partito Comunista, 383, 2017) and "Turkish Invasion of Syria with the Consent of Russian and American Imperialisms" (il Partito Comunista, 398, 2019).

As we wrote in 2012: "In 1918 British troops occupied Syria, ending Turkish rule and supporting the appointment to the throne of Emir Feisal, their ally. But the French soon dispersed Feisal's weak forces and assumed control of the country, sanctioned in 1922 in the form of a League of Nations mandate. The mandate lasted until its independence, recognized in 1941 but not implemented until 1946, at the end of World War II. During this period France leveraged precisely on ethnic and religious differences, particularly the minorities of Christians, Alawites and Druze, to secure easy and well-manageable control over the Sunni majority in the country, entrusting these minorities with the lower ranks of the army as the British had done in India with the Sikhs (...) In the post-war period there were several coups d'État. In 1963 the Baath Party, effectively the Assad family clan, which still holds power, seized power and proclaimed a state of emergency that imposed severe limits on the civil and political freedoms of the population and gave broad, discretionary powers to the army and police".

During the Cold War, Baathist Syria was a close ally of the Eastern bloc. Since the end of the Cold War, "the Syrian ruling class has been forced to devise differentiated tactics: on the one hand, the Alawite bourgeoisie has sought new and better relations with the United States, as has been demonstrated by its substantial support for the Washington-led coalition in the war against Iraq [in 1991]; on the other hand, it works to strengthen its strategic alliance with Iran in an anti-Israeli function. Despite these maneuvers, the Syrian regime, due to internal weakness, was forced in 2005 to give up its military occupation of neighboring Lebanon, where for years it served as a watchdog against the Palestinian and Lebanese proletariat. Despite these maneuvers Damascus has lost much of its influence in the region, and now these weaknesses on the external front are added to the internal ones increased by the inevitable precipitation of the global crisis" (il Partito Comunista, 351).

In this background, Syria would be along the countries that would be shaken by the series of mass protests and revolts which have been called the "Arab Spring" that started in December 2010 in Tunisia following the self-immolation of a street vendor. Although in certain examples, such as in Tunisia, Egypt, there was a clear class content expressed within the inter-class movements and the events lead to a quick disposal of the former rulers and reestablishment of order, Syria, like Libya, would prove to be a different case. As we wrote in 2012, soon after the arrival of the Arab Spring in Syria in late 2011:

"The divisions between the social groups never recomposed, rather they exacerbated, and the wave of the imperialist crisis, with the rapid decline in the living conditions of the lower classes, was the trigger of the fuse that set Syria on fire as well (...) During the first few months, the protest demonstrations in the various cities and governorates were broadly similar and tended to be peaceful; especially in the poorer proletarian suburbs, thousands took to the streets (...) The processions, chanting anti-government slogans, extolling the fall of the regime, social and economic reforms, hypnotized by the myth of the demand for more freedom and more democracy headed for government headquarters and offices, often clashing with security forces who did not hesitate to shoot (...) It is likely that many proletarians, especially wage-earning peasants, unemployed but also industrial and service workers participated and continue to participate in the demonstrations, but without highlighting any specific class demands of their own (...)

"In November and December on the international front the isolation of Damascus intensified; on the domestic front there has been a gradual militarization of the uprising. Since September, incidents of unequal confrontation between government and generic protesters have diminished, but various armed groups, funded by Western imperialisms and Gulf monarchies, increasingly confront the army. Periodic raids are conducted against command centers, ambushes of convoys, targeted killings, but also outright battles that appear to have even led to the insurgents' control of some towns. However, the uprising lacks authoritative political leadership (...) In October, an army, the Free Syrian Army, was also formed and is responsible for increasingly frequent attacks on military and civilian targets; this FSA, directed by a section of the Syrian opposition, is largely financed by foreign capital (...) British, French, Jordanian and especially Qatari special forces are operating at Turkey's Iskenderun base where they train FSA mercenaries along with Ankara's

military" (il Partito Comunista, 352).

"During the 2011 civil war, protests spread to Kurdish areas as well, but Bashar Al Assad had granted some autonomy to the region and shown tolerance toward the Kurdish minority political group PYD (Democratic Union Party), the Syrian branch of the PKK at war with the Turkish State, freeing many imprisoned militants and withdrawing his forces from Syrian Kurdistan in 2012, thus strengthening other fronts of the civil war. This left the PYD and its armed wing, the YPG (People's Protection Unit), free. The YPG militias, it should be remembered, in the towns and villages under their control have suppressed demonstrations and gatherings of Kurds and organizations in opposition to the Damascus regime, in perfect agreement with Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies" (il Partito Comunista, 398).

In the meanwhile, the Islamic State, a break-away from the Al Nusra Front, the Syrian affiliate of Al-Qaeda, begun its activities in the region. By the winter of 2013-14 the Islamic State organization controlled one-third of Iraq and one-third of Syria. Its rule was one of terror: Kurds, Alawites, Christians, Druze and whichever other members of minority groups who had the misfortune of living under them were brutally repressed, murdered, tortured, raped and sold on slave markets. The Islamic State, which promised its adherents unrestricted hedonism and which pursued a particularly unprincipled pragmatism in its commercial and covert diplomatic relations, earned the disapproval even of other jihadist organizations such as the Al Nusra Front. As we wrote in 2017:

"In 2014, the Islamic State became an inconvenience for Washington and Moscow, whose interests in Syria are divergent but can find each other momentarily to fight common enemies. But what are their common enemies? The Islamic State, like Al Qaeda and other Sunni Islamist groups, formed and developed with the help of the U.S. and its European and Middle Eastern coppers, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, with the aim of destabilizing first Russia in Afghanistan and its Muslim-inhabited territories, then Syria and Moscow-linked Shiite Iran. Jihadist groups received significant flows of foreign fighters from the Maghreb, Europe, and also Russia and China; this flow ended after 2015. The monstrous creature had now achieved the purpose for which it was generated, and it was now necessary to contain it (...) Since 2015, the officially declared common enemy was the Islamic State.

"Western media present Kurdish-Syrian forces as the best military tool against the Islamic State, overshadowing Islamist guerrilla groups, including those supported by Western countries through Turkey, Saudi Arabia or Qatar. Above all, they omit the fact that these Kurdish-Syrian forces are not fighting the Syrian regime but aim to negotiate with it in order to achieve a federal Syria, within which the Rojava region would have broad political and administrative autonomy, as the diplomacies of Russia and the United States have probably floated in order to gain their support on the battlefield.

"Turkey for its part (...) although it has supported the Islamic State in the past, changed its strategy in 2015-2016: after attacks on Turkish soil attributed to the PKK, Ankara in July 2015 broke off peace negotiations with it and bombed its bases in Iraqi Kurdistan. After the attempted coup in Turkey on July 15, 2016, it moved closer again to its Russian enemy-friend by openly proclaiming its hostility toward the Islamic State".

"In September 2015, Russia openly intervened in Syria, called upon by the Syrian government to fight, it claims, against the Islamic State and al-Nusra. Western reactions were modest, except for incessant reports of massacres of Syrian civilians by the Syrian Army and bombings by the Russians (...) The pacification of Syria was entrusted to the regular Syrian Army, backed by Russian and Iranian forces (some elite units and the Lebanese Hezbollah) with the support of Turkey, despite the reticence of Damascus, which feared Turkish ambitions on Syrian border territories. Instead, the reconquest of Iraqi territories from Mosul to northern Syria was entrusted to the U.S.-led coalition (...) Indeed, the agreement with Russia, kept secret, would provide for the liquidation, in addition to the Islamic State, of anti-Assad jihadist groups, including al-Nusra, and also the neutralization of the Free Syrian Army. Thus, after their official entry into the war, Russian bombers focused on rebel groups hostile to the Damascus regime, although these were still officially supported by the United States, Europe and Turkey itself" (il Partito Comunista, 383).

"In October 2015 the US pushed for the creation of the Syrian Democratic Forces, an alliance of Kurdish PYD troops, Syrian Arab and Assyrian brigades, some tribal formations and Christian militias. The purpose was to engage the non-Kurdish populations in the PYD-controlled area in the fight against the Islamic State; the YPG remains the most important contingent of the SDF, but some Arab tribes that had previously associated with Isis were also included, which again showed that alliances and their reversals are made according to the needs of the war and not on "ideological", ethnic, racial or religious grounds. In 2015-16 only the SDF forces confronted Islamic State jihadists in Syria with the support of international coalition aircraft, along with small contingents of 2,000 U.S., 200 French and 200 British soldiers. In 2016 the YPG fought, with Russian air support, along with the Syrian army against anti-regime rebels in the Menagh, Tell Rifat and Zalep areas. At the end of 2017, almost one-third of Syrian territory, including

hydrocarbon-producing regions such as Deir Ez Zor, was under the control of SDF militias, and they were putting their principles of 'democratic municipalism' into operation".

"In regaining territories east of the Euphrates river from the Islamic State, YPG troops found themselves masters of a territory rich in hydrocarbons (around the city of Deir Ez Zor, east of Qamishli and Al Hasakah, two-thirds of Syria's oil resources are gathered), of agricultural products (vast agricultural lands in the northeast along the Euphrates, where 52% of Syria's wheat and 79% of its cotton is harvested, but severely damaged by the war), and infrastructure, 3 of Syria's 4 hydroelectric dams, albeit poorly maintained, while Turkey controls the upstream flow of the river to Syria".

"On Jan. 20, 2018, the Turkish army and the Free Syrian Army rebels launched an offensive, dubbed 'Olive Branch', this time directly against the Kurdish forces of the YPG in the Syrian Kurdish canton of Afrin, which the YPG had controlled since 2012, alone, without the support of Western forces, apart from a small Russian contingent. Before launching the offensive on Afrin Erdoğan negotiated with Putin the withdrawal of his men and the non-intervention of his powerful anti-aircraft missile batteries. This was how the YPG's 'friendly' governments, American and Russian, left Turkey a free hand in the operation against the Kurds".

"While Bashar Al Assad's troops, backed by the Russian army and Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah militias, continued to heavily bombard Idlib province, the last enclave in Syrian territory controlled by the opposition and protected by Ankara's army, Turkish troops, backed by mercenaries from Syria's Islamist brigades with the support of Ankara's air force, penetrated northern Syria on Oct. 9, 2019 to 'end the Rojava (i.e., Western Kurdistan) 'political entity', or 'self-government of northeastern Syria', accused of supporting Kurdish PKK guerrillas in southern Turkey. The military operation was called with cynical realism 'Peace Spring" (il Partito Comunista, 398).

Operation Peace Spring added cities such as Ras al Ayn and Tell Abyad to the part of Syria under Turkish occupation, formally under the control of the Turkish backed Free Syrian Army, or with its new name, Syrian National Army, organized as a mercenary army whose salaries are paid by Ankara. As the US withdrew from Syria for the most part in the meanwhile, the SDF was forced to reach an agreement with the regime, which lead to the Syrian Army controlling the border with Turkey. Following some military action centering around Idlib, the only major city still under jihadist control, in 2019-2020, the situation in Syria evolved into what appeared to be a stalemate.

The Sudden Fall of the Regime

The sudden fall of the Baath regime at the hands of jihadist remnants, only a few years after the apparent pacification of most of the country under either its rule or that of the Kurdish nationalists, came as a surprise to many, admitted even by the functionaries of various governments.

The explanation can be found in two three factors: economic, diplomatic and military. The economic factor, simplest to explain, was perhaps the most powerful one as well. The Syrian annual inflation rate was already one of the highest in the world; this only became worse from mid 2020 onward. As Bashar al-Assad declared Syria to be following the Chinese model of socialism, prices of basic goods skyrocketed and some products disappeared from the market as the public struggled to keep up with the rising cost of living. Peace, or at least ceasefire, in a divided country under Western embargo was not, it turned out any better for the Syrian economy than war.

As for the diplomatic and military factors, it would be in order to take a look, first of all, at the evolution of jihadist politics in Syria after the fall of the Islamic State, which we briefly described as follows in 2017:

"Soldiers and officers 'defected' from the Syrian army following the nationalist and democratic Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Turkey, which grouped together some 50 factions of the most diverse ideologies. In fact, from such a heterogeneous FSA in 2013 some groups split off to join the jihadists of the al-Nusra Front, the official branch of al-Qaeda in Syria. Created in 2011 at the beginning of the insurgency, it became Jabhat Fatah al-Sham in 2016, and, since late January 2017, after violent clashes with the competing jihadist group Ahrar al-Sham and following a merger with other smaller groups, it changed its name once again to Tahrir al-Sham" (il Partito Comunista, 383).

Better known today with its full name as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, this organization disaffiliated from al-Qaeda and, despite being put on the list of terrorist organizations by numerous countries including the United States and Turkey, began to moderate its stance. In particular, HTS renounced the claim of its predecessors to establish a caliphate, settling with claiming Islamic rule over Syria alone. Undoubtedly, this moderation drew the attention of Western imperialist powers.

With mere 10,000 to 15,000 fighters out of a total of about 70,000 that make up various mostly jihadist anti-government militias and surrounded by enemies on all sides in Idlib, the rescue for HTS came from Ukraine. Ukrainian military intelligence, even by its own admission, has been reported for a while in various countries targeting Russian interests, from Sudan to Mali and Georgia. Not only were Ukrainian agents organizing

attacks against Russian forces in Syria, but according to Kurdish, Turkish, Syrian and Russian forces, they supplied HTS with military drones and sent 250 instructors to give HTS militia training. Added to this was the fact that years of war had particularly worn down the Syrian Arab Army, which already had a narrow base, essentially backed by the Alawite, Christian and Druze minorities of the Syrian population, and the Israeli-American attacks on Iran and the Hezbollah in Lebanon on whose support the Baath regime had been depending on. Both factors left the Baath government militarily particularly vulnerable.

On November 27, HTS, along with its smaller allies and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, launched an offensive out of Idlib, with Aleppo as their primary target. The success of the rebels was wildly above their own expectations as they conquered city after city in a matter of days. The rebels, mostly equipped with small arms and handheld weapons (including FPV drones now inevitable in any theater of war), could not have so quickly gained the upper hand in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus and then also in Latakya and Tartus (in that coastal area inhabited by Alawites) if Syrian forces had put up real resistance.

The Syrian armed forces are credited with 170,000 military personnel and 100,000 gendarmes and paramilitaries to which are added at least 4,000 Russian military personnel, 1,000 Iranian Pasdaran and 2,000 Lebanese Hezbollah with hundreds of armored vehicles, artillery and more than 200 aircraft and helicopters. If in the early days of the HTS offensive some Syrian units fought decisively thanks in part to the air support of the Syrian and Russian air forces (in fact, estimates recorded far higher casualties among the rebels than the government) already a few days later Russian sources were noting the absence of will to fight among government troops. By December 8, al Assad had fled to Moscow and the Baath government capitulated to the rebels.

Today, the main fighting in Syria remains between the SNO, which the HTS did not allow further south following the fall of Aleppo, and the Kurdish nationalists. The SNO's primary gain so far has been Tel Rifat, which the Kurdish nationalist led SDF withdrew from. The Turkish backed mercenaries then moved to Manbij where they faced fierce resistance and where the fighting still continues despite Turkish air support and earlier rumors that SDF would withdraw from Manbij too. In the meanwhile, the Kurdish nationalists managed to take over all parts of Deir ez-zor with American support, along with Qamişlo and Heseke to the east of Euphrates, strategic locations of which were previously controlled by the Syrian government, considerably enlarging the territory they control.

Nevertheless, the Kurdish nationalist rule in Deir ez-Zor was short lived as the Military Council aligned with the SDF defected and joined HTS lead forces. In the meanwhile, Israel quickly took advantage of the opportunity and occupied the disputed Golan Heights to the south and started bombing numerous military targets, officially in order to prevent the jihadists from inheriting the full military capacity of the former Syrian Arab Army. In short, while the central sectarian conflict of the Syrian Civil War, between the Alawite government and the Sunni opposition, was resolved with the fall of the government, this in no way indicates that the war in Syria is over.

The Imperialist War Continues

"To the victor go the spoils". In this case, the victor was HTS and the spoils were above all of a diplomatic nature. HTS, which has been ruling the Idlib region with an iron fist for the last few years, did not fail to do its part: it issued a declaration condemning the treatment Kurds, Alawites, Christians and Druze endured under the Islamic State as un-Muslim; it ordered its militias not to intervene with women's clothing; its leader al-Jolani declared to Israeli press that they wanted to transition into an inclusive democracy.

In turn all the imperialist powers active in the region embraced HTS. Erdogan, who knew of HTS' operation in advance and had done nothing to help or stop it, except inviting al-Assad back to negotiations one last time before the events, quickly declared support for the jihadists marching on Damascus. After the fall of the government, Qatar was the first to establish a formal and public political relationship with HTS as the US and the UK begun considering removing HTS from their list of terrorist organizations, and European leaders started declaring that HTS will be a part of Syria's future, whatever that may be. Of course all these powers already indirectly supported HTS through the Ukraine.

From the Kurdish side, politician Salih Muslim declared himself optimistic about HTS and appreciated its inclusiveness, and General Mazlum Abdi noted that they had never fought with HTS and that they were ready for dialogue. Indeed, during the assault on Aleppo, HTS and SDF negotiated for the retreat of fighters in the Kurdish neighborhoods of the city, who were followed by a large portion of the population out of Aleppo. HTS even reassured Russia by declaring it will not interfere with the Russian bases in Latakya and Tartus. Though it will be seen whether this will be enough for Russia and China not to veto removing HTS from the United Nations' list of terrorist organizations, it is reasonably clear that there will be a new Syrian peace process, beyond the Astana format involving Russia, Iran and Turkey. Of the three countries, only

Turkey will continue to play as major a role as before in the future of Syria.

A particularly relevant dimension of the future of the conflict in Syria is about the negotiation process between Turkey and Kurdish nationalists. In "Turkey-Kurdistan: New Negotiations Are Paving the Way for Bigger Wars", we recently wrote:

"Erdogan's emphasis on strengthening the internal front in the context of the spreading war in the Middle East is equally important. This is undoubtedly a militarist emphasis. Unless this problem is somehow resolved, in future regional and global wars, the PKK threat will remain a major weakness, as it can always strike the Turkish State from within, and could cause enormous damage to a possible war mobilization of the Turkish State. Therefore, this move could, albeit unlikely, give the Turkish State a chance to strike a deal with the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria, thereby resolving its problems with the US to a large extent, and move towards overthrowing the Assad regime in Syria" (Enternasyonal Komünist Partisi, 2024).

With the sudden fall of the Syrian government, a Turkey-PKK alliance, which is not without its promoters in Turkey, could not materialize against it; aside from uniting in their support for HTS, are still actively fighting each other. Nevertheless, minor partner of the government and leader of the main fascist party in the country, Devlet Bahçeli, recently continued his democratic advances and applauded a speech by Kurdish nationalist parliamentarians calling for peace in Syria.

The Kurdish nationalists, however, are not united in how they will approach these advances. While Öcalan and some parliamentary deputies are warm to the idea of reconciliation with Turkey, there seems to be a significant resistance from some of the PKK leaders in Qandil. Moreover, while the SDF leaders are friendly towards the HTS, Sabri Ok, one of the PKK leaders in Qandil, boldly declared HTS to be no different than the Islamic State, adding that it will share the same fate. Qandil leadership's confidence is likely due to Israel declaring the protection of the Kurds in Syria to be a priority, and actually being in a position to do something about it.

Among the regional imperialist powers, it is Turkey and Israel who will play the most important role in the future affairs of Syria. In any case, regardless of whether the Syrian peace process stalls a larger war for a while or whether it fails to stop the current situation from evolving into a much bloodier conflict than what was witnessed in the last few weeks, the bourgeois future of Syria looks much gloomier than those celebrating democratic jihadists' overthrow of a brutal dictatorship portray it to be.

In "The Historical Causes of Arab Separatism", written in 1958, we wrote: "By following the path already taken, the "balkanization" of the Arabs will reach its extreme consequences. The Arabs will wall themselves off more and more within prefabricated States, that is, States manufactured by imperialism and its agents, States poisoned by a depressing squalor, disheartened by insurmountable impotence, and which will consume their futile existence in infighting (...) Fragmented, divided by ignoble dynastic issues, devoured alive by the bloodsucking foreign capitalist monopolies who willingly cede large slices of the oil profits, entangled in the deadly military alliances of imperialism, the Arab States not only instill no fear in the various imperialisms but serve as pawns in their diabolical game" (il Programma Comunista, 1958).

What we wrote almost seventy years ago continues to be confirmed today. Syria is not a nation in the Marxist sense; it is merely the name of a historic region which was made into a country. The various nationalities, ethnicities and denominations that make up the Syrian population never united as a nation in a bourgeois revolution but were grouped together as a result of borders arbitrarily drawn by imperialism.

For this reason, it was particularly easy for the Syrian Civil War to turn into a complex imperialist conflict so quickly, as numerous global and regional imperialist powers had stakes in the country which they could pursue through the vast variety of political organizations and affiliated militias that emerged. All sides to the war acted as boots of this or that imperialism on the ground.

National struggles with a revolutionary and anti-imperialist character were exhausted a long time ago in the Middle East. There were no anti-imperialists in this war: it was, and it remains, an inter-imperialist conflict played out within a single country, which is among many local wars bringing us closer to a new imperialist world war. There is no solution to the burning national questions of the region within the framework of imperialism. The only path for the liberation of the proletarians of Syria and the Middle East is to unite against all factions in this war, all the regional and global imperialist powers involved, in a trade union front from below, lead by the International Communist Party. Only the proletarian revolution, resulting in a Federation of Socialist Soviet Republics of the Middle East, can heal the wounds of the region.

The Short Lived Martial Law in South Korea

In a late night announcement on December 3rd, South Korea entered martial law. The President, Yoon Suk Yeol, cited alleged "anti-state actions"

being taken by the left-liberal bourgeois opposition Democratic Party government in parliament. Subsequently the military was mobilized, parliament was shut down and protests criminalized. Exposing the class nature of the maneuver, the only real use of the military was directed against the ongoing national doctors strike which was promptly crushed. Soon after the declaration the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, affiliated with the bourgeois Democratic Party, issued a call for a general strike to its 1.1 million members, saying the strike would start Wednesday at 9 a.m. local time and would last until the president's "regime" abolished martial law and the president stepped down. After using the military to crush the doctors strike, the military suddenly chose to respect the vote by the parliament to overturn the order, and the martial law came to a quick close with the bourgeois democracy & labor peace "restored".

Yoon's conservative "People Power Party" is the Korean bourgeois pro-United States party, which in recent years has taken an increasingly hardline stance against North Korea amid the general build up towards the next inter-imperialist war. In contrast to the move towards softening of relations between North and South Korea over the last decade, Yoon's Party has advocated for a hard shift towards escalation, engaging in greater military cooperation with the United States, adopting major aspects of Washington's trade war policies against China and cooperating with moving aspects of it's own high-tech supply chains and production to the United States. Thus the People Power Party, represents industrial interests within South Korea that are more firmly tied to the United States, and thus frustrates the attempts by the more "peaceful" elements within the Korean national bourgeoisie who had aspired to unite the peninsula to become their own regional capital and imperialism, something that is not in the interest of either China or the United States.

Yoon had insinuated that the opposition in control of the parliament had sympathies for North Korea, amid the denial of both his budget proposals by parliament, the threatened impeachment of his top prosecutors, gave him impetus to call in the military. This short-sighted power grab by conservative bourgeois forces in South Korea, parallels trends seen emerging across the world as the bourgeois regimes divulge into a stew of so called "corruption" scandals as they chaotically rush to shed their democratic veneer, amid a proliferation of proletarian labor revolts as a result of the mounting economic catastrophe. Like in the United States, the South Korean bourgeoisie is engaged in increasingly hostile internecine battles, where both bourgeois parties engage in partisan struggles willing to mobilize it's police and military agencies against it's opponents as they struggle to deal with the mounting crisis. Meanwhile they work to lock the proletariat into the now age old fascist & anti-fascist battle, ahead of the next inter-imperialist war. Both Yoon and the leader of the opposition, Lee Jae-myung, are wading through their own separate corruption scandals with the opposition recently calls for independent investigations around corruption allegations against top officials and others, including his wife, who was caught accepting a \$2200 purse as a gift.

The South Korean Economy has been experiencing an economic slow down. The Won, after a 45-month low, has reached a 1.5% inflation rate year per year. The country's stock market is one of the worst-performing in the world this year. A weaker Won, paired with export slowdowns, have caused South Korea to almost slip into a recession, only growing their GDP by .1% by the end of the third quarter after a .2% decrease. Due to these economic fears, the Bank of Korea has cut interest rates, which would only serve to place bandages onto a faltering system.

The military of South Korea, during the country's 6 hour stint with martial law, ordered the cessation of the doctor's strike, which the current government had previously stated they would use legal means to end after calling the strike "regrettable". This would be the end of the strike, as the military has declared that anyone who violates this order could be arrested without a warrant. The strike, which had been started over the South Korean government's decision to change the enrollment quota of medical school, had been taking place for three months. While the strike is threatening to the bourgeois striking doctors, mainly junior doctors, had cited monopolistic concerns over the influx of new students into the medical field, which would devalue their labor, instead of fighting for maintaining their wages and increasing those of all workers, they fought to oppose a government program that would certify more medical workers enlarging the reserve army of medical workers so as to drive down their wages.

The National Samsung Electronics Union has been on protest for months after workers returned to their jobs on August 8th of this year. Despite a large number of workers in the company being represented by the union, the negotiations for wage increases and better working conditions ultimately failed. The Samsung strike had gone on from July 7th to August 5th, almost one full month, but the ongoing effects are still being felt. Samsung is the largest of the South Korean Chaebols, or massive dynastic corporations that dominate the South Korean economy. This strike, the first in Samsung's history since its founding in 1969, is historic. It shows the first signs of the weakening grasp of the South Korean Bourgeoisie over the proletariat.

The role that the threat of the indefinite general strike by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

(KCTU) played in ending president Yoon's plans for martial law demonstrates that the warring bourgeois will always work to bring the workers to it's side either through forceful violence or through the lie of a common interest in defense of nation or "democracy", and yet still the true power lies in the hands of the working class. Until the mid 1990's the KCTU operated as an independent mostly illegal union in the times of the dictatorship. As the economic boom of the "Asian Tigers" developed, the brutal South Korean dictatorship was transformed into a "democracy", and the independent unions began to be bargained with. As their their power grew along with the enlarging of the South Korea capital, it could likewise afford to fund a labor aristocracy. After it's KCTU's official recognition, it has increasingly worked with the bourgeois state in promoting a common national interest between the workers and the bourgeois.

Thus for the bourgeois, it's tolerance of the unions is contingent upon the economic times, the ruthless & violent repression of the workers movement is the common history of the international working class within the bourgeois democratic-fascist states. The short, sighted attempt by the union to "defend democracy" ultimately only works to ensure fascism. By leading workers away from identifying their fundamentally antagonistic relation with capital and the need for proletarian dictatorship as the only solution to the viscous violence of the bourgeois , they lead the workers to cling even harder onto the decaying corpse of bourgeois democracy in a futile struggle to maintain their aristocratic position within the world imperialist order. Thus it is imperative that workers within KCTU work to rid themselves of their opportunist leadership & fight for general strike action not to defend bourgeois national democracy, but to unite workers across the world to oppose the mounting inter-imperialist war with the slogans of revolutionary defeatism.

Our party stands resolute in our stance on bourgeois democracy as inextricably linked to fascism. Without bourgeois democracy there could be no fascism, as the bourgeoisie has turned "democracy" to mean "worship of the individual". It has divorced political struggle from class, an ahistorical and anti-proletarian action that must be rectified with the destruction of democracy. The fault of democracy is in its desire to see the individual, or at least the bourgeois idea of the individual, as sacred.

With the involvement of the national bourgeoisies of both China and the United States on the prowl for Korean expropriations, it comes to no surprise that the North and South are not united. They are but pawns in a cold imperial war over markets. The only method of which to shed this ever looming threat of imperial war would be for the working class to consolidate in class unions to prepare for the eventual revolution led by the Communist Party.

Oil and Gas in Venezuela

The control of transnationals over Venezuelan oil and gas is growing, while the working class remains burdened by low wages and over-exploitation.

Oil, petrochemical and gas workers: break with passivity and illusions and prepare for class struggle. Between January 2023 and July 2024, oil production in Venezuela went from 732,000 BPD to 928,000 BPD, representing an increase of 196,000 BPD (26.78%). Of this increase, Chevron added 189,000 BPD (96.43%). The difference in this growth (7,000 BPD) represents PDVSA's own effort, but even in this fraction companies such as Eni, Repsol and Maurel & Prom have participated.

In other words, the growth of Venezuelan oil production is openly dependent on the participation of transnational companies in the recovery of wells and in the production of crude oil and gas. Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) does not have the financial muscle to have an autonomous impact on the recovery of production and this is compounded by an accumulation of operational limitations, a lack of qualified labor - which does not have attractive salaries - and is subject to the direction of top management focused on draining part of the oil income into channels of corruption.

Both production and exports survive thanks to the action of transnationals: Chevron, Eni, Repsol and Maurel & Prom. The income generated by PDVSA would hardly cover 60% of the budget of the Venezuelan bourgeois state. And oil prices still have not reached \$80 per barrel. Likewise, it is estimated that Venezuela owes approximately \$154 billion to foreign lenders; although the government has not been able to pay this debt not only because of insufficient financial resources, but also due to the sanctions imposed by the United States, which prevent PDVSA and other state enterprises from making or receiving payments in international banks.

On the other hand, the world economic environment shows a tendency towards overproduction of oil and gas, a process that has not yet reached its maximum expression due to the limitations faced by Russian oil and gas to fully flow in the markets. This tendency towards overproduction will end up depressing the international prices of these raw materials.

Despite the fact that the different oil ministers and presidents of PDVSA have promised to meet ambitious production growth goals, only in July 2024 can they show the result of 2 drilling rigs in operation, despite the fact that they promised to activate 27

out of 121 rigs. The directors of PDVSA, Pequiven and other companies of the oil and gas sector are engaged in a constant demagogic campaign, touring plants and facilities, spreading lies in the social networks and manipulating the workers to keep them passive and hopeful in socio-economic improvements that they do not fulfill and receiving crumbs, while millions of dollars are spent in advertising and in making up the image of semi-paralyzed companies and waiting for the arrival of capital from the transnationals. And the sector's unions, traitors and servile, have been committed to this process, while also participating in the feast of corruption.

The business model established by the Venezuelan bourgeois government is determined by alliances with the imperialist powers, leaving in the hands of the transnationals the recovery of oil and gas production and exports. So far, this is a scheme from which U.S. imperialism has taken the greatest advantage, relying on a set of sanctions that allow it to decide which companies will operate in Venezuelan territory and which will assume not only the recovery of oil wells but also the commercialization of the oil extracted. The Venezuelan government and the Venezuelan parliament have been signing multiple agreements with transnationals for the exploitation of Venezuelan oil, but so far the United States has the last word in deciding who enters and who does not. Even the agreement signed between the Venezuelan government and that of Trinidad to exploit gas in part of its maritime platform, which would allow the British Shell to enter, depends on the pronouncement of the US government.

In the framework of the confrontation between Venezuelan and non-Venezuelan bourgeois sectors for the control of the government and, therefore, of the oil, gas and other raw materials business, the present government has approached the imperialist group of the BRICS, led by China, to place these businesses at its disposal. This explains why the governments integrated to the BRICS immediately recognized the electoral triumph of Nicolás Maduro in his reelection as president of Venezuela. Behind the political clashes and negotiations regarding the July 2024 election results in Venezuela, inter-imperialist contradictions underlie. Even so, the post-electoral political confrontation has not stopped exports and maritime transport tracking portals report that during the 19 days after July 29, 12 ships left for the US from the docks of Jose, Amuay and Puerto La Cruz with cargo belonging to the US Chevron and the Spanish Repsol, which since July began to send crude oil to refineries in that country. Part of these exports are exchanged for gasoline, diesel and diluents received by the Venezuelan state-owned PDVSA.

Meanwhile, workers continue to be subjected to low wages, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions and a deterioration in benefits complementary to wages. This situation becomes more critical among retired and pensioned workers and among the unemployed, who are subjected to misery. Likewise, the discussion and renewal of collective bargaining agreements in all areas of economic activity has been paralyzed for a long time. In spite of the fact that in the case of oil, petrochemical and gas workers they receive better salary packages than strata of workers in other economic activities, their income and benefits continue to be far below the cost of living. Likewise, the entire mass of active workers is subjected to a very low salary scheme, complemented with the payment of different bonuses that are not counted in the calculation of their social benefits. The transnationals will not miss the opportunity to operate in Venezuela paying low salaries and with low layoff costs.

The position of the workers

The working class is called to maintain its class independence and to express this independence in its struggles for union demands. In this sense, the class union movement that must arise among the oil, petrochemical and gas workers must assume the following positions:

- Not to limit itself to union organization by company or branch of industry and to constantly promote the integration of the organization and the struggle in a Single Class Union Front at local, regional, national and international levels, integrating workers from different companies, from different trades, of different nationalities and even affiliated to different unions, integrating in a single class struggle movement active, retired, pensioned and unemployed workers. The oil, petrochemical and gas workers must not only unite among themselves, at the base, but must also unite with the rest of the workers in a Single Class Union Front. Without the unity of the entire working class at the local, regional, national and international levels, it is very difficult to achieve partial victories in the struggles for demands against the capitalist bosses.

- To break with all the calls of the government, of the bosses, of the union leaders and of the different opportunist parties, which call to defend the homeland, the national economy and the operational continuity of the enterprises and which ask the workers to remain in labor peace, to paralyze their struggles and to sacrifice their demands for demands while waiting for the "economic recovery of the country" and "the improvement of the production of the enterprises". The recovery of the economy and the reactivation of the plants and the production in the areas of oil, gas and petrochemicals, as well as the growth of the income and profitability of the

companies of the sector, will only be possible on the basis of the over-exploitation of the workers, of the payment of insufficient wages and without improvements in the working conditions and environment. If the economy, the country and the companies are doing well, the workers are doing badly. The new class-conscious trade union movement must oppose all nationalism and all solidarity with the company and the bosses. We cannot accept the bosses' position that improvements in wages and working conditions depend on the company reactivating its plants and raising production.

- The class union that the workers must assume rejects the support of governments in the recruitment of workers to participate in wars between capitalist states. The class union that the oil, petrochemical and gas workers need must refuse to go to war against Guyana for the claim of the Essequibo territory, since the workers of both countries, as well as all the contracted wage-earning immigrants, will be exploited by the different companies that will extract and commercialize the oil and gas, to accumulate capital for the bourgeoisie and its national and transnational, public and private companies.

- Promote workers' assemblies to debate on their situation, on the demands to be made, on the actions to be taken and on the commissions and working groups to be formed. Promote local assemblies that integrate workers from different companies and trades, as well as retirees, pensioners and the unemployed.

- To rescue the strike and street mobilization as the main forms of workers' struggle. To the extent that there is strength, due to the massive participation of the workers, strikes should be called without prior notice, without minimum services and indefinite. The new trade union movement should constantly agitate for a General Strike that integrates all workers in the demand for a significant increase in wages, pensions and pensions and that demands the payment of full wages for the unemployed. Along with wage demands, the movement can incorporate demands such as the reduction of the working day, the reduction of the retirement age, the changeover of contract workers to permanent workers in the companies, elimination of overtime work, etc. Also demand the elimination of the scheme of payment of bonuses of different types, all becoming part of the salary and, therefore, to be counted in the calculation of social benefits.

- In the elections of presidents, governors, mayors and deputies it is decided who will be the new representative of the bourgeoisie in those positions. Class unionism does not participate in the elections of bourgeois democracy, nor does it campaign for any candidate and does not postulate the so-called "workers candidates". While the opportunists and union clowns call to vote in the bourgeois elections the class unions call for the struggle for demands and explain to the workers that any of the persons and movements that win in these elections are going to work from the government against the workers and, therefore, are enemies of the working class. Any workers' leader who calls to vote for any of the candidates of bourgeois democracy must be considered a traitor.

- The problems of managerial capacities and corruption present in companies like PDVSA, Pequiven and others, are problems of the Venezuelan bourgeois state. The class union movement cannot demand a change of directors or managers, because any of those appointed will always be representatives of the boss. The workers must reject union leaders who call to demand the change or maintenance of directors or managers of the companies, since this is a distraction that makes them lose focus on the demands put forward in each struggle. If the company changes its managers, that is a problem of the employer and not of the workers. The class union movement does not promote the hope that new managers in the companies will bring improvements to the workers and calls on the workers to confront the representatives of the employer, in order to conquer the socio-economic demands.

- The growing presence of transnationals in the oil and gas business in Venezuela should not create the illusion that with these companies will come better wages. The trade union movement must make the workers understand that the transnationals will want to profit from the payment of low wages as PDVSA currently does. Nor does the class union movement assume the banners of struggle against the privatization of companies or against the penetration of transnationals associated with national, state or private capital. For the class union it does not matter whether the employer is public or private, national or transnational, they all represent equally the employer who must be confronted with the strike to defend and win demands.

- Take precautions against the repression of the government and the bosses, supported by the treacherous union leaders, who will want to stop this movement. Hence, the grassroots movement will often have to organize in a discreet manner, without exposing itself unnecessarily to the bosses and their agents of repression, until it achieves its consolidation and expansion among all the workers.

The advance towards a resurgence of the class unions has as a premise the multiplication and extension of the workers' struggles, to the point of being beyond the control of the present unions of the regime, allies and accomplices of the bosses and the government. This is valid for the entire working class and applies therefore also to the oil, petrochemical and gas

workers, who will have to go to the struggle, organized by the rank and file, going over the heads of the current traitorous union leaders.

For the Class Union

The Boeing Strike in Retrospect

November 4th marks the date that the 33,000 strong strike against Boeing came to an end after almost 2 months of being on the picket line. The strike that started on September 13th between Boeing and the International International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) IAM initially had the overwhelming support of the workers involved. The same enthusiasm was not shared by union leadership in regards to a yes on their strike vote. The president of District 751 of the IAM was quoted as saying "We recommended acceptance because we can't guarantee we can achieve more in a strike." Considering the fact that Boeing's initial offer was for a 25% raise over the life of the four year contract, and that the final agreement has the GWI increase as being at 38% - yes we can confirm workers did get a better deal from striking. The sorry state that most organized labor is in within the United States has most of its current union leadership in agreeance with the perspective above. Most trade union leaders are either totally won over to the capitalist cause rejecting any notion that open opposition, or struggle is a requirement on the path forward. Or in other scenarios leadership has been so thoroughly beaten down over time that they would rather accept a paltry contract thats guaranteed versus fighting for a "loftier" goal that entails the risk of failing. Both of these attitudes are a cancer within the labor movement, and will have to be struggled against in the time to come.

Years of nonexistent raises, the removal of workers pension plan in 2014, and the company being mismanaged from top to bottom led those workers to self help. The most recent agreement had 80% of the eligible workers voting but only 59% voted to accept the contract. This was not the same unanimity that existed voting to strike as there was to vote yes on this agreement. While some of the initial demands were met including an increase to wages, and a reigning in on mandatory overtime a sizeable portion of workers wanted to continue to strike. From reading interviews with workers online and from speaking to them on the physical picket line the desire to fight for getting the pension back was a key sticking point for many workers at Boeing. Defined benefit plans aka pensions are a retirement benefit that most private sector workers do not have the "luxury" of acquiring. The current amount of private sector workers in the United States that have a pension plan is 8% of the workforce vs 39% in 1980. The obvious benefit of a pension plan for the worker is the fact that if they have to contribute anything at all to their retirement, it is an incredibly small portion of their wages. The employer is the one investing, and paying out for the majority of this retirement. In capitals thirst for accumulation any cost that does not directly tie into capitals ability to grow and reproduce itself is seen as superfluous. Boeing's desire to not budge on the issue of pensions is easily understood from capitals viewpoint. Besides the potential for the retirement to act as a pair of golden handcuffs - a benefit so good that workers either fall in line or stay at the company with an ever increasing diminishment of wages or working conditions - there is no other benefit to the company for having to pay for this. Bean counters are compelled to cut cost on everything from toilet paper, tools, spare parts, and even retirements because of this anarchy of production. In a world where nothing escapes the balance book, lower costs can be what determines who lives and dies on the market.

Economists, accountants, and politicians everywhere are discussing the economic impact of the strike. An impact that for the bourgeoisie and their syncophants is forever a negative one that most often is juxtaposed against the "national interests". For us however the negative impact that is derived from the strike is actually a positive one, and one that effectively allows workers to have an influence over their day to day working conditions. Struggling against and weakening the enemy class - the bourgeoisie - must be able to actually impact the economic situation that these groups find themselves within and disruption to the economy through striking is an incredibly valuable tool in this battle between classes. The Anderson Economic Group has the total cost to Boeing at around \$6.5 billion, and the cost for the US economy as a whole at \$11.5 billion. The loss in money to the aerospace giant is no small amount, and especially since it is coming after almost \$40 billion dollars in costs after Boeing's 2 fatal crashes, will have lingering effects until the end of 2025 at least. Contradictions plague class society and this strike amongst others have brought many of these problems to the forefront of workers at Boeing. In October, Boeing announced that they would be laying off 17,000 of their global workforce. There is not enough information at this time to see what the breakdown of who is actually going to be laid off. Union vs non union workers and actually at this time Boeing says that the strike is not the primary motivator for these cost cutting endeavours. One suspects that at this moment this may be a way of staying in the good graces of the workers at these facilities, but either way it puts a spotlight on the very contradiction between capital and labor. Workers are

expected to accept a diminution of their wages, benefits, and an increase in laboring time, and if they successfully wage a struggle against these problems they or their cohorts will be punished with the firing of these same workers.

All in all in studying the ongoing struggle at Boeing we cannot help but see a confirmation of our theses. The iron laws of accumulation force firms to attempt to bleed workers dry, and united class action is the only effective bulwark against this attack from the capitalist class. One thing that the IAM leadership is correct about is the fact that when workers in one sector or industry struggle and win a higher standard of living within class society other workers can use that as either moral or actual leverage in their fight against the bourgeois assaults. This increase in wages, and defense of overtime production can be seen as a "win" by some within the labor movement. While at a certain level this is true this win within class society is temporary and Boeing along with every other firm in the capitalist market is compelled to undo time and time again by different methods what "wins" are extracted out of them. We can never forget that with private property class society segments an ever increasing amount of producers against an ever smaller group of accumulators. A comrade had a conversation with a local labor leader within the IAM at the union hall during the strike. The local leader continuously said that this fight was IAM workers alone, and that he "didn't want any trouble from outsiders". The real and serious trouble is the one calling from inside the house. A contradiction in interests between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. It will only be by rebuilding the labor movement, and a united class front led by the International Communist Party that this phone will stop ringing.

Volkswagen Strike in Germany

Nine Volkswagen factories, an estimated hundred thousand workers, came out to strike throughout Germany, negotiation led by IG Metall, the major metalworking trade union, against cost cutting measures and a ten percent wage decrease. In response Volkswagen threatened to shut down three factories and layoff a thousand workers, rejecting the union's proposal for a seven percent wage increase, arguing that cost cutting measures are necessary to keep competitive with other companies as manufacturing costs rise, from the general tendency of consolidation and monopolization.

Volkswagen's CEO Oliver Blume at VW's largest factory at Wolfsburg met with workers saying "As management we're not operating in a fantasy world. We are making decisions in a rapidly changing world." Workers booed him throughout the meeting as he dismissed their demands, he then appealed to workers saying he grew up in Wolfsburg and holds the city dear to him, workers were not convinced. Thirty-five thousand workers at the Wolfsburg plant on December 2nd, led a two hour strike during their morning shifts, meaning that several hundred cars could not be made, declining VW's delivery capability and profits. Blume stated that "We therefore urgently need to take measures to secure the future of Volkswagen. Our plans are on the table." pressuring workers to accept greater immiseration. Plans fell through in the fourth round of negotiations on the 9th, they have scheduled another round of meetings on the 16th of December. If an agreement is not made before Christmas the union said that strikes will continue into 2025. Last week's strikes cost Volkswagen roughly €40,000 per minute from a reuter source.

The district manager and major negotiations of IG Metall, Thorsten Gröger said "anyone who ignores the workforce is playing with fire and we know how to turn sparks into flames", however those flames will dwindle under IG Metall's leadership and programme as they become more desperate for bourgeois validation and concessions.

The IG Metall's Social Democratic led administration leans towards reform and collaborationism, ultimately working at the long term detriment of the working class. IG Metall even proposed a measure that would save Volkswagen €1.5 billion in wages and forgo workers' bonuses for the next two years if the company agrees to not close down its factories, proving their willingness towards making conciliatory demands in favour of bourgeois interests.

Although such struggles against dismissal, wage decreases and general impoverishment amongst rank and file union workers are meritorious and admirable. It should be noted that all benefits gained by such struggles will be put in question by the bourgeoisie when all solidarity and militancy is lost, as such achievements can lead to complacency and disarmament if demands are not broadened and struggle continued. The IG metall union has largely prioritized the interest of the national economy and manufacturing industry over the proletariat class interest, safeguarding the nation's economic stability and consequently the interests of the bourgeoisie. The union also supports dirigiste policies to facilitate cooperation between the automotive industry and the state through a plan presented to the german Federal Minister of Economy, to subsidize domestic industry such as steel manufacturing and green energy, as well as advocating for the welfarist measures as per Metall's eleven point plan.

The major calls in the Metallzeitung union magazine can be shown as pseudo-working class is pandering in their antiwar stances saying "Peace does not include supplying weapons to Ukraine and

Israel. They only contribute to further escalations and many deaths. Diplomacy is needed here." Although true, they push it on the basis of concern for the national economy rather than the interest of the working class of imperialist warring nations or demanding revolutionary defeatism. The magazine also called for electoralism and anti-fascist coalitions stating that "Democrats must stand together and deal with each other in a tough election campaign in such a way that they remain capable of forming a coalition." in reference to the electoral gains of the AfD and BSW, calling the AfD "as the parliamentary arm of German fascism" and both parties "...henchmen of the Kremlin". although correct in pointing out the fascistic character of AfD and BSW, the solution is not the democratic popular front coalition against fascistic tendencies and a return to liberal democracy but rather proletarian unity against the bourgeoisie both fascist and liberal, as well as capitalism to which inevitably creates fascism through economic crisis.

The only way to combat complacency is to push the working class towards constituting itself as an indissolubly united class, regardless of trade, industry, sector or nationality, striving towards class unionism against the bourgeoisie and their parties, against the appeasement, opportunism and collaborationism of the trade union piecards. A class union that organizes in opposition to bourgeois legality and right, uplifting proletarian struggle at the forefront of class mobilization, utilizing the union strike's potential in agitation for class unionism and labour militancy, rendering immediate victories as ephemeral without solidarity taking root amongst the working class.

Party Union Activity In Italy

Since late September, union activity in Italy has focused on agitating for the address of unity of action by workers and grassroots unionism.

This was done with an initial letter-appeal, dated Oct. 7, addressed to the members and leadership of all grassroots unions, calling for a united response from all grassroots unions to oppose the government's so-called "Security Bill."

This bill provides for the introduction of the "crime of road blocking," in a form that is pejorative even compared to the law introduced in 1948, in that it considers road blocking even with the mere use of one's own bodies a crime, while the law of the infamous Minister Scelba considered road blocking a crime, only if done with objects (pallets, cars, etc., suitable for forming barricades).

If there could have been any doubts about the government's intentions, these were dispelled by the Interior Minister's speech in Parliament in early October, in which he explained how the aim of the Bill is to prevent pickets organized by grassroots unions in front of logistics warehouses, to block the entry and exit of trucks loaded with goods, as a key weapon for winning strikes.

The letter garnered some 30 endorsements from delegates and militants of grassroots unionism - of the Usb and SI Cobas - and the CGIL. In fact, it called for the expansion of unity of action beyond the boundaries of grassroots unionism, involving the conflictual minorities in Cgil.

The adhesions to these appeals, which we have reiterated over the years, are still very small, and the aim is not to succeed in changing the decisions of opportunistic union leaderships, or even to oust them, but to weave a network of relations among union militants.

Such work, as long as workers' struggle remains at low levels, as it has in recent decades in Italy, can only advance in very small steps, or remain stationary. However, between steps backward and steps forward, its correctness is confirmed, and it strengthens the party in this practical experience.

The contents of the letter were set out in two speeches:

- in an assembly promoted on October 9 by the Usb dockworkers in Genoa against the Security Bill, with about 60 participants, half workers half students;

- at the Usb Confederal Coordination in Genoa on October 12, with about 30 union delegates.

At both assemblies the letter was distributed, which found as new adhesions, compared to similar past initiatives, those of USB delegates from the airport and environmental hygiene (garbage collectors) in Genoa.

In addition, the association with a small minority of SI Cobas militants was confirmed, strengthened by sharing the party's position on the merits of the Israel-Palestine-Lebanon war, which was for this reason isolated and attacked within their union by the leadership fanatically siding with the so-called "Palestinian resistance," that is, with Hamas, Hezbollah and the imperialist powers that back them.

Two days before the SI Cobas' Oct. 18 "general" strike, the Cub and Sgb grassroots unions on Oct. 16 called a general strike for Nov. 29. This decision was due to the announced intention of the CGIL to also proclaim a general strike.

Due to the anti-strike laws introduced in Italy since 1990, which were wanted by the Cgil itself as well as the Cisl and Uil, the choice of the day to proclaim a general strike is very difficult, and is subject to various limitations that are not very easy to evaluate.

The leaders of Cub and Sgb estimated that under the limitations due to the anti-strike laws the date of a possible Cgil and Uil general strike would be November 29, and decided not to conduct a strike by grassroots

unionism alone, which would have been yet another minority and demoralizing action, but rather to join the strike promoted by Cgil and Uil, but hiding this choice by proclaiming it earlier! The calculation turned out to be correct and on October 30 Cgil and Uil proclaimed a general strike, for November 29.

Beyond these maneuvers and tactics, the important element is a change in the conduct held for decades by the leaderships of grassroots unionism, of organizing strikes separate from and in competition with those proclaimed by the regime unions.

What our party has always stood for within the grassroots unions has been the direction to strike united, regardless of which union proclaims the strike. Because only on the material basis of strong strikes can class unionism grow, not on that of weak, minority strikes.

This reversal of the conduct held for decades has not only affected Cub and the Sgb, which have practiced it without yet explicitly declaring it. A few days after Cgil and Uil also called a general strike on October 30 for November 29, other grassroots unions joined in, a group of which (Adl Cobas, Confederazione Cobas, Sial Cobas) explained in a joint communiqué that there was a need to unite action to strengthen strikes, following the example of what has been done in recent years in France.

Over the next few days all the other grassroots unions joined hand in hand, except for the Usb. This one, on October 17, had proclaimed a general strike for December 13. And despite the convergence of all the grassroots unions on the Nov. 29 strike, Usb's leadership seems to have no intention of changing its decision, showing itself the most obtuse in defending a conduct that divides and weakens workers' fighting action.

So that, this time addressed only to Usb members, we wrote a second letter-appeal, dated Nov. 13, asking the Usb leadership to converge on the Nov. 29 strike and possibly, if it is felt there is the strength and will among the workers, to propagate in it the need to have a second general strike, on Dec. 13.

This second letter, although still very small in numbers, had larger adhesions of Usb members and delegates than the previous one.

For the November 29 strike, we have prepared a Party leaflet (<https://www.international-communist-party.org/Partito/Parti430.htm#Mobilizzazione>) distributed at the demonstrations in Genoa and Naples.

In addition to what has been said so far, we have also drafted a text about an assault suffered by some workers and union militants during a strike in a small company in the textile district of Prato (<https://www.international-communist-party.org/Partito/Parti430.htm#Prato>). The strike was led by the Sudd Cobas grassroots union, which was formed by the detachment of the local structure from the SI Cobas.

Sudd Cobas then participated in the picket line for the Nov. 8 strike at the GLS company's logistics warehouse in Campi Bisenzio, Florence, as part of a nationwide strike affecting four logistics hubs-and in smaller warehouses-of the U.K. Postal Service-owned company, organized by the grassroots unions Adl Cobas and Cobas Private Labor.

The absence of SI Cobas from this strike is surprising, given that this was the strongest grassroots union in this company and in the entire logistics sector. This perhaps confirms its weakening. But the important fact to note is that the difficulties of what used to be the largest grassroots union in logistics are not matched by either a halt in strikes or a halt in the workers' tendency to organize outside and against the regime unions, which finds satisfaction in other grassroots unions.

We then followed up on the national strike of tramway workers on November 8. This had been proclaimed since the end of September by the regime unions, which had resorted to the possibility granted by the anti-strike law to be able to proclaim it without respect for the so-called "guarantee time slots." This is basically a strike closer to being total than what is normally granted by law. This possibility is given: only for a single strike, only within the framework of the dispute over the renewal of the national contract, only after 3 previous strikes occurred within the "guarantee bands," and only for unions that are signatories to the national contract. This gives an idea of the incredible loopholes and limits placed by the laws against striking. That said, since this law has been in existence, that is, since 1990, the regime unions have resorted to this possibility only 3 times in 34 years. Moreover, for November 8, they organized a national demonstration in Rome.

This decision predicted strong worker participation in a strike that was finally felt to be "real." This coupled with the growing malaise in the category, with numerous cases of resignations in Rome and Milan and difficulties for companies to find new hires. In fact, the previous strike by the regimented unions, on September 8, had gone very well, and so had the one 12 days later-September 20-by the grassroots unions, despite being only a few days apart.

The one on September 20, had seen the united participation of all the grassroots unions, including Usb, with the sole exclusion of Al Cobas, which has a good presence only in Milan, where, however, there is the second largest Local Public Transport company in Italy.

For the November 8 strike, in addition to the very high adherence, the element to be noted is the adherence of the majority of the grassroots unions, which as with their confederal structures also in this case decided to

abandon the practice of deserting strikes promoted by the regime unions. Again, however, the Usb was an exception, here accompanied by the AL Cobas.

We continue to follow the mobilizations of the railway workers, that of the maintenance workers organized in the National Assembly of Maintenance Workers (ANLM), formed last summer into a union, and that of the train crews (drivers and train chiefs) organized in the Pdm-Pdb Assembly (Engine and Train Personnel) and with the support of the grassroots unions (Cub, Sgb, Usb).

The eighth ANLM strike, last Nov. 13, went badly, and it is the third one that fails. The first 4 had had adhesions of over 70%. The last 3 around 40%. The demonstration in Florence also had poor participation. The struggle movement seems hopelessly refluxed but has sedimented a new organization. We will see if it has the strength and right direction to walk and organize future struggles. Finally, the seventh strike of the traveling personnel, for the renewal of the contract, is being prepared for November 23-24. The previous six went very well.

In the maintenance workers' movement and the train crew movement, we are able to intervene indirectly, through our participation in the Self-Convoked Workers' Coordination, to which some of the most committed railway workers are linked in union work in support of these strikes.

Party Union Activity in the US

Alliance Ouvrière (Quebec, Canada Worker Coordination)

Alliance Ouvrière (AO), a worker coordination in Quebec our comrade participated in the formation of, will be holding its first worker congress on December 8. A number of workers from different sectors are active in the coordination, divided into three caucuses: public sector, construction, and logistics / movement of goods.

The logistics / movement of goods caucus includes workers from the Amazon DXT4 warehouse union executive, workers from additional Amazon facilities, and two Canadian Postal workers. Amazon workers in the caucus recently took solidarity action with the 55,000 Canadian Postal workers (CUPW) currently on strike by joining the picket lines at the sorting center in Montreal.

The public sector caucus is the second largest and was officially launched in November. It includes around twenty workers, mainly from the health and education sectors. Our Party militant is amongst them working in public transportation. This caucus is preparing for the next round of collective bargaining, which will take place in 3 years' time. Despite an initially interesting balance of power, the last common front, and the Autonomous Federation of Education (FEA) indefinite general strike were disastrous. Unfortunately, the Education Union Federation (FSE), the other central labor body in the education sector, left FEA to strike alone. As for the Federation of Nurses (FIQ) struck out on their own and have just signed their new contract which includes major setbacks for the workers. The public sector caucus is intended as a new common front for the rank and file (workers wishing to consult independently of the central labor bodies).

Class Struggle Action Network

Party militants continue their intervention work in the Class Struggle Action Network (CSAN). 9 workers have joined CSAN in the last two months and 10 others have come into contact. Industries present in the network include: education, health, social service, postal, railroad, hospitality, grocery, city workers, bank, tech, construction, millwrights, baristas, gig workers etc

Participation in the monthly general meetings has been increasing. The last General Meeting, 17 workers attended. Many of the participants were from Richmond, Virginia, USA, where there is a newly forming chapter of Class Struggle Action Network. We will be holding a public event in this location for both CSAN and the ICP. Many of these workers are connected with the Southern Workers Assembly, detailed later in the report.

CSAN is adopting a new constitution and bylaws to be implemented as the network's numbers and good work grows. The constitution and bylaws further articulates CSAN's foundational principles, positions, methods, and mission. It defines membership and its requirements. Additionally, the majority of the organizing of the network will be moved to the general meetings of the network where the membership can more deeply engage in the work of building a class union and otherwise bring proposals to the broader network.

Starbucks, New Seasons Workers & Fred Meyers Workers

As we have previously reported Party members within the The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), last year formed a workers committee on class unionist principles called the United For Class Wide Action (UFCWA). The militant caucus grew to several dozen workers across locations in the Portland area and spent a year building a united front effort with other combative currents within the union culminating in an effort to defend

workers against the notorious UFCW regime union, who sought to promote pitiful wage demands. The work of the caucus forced the union leadership to put forward wage demands in excess of inflation during their contract bargain, that ultimately led to the union taking strike action; however, their collaborationist and sabotage efforts of leadership in the course of the strike and the bargain again sold workers out leaving them with pitiful gains. This only pointed towards the need for continual organizing for the UFCWA and lead the workers to breakout from the shackles of the regime union.

Through the Class Struggle Action Network, these workers have built association with class militants within the Starbucks Workers United union. Through CSAN these Starbucks workers fought for a year to oppose their own unions acceptance of a collaborationist "no strike clause" in their contract and advance the need for serious strike action. The agitational work in Starbucks against the unions collaborationist attitude over the past year, has also contributed towards leading it back onto the grounds of voting for a national strike authorization vote.

In Portland Starbucks workers and Fred Meyer's workers have united to form a territorial congress of service workers united by class unionist principles. Already the effort has brought the two sections of workers together with others within the New Seasons Labor Union. The first action of the new association has been to pass solidarity resolutions within their respective unions to stand together in solidarity, at take labor actions in the event of a strike declaration by the others. Already such a resolution was passed unanimously in Portland, by the New Seasons Labor Union. This declaration of intent to take serious united strike action, represents a serious and positive development for the elements of combative independent unions in Portland, towards their unification, via joint action within a classist united front that can begin to seriously defend workers interests.

Richmond Workers Assembly (RWA)

The Richmond Workers Assembly (branch of the Southern Workers Assembly) puts on a regularly occurring monthly meeting, open to all workers, where various workers united around class union principles (often involved in rank and file caucuses) in the Richmond area congregate and share activity in their unions and promote local campaigns, as well as help to organize the unorganized workers.

The assembly established contact with the Class Struggle Action Network last year and we have since shared joint membership and support. It has shown strong support and solidarity actions for local unionization efforts, including: a successful arborists union drive with IAM, a brewery (Sapporo-Stone) unionization drive with the Teamsters that ended in a failed vote after a bitter union busting campaign, but has developed a strong Organizing Committee that's emboldened to continue the fight in the upcoming year. Additionally, there is a developing effort from the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden workers with IAM, where solidarity actions from the assembly are being planned.

Our Party militant's intervention within RWA has been largely relegated to propagandizing our Party's paper among the workers. Many workers have gone from simply accepting our press, to actively seeking out the paper. In addition to distribution of our press, there has been an effort to merge participation between assembly workers into the broader Class Struggle Action Network. At least 4 assembly members have started attending the monthly CSAN meetings and have shared positive remarks on CSAN's work with others in the assembly, suggesting a promising future.

IAM & the Boeing Strike

Note: A TA is a tentative agreement; a proposed agreement between boss and union leadership that has not been approved or voted on by workers yet. Thus, it is an unofficial agreement that proceeds to be voted on by workers in a particular union.

Since our last report, comrades continued to intervene on the International Aerospace and Machinists (IAM) district local 751 and W24 picket lines at Boeing, distributing our party press at nearly all picket locations up until the rank and file, by a small margin, approved a tentative agreement (TA) after 53 days of striking. The TA was approved by only 59% of the rank and file, while 41% wanted to continue the hard struggle, particularly to regain their pension. Workers had spent years saving up for this strike, many of whom reported having saved to last at least 6 months of a strike. The small majority of workers who approved the TA came from the newer hires who had been recently recruited into the company and had never experienced a pension. The company had continued to work to draw away the new hires in negotiations with targeted small pay increases that would specifically increase their wages to create divisions amongst the workers.

Through our conversations on the picket lines, we learned many workers were recognizing the need to organize amongst themselves within the union to overthrow leadership and put their union on a fighting footing to actually get their demands met. As far as we could tell, there was not yet a force specifically organized amongst the rank and file prepared to drive the agitation of the workers forward. The direct actions and opposition to union leadership in voting down multiple

contracts that the union had tried selling to the rank and file as "historic wins", came spontaneously as a product of the poor conditions and sellout leadership that workers knew did not represent their interests. The approval of the latest TA leaves a very agitated 41%, nearly 14,000 workers. The current contract expires in 2028, the same year which the United Auto Worker president Sean Fain has called for workers to align contracts.

Subsequently, through contacts long established through our various picket line intervention work over the years, Party members in CSAN were invited to deliver a speech to health care workers within an IAM local as they deliberated over whether or not to approve the current TA they were bargaining, and whether or not to vote to authorize a strike. There were approximately 25 workers present at the union hall at the time, along with a small handful of union leaders. Worker's conditions and wages were appalling. Workers responded enthusiastically to what our Party's militant proselytized about class unionism and struggle.

PSU AAUP

A Party militant has been organizing support for increasing the combative strength of workers in the Portland State University American Association of University Professors union (PSU-AAUP) as actions escalate during contract negotiations. The university president and board of trustees are all owners of property development companies. Funds generated by the university have been diverted away from workers, and towards investment opportunities that benefit their companies. Both to increase profits, and to intimidate workers into a cowering position as their contract expires, the university announced a \$25 million dollar budget cut and issued 94 lay off notices. This announcement came as the university invested \$300 million in concrete and steel.

Our comrade has now participated in multiple worker actions that have included rallies, marches, building occupations and crowding of workers into the negotiating room.

Besides distributing both our Party and CSAN press, our comrade has played a role in emboldening the workers towards further advancing their actions, such as being the first to approach and enter the building to be occupied as workers stalled their march's advance. During the first action while occupying the building, our comrade was asked to give a speech to the workers that resulted in an eruption of cheers by the workers present.

At the following day of action, our militant distributed papers to the 75% of workers who accepted our press, and otherwise built individual contacts with workers from various unions who had shown up to the action in solidarity. With the contract expiring this week, more actions are planned and it is likely a strike authorization vote will soon occur. Our Party militant will continue to put forth our Party's positions and press to the workers.

Graduate Employees Organization (GEO) in Chicago

In September when there was a strike by the rank and file of SEIU at the University of Illinois, our Party militant distributed a Party flyer denouncing the electoralist and regime union, and a CSAN quarter sheet urging walkouts and slowdowns. As a result of these efforts and the solidarity in struggle demonstrated, the rank and file members of GEO requested our comrade's support in the organizing of a solidarity committee within the union. Originally the committee was framed in liberal terms. Our comrade collaborated with other Party militants to put forth a new framework to outline the mission of the committee along class unionist lines. The proposal was welcomed and implemented. As discussions have continued amongst those particularly excited to learn more about class unionism, it was decided to investigate the potential of building a class union caucus within the union to further agitate those positions within the broader union. Approximately 12 workers have confirmed extreme interest in developing the caucus. Our comrade recently became a formal voting member of the committee where he has continued to put forth our Party's positions.

National Association of Letter Carriers

Via our connections with a class unionist in the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) who is sympathetic to the Party, we learned of a workers rally being held outside a Post Office in town. The rally was organized as a part of a national day of action for workers in the National American Letter Carrier (NALC) union who have been working without a contract now for nearly 550 days as negotiations stall. The NALC recently put forward an insulting TA to its membership. The day of action was organized as a part of a campaign by the rank and file to turn out a vote against a TA meant only for the port-potty, and to further organize workers to overtake the union's collaborationist old guard leaders. The TA includes a laughable raise of 1.3%, an effective wage cut given inflation.

Emerging from the struggles of the over 280,000 rank and file of the NALC living with low wages that have endured a net loss in purchasing power of 13 percent, is the Build a Fighting NALC (BFN) rank and file union caucus, who organized the day of action. BFN appears to be taking some

sort of lead in a coalition effort of a number of reform caucus within the union including Concerned Letter Carriers (CLC) in the vote no campaign against the TA. A TA hasn't been voted down since 1978. BFN clarifies, this campaign is to encourage a no vote in favor of better wages, but that their caucus aims to overthrow the old guard of the union, build solidarity across the postal unions, and gain the right to strike.

The 585,000 postal workers across 4 unions and crafts making up America's largest unionized workforce, are additionally undergoing massive threats of layoffs. To stay competitive with Amazon, UPS, and FedEx, the United States Postal Service (USPS) has a plan to close loads of post offices and create a few, far spread out, mega facilities that incorporate large scale automation, such as that seen on the huge 90 football field wide UPS facility in Kentucky, that has humans touching packages only twice, on their way into the facility and on the way out.

Long time postal rank and file organizers say that there is more movement by workers on the shop floor than they've seen in 30 years. The Postal worker's history shows, should the material conditions be desperate enough, the workers will strike, regardless of any so called rights bestowed or denied by the capitalist class.

In 1970, the second year of the US war in Vietnam, political unrest, and the hardships of rising inflation took place. Federal Postal workers, despite lack of bourgeois touted "rights of collective bargaining", staged a wildcat of 210,000 workers across 30 cities in the largest strike against the Federal Government, and the first walk-out against the Federal Government in U.S. history. This 8 day strike halted the distribution of 270 million pieces of mail a day, leading to a massive buildup of government and financial documents including draft notification letters for the imperialist slaughter of workers in Vietnam. That 28% representing the militant minority of the postal workforce who went on illegal strike for wages, while the federal government tried to break them with 23,000 national armed forces, won those higher wages.

At the recent National Day of collective action rally, postal workers erupted with shouts of "I want to strike" in response to speeches recalling the great postal Wildcat of the 1970's as an exemplar of worker power, possibility, and as an answer to their decimated wages and worsening conditions. Despite a group of members of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) making a point to alienate our comrade at the rally, workers quickly devoured both our Party press and CSAN literature.

Party Reports

Latin America: Anti-Labor Policies, Repression And Media Offensive of the Bourgeoisie and its Governments, Betrayal of the Trade Unions and Conciliation of Reformism Slow Down the Resumption of the Class Struggle of the Wage Earners.

While the governments and the institutions of the bourgeois world speak of economic growth in the countries of the region, the wage conditions and working environment of the wage earners maintain their tendency to impoverishment, with a fall in real wages, labor instability, high unemployment rates, food insecurity and poor access to drinking water, electricity, health services and so-called "social assistance".

The governments, although with some differences in approach, are concentrating on fiscal discipline measures, inflation control, reduction of current spending and reduction or elimination of some subsidies. In this regard, it is striking that the governments that call themselves "leftist" or progressive and are known for their "anti-neoliberal" discourse are the most aggressive in adopting policies of this type and have not hesitated to use repression against their opponents. In this regard, Venezuela, Brazil and Colombia stand out, where the "anti-neoliberals" impose an agenda of increasing the rate of exploitation and reducing the fiscal deficit, measures commonly associated with neoliberalism. These demonstrate that the policies necessary to maintain the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, such as a level of exploitation adequate to valorize the total national capital, and a fiscal deficit focused on absorbing the overproduction of commodities, are independent of any bourgeois program, which on the contrary, must accommodate them, whether enthusiastically, or in an improvised manner.

The trade union movement in Latin America displays all the erroneous and opportunist positions already known, which have historically pushed the workers to class conciliation, paralysis, division and disorganization, leaving them unarmed

and defenseless in the struggles for their demands. The traitorous trade union centers dominate the scene, integrated into the bourgeois state, submissive to the governments and the laws. Only sporadically have we seen that the discontented workers have taken up the struggles, united by the rank and file, escaping from the control of the union leaderships; but even in these cases the traitor unions take advantage of the first opportunity to boycott the struggles and reach agreements with the bosses on the basis of betrayal. But it has also been relevant that these spontaneous struggles have focused on demands for wage increases or improvements in working conditions and environment. That is to say that only in these spontaneous struggles, where the workers have gone over the heads of the treacherous union leaderships, the union movement has taken up the strike as a form of struggle, has focused on the economic demands of the class and has united over artificial divisions such as union affiliation, nationality and trades. We have seen this in the strike of workers of the National Institute of Social Security (INSS) in Brazil and we have already observed it in 2023 in Venezuela with the education workers.

To the extent that there have been struggles in which workers have mobilized spontaneously, despite the conciliation of the union leadership with the employers, we have seen how governments have been reinforcing strategies of criminalization of workers' protests, promoting opinion matrixes in which wage demands struggles are placed as part of "terrorist plans", "coup plans" or even qualifying strikes as "destabilizing" actions, of "treason" and of a "criminal" character in general. It is no coincidence that in Venezuela what they called an "Anti-Fascist Congress" was held and that the government is promoting a Law against Fascism, which already has as precedent the legislation "against terrorism" and "against hatred". In general, the intention is to promote throughout Latin America the supposed confrontation between democracy and fascism, despite the fact that these are two faces of the regime of bourgeois domination. This "booby trap", with which the so-called "public opinion" is manipulated, imposing a new version of the political polarization between the bourgeois factions disputing the control of the governments, is really directed against the wage-earning workers and their organizations of economic struggle, whose control by the State is sought to be deepened.

The workers are subjected to a "psychological and ideological war" of the bourgeoisie which, from the media and the social networks, from the governments and from the different parties that converge in parliament and in the electoral campaigns, carries out operations of distraction, confusion and disorientation of the workers, calling them to assume bourgeois-democratic demands (defense of the vote, defense of the National Constitution, etc.), to the defense of the homeland, to the defense of the national economy and to class conciliation with the bourgeoisie. And it is precisely in this context that every struggle in which the workers are able to escape from this great ideological coercion to take up their economic struggles stands out.

The real economic demands of the working class remain buried by bourgeois-democratic demands and diluted in polyclassist or petty bourgeois oriented movements and generally subordinated to the interests of the political groups that dispute the control of the government.

Our party has insisted in its propaganda, in the call to the workers' movement to form in all countries a Single Class Trade Union Front, which expresses the unity of action in the economic struggle and that goes beyond the artificial divisions associated with nationality and trades. We have even insisted that in struggles workers must unite even if they are affiliated to different unions. A front like this should arise in an atmosphere of multiplication of the struggles of the wage earners, as a way to free themselves from the chains of betrayal of the Central Unions of the regime. Likewise we have insisted on the need for the class union movement to assume the agitation in favor of the general strike as the only way to defeat the bosses and their governments in the economic struggles for demands.

In Brazil the strike of the workers of the National Institute of Social Security (INSS) stands out, which since July 10 began a struggle demanding better wages and working conditions. At the end of September this strike will have been going on for approximately 11 weeks (September 23 was 70 days). The workers organized at the local level and have rejected the various government offers. Although some union officials signed an agreement with the employer, this was rejected by the workers, who remained on strike. The government has remained inflexible in its offers to the workers and has been declaring that the INSS workers are infiltrated by "Bolsonarism", thus pushing an opinion matrix that justifies them to repress this movement arguing that they are facing "coupism", of which ex-President Bolsonaro and his followers have been accused. Regardless of the results of this strike and the weaknesses in part of its demands, we have seen once again how when the workers unite at the base and throw themselves into the struggle, despite the passive and conciliatory attitude of the union leaderships, the movement tends to approach the methods of class struggle and organization: debate and decisions in assemblies, indefinite strike without minimum services, focus on proletarian economic demands and rupture with any kind of artificial division in the movement. To the extent that the boss-government remains intransigent, it is

to be expected that the fighting movement will tend to wear down and, in order to advance, it will need to seek contact with other sectors of the workers to extend the strike. But the agitation for the extension of the strike and to raise to the other workers the need for a general strike, which becomes a necessary condition even for victories in initially isolated struggles, requires a break with opportunist policies, which for now is not possible in Brazil, where opportunism controls the trade union movement.

The Brazilian government, in collusion with the Superior Judicial Court (STJ), has tried to use legal measures to intimidate the workers and make them back down, such as the imposition of a daily fine on unions participating in strikes and the demand to limit strike membership to only 15% of the workers in the category, guaranteeing a "minimum service" of 85%. The bourgeois press attempts to pit service users against INSS workers, repeatedly claiming that the strike is affecting service delivery. Likewise, in municipalities such as Londrina, in the north of the state of Paraná, the government used subcontracted workers as strikebreakers to guarantee minimum services in the agencies.

Despite these attempts at intimidation, isolation and repression, the workers have responded to this employers' offensive with some direct actions. Of particular note was the occupation of the INSS headquarters in Brasilia on September 10, led by the FENASPS union federation, which succeeded in getting the government to back down on some repressive measures.

In Colombia so far the government has managed, with the support of the traitorous clowns of the unions and the backing of the opportunist parties and the so-called social movements, to keep the workers in passivity, in expectation of an offer of reforms presented to parliament, which however leave aside the fundamental economic demands of the workers.

The Colombian government is seeking to remove some burdens from its budget, such as subsidies of different types. For the government, the concern for correcting fiscal and budgetary imbalances leads them to implement many neoliberal policies that they have normally criticized and that have a social impact that will hit many sectors that gave them electoral support. In this context, between August 31 and September 6 a "Truckers' Strike" took place, which according to the analysts of the bourgeois press put at stake the stability of the government. It was not an action of workers but of small, medium and big businessmen of the transport sector. The Ministries of Mines and Energy and of Finance and Public Credit issued resolutions establishing an adjustment in the retail price of a gallon of diesel, effective as of Saturday, August 31. The government intended to reduce the deficit in current spending and to advance in the elimination of the subsidy on diesel, something that had not been achieved by the previous Duque administration. On August 6 the strike was lifted, after an agreement between the government and the transporters and although the government resolution was modified and the increase was reduced and divided into 2 parts, the government managed to advance in its policy of freeing fuel prices, without stopping for the impact it will have on public transportation used by workers, as well as on the price of food and services, without anyone putting on the table the issue of salary increases.

In Venezuela, the effect of the electoral campaign on the workers' struggles continues, and they have tended to demobilize. This effect has been prolonged due to the struggle of the bourgeois factions and their parties for the recognition or not of the results of the July 28 presidential elections. In the post-electoral stage the government massively repressed its electoral opponents and has indiscriminately used accusations, arrests and sentences with the backing of anti-terrorist and "anti-hate" laws. With this precedent of repression and state terrorism the workers, besides being distracted by the whole media offensive, are frightened by repression at the moment of raising their struggle and demands. There are no class unions to defend the workers. The governmental Labor Inspectorates are in favor of the bosses and apply procedural delays and administrative silence, giving long delays to the attention, so that the worker gets tired or is forced to look for another job in precarious conditions in order to survive for himself and his family.

The government keeps the minimum wage and the bonus payment policy frozen and thus manages the payroll of public sector workers. But the private sector also relies on this public policy, only that it pays higher bonuses. But in general workers face salaries that do not allow them to cover the cost of living. It is in this context that the educators, the education workers, who in 2023 staged massive mobilizations demanding salary increases and who, abandoned by the union federations, did not achieve any increase, will return to work. However, the education workers have imposed on the employer in practice the same working days that were implemented during Covid 19, limited to 2 or 3 working days a week. Not receiving a salary increase, the education workers in the last few years, contracted for 36 hours a week, have been working 2 or 3 days a week and have been performing different complementary activities to obtain income and supplement the insignificant salary they receive from the Ministry of Education. Therefore, for the start of classes in October 2024, the government will expect the workers to work every day of the week, threatening with dismissal those who do not comply with the schedule. The workers, always without

the support of the union federations, are disorganized and, if they are not able to make a collective opposition and take up the struggle for a wage increase, they will be defenseless at the mercy of the employers' offensive.

In Argentina, on September 2, President Javier Milei vetoed a Pension Mobility Law passed by Congress. Since then, older workers have been demonstrating in the streets to the point of being subjected to harsh repression by the government. The Pension Mobility Law proposed a monthly update of the amount of the payments based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and also included an extra compensation of 8.1%, with the purpose of allowing retirees to equalize their income with the 20.6% inflation rate of January; month in which the Executive granted only a 12.5% increase. The law also stipulated that the minimum pension should not be less than the value of a basic basket for senior citizens and that the formula could not be tied only to the CPI, but had to take into account salaries. Parliament maintained the government's veto to the Retirement Mobility Law and therefore the minimum retirement amount remains the same (234,000 pesos) and the government will implement the payment of a Compensatory Bonus of 70,000 pesos. The government stated that its veto to the Law is due to the fact that it does not have the funds to pay these increases. But the government did not make clear whether it has the resources to maintain the compensatory bonus over time and whether it will adjust it according to the behavior of inflation and the cost of the basic food basket. Pensions have been devaluated during the Macri and Fernandez governments by more than 60%. Again government and parliament unite to legislate against the workers and the trade union centers continue without taking action, nor assuming the general strike. Meanwhile the wave of layoffs in the public sector continues and by the end of September 65,000 more layoffs are announced.

The Course of Global Capitalism: An Overview

After the recession of 2019-20 in 2021, industrial production recovered strongly. This came at the cost of general chaos, which led to high price inflation in commodities, energy and agricultural products. The response of the central banks-the Fed, the ECB and the Bank of England-was to gradually raise interest rates until they reached 5 percent and 5.5 percent for the Fed and 4.5 percent and 4.75 percent for the ECB in 2023.

The combined result of inflation and rising interest rates has been not only a sharp slowdown in household consumption and economic activity, but a return to recession. This in turn was reflected on the countries that served as subcontractors to the big imperialist countries, which transferred part of their industry there. China, for example, the new imperialist giant, has been in recession since 2019; so are Poland and Belgium, which together with Flanders produce a whole range of goods that the old imperialist countries like Britain, France and Italy no longer produce. The same goes for Mexico, North America and so on. Only Turkey, with its devalued currency, seems to be avoiding recession for the time being.

Rising interest rates have led to the 20-30% devaluation of trillions of dollars of bonds, with interest rates close to zero, if not negative, causing the collapse of major regional banks in the United States and Credit Suisse, Switzerland's second largest bank.

This same rise in interest rates, making access to credit more difficult, is leading to a record number of business failures around the world. In France, the number of business failures increased by 35 percent in 2023, to 55,000, and is expected to rise to more than 60,000 in 2024. In the United States, the increase in bankruptcies was 40% in 2023 and is expected to rise 28% in 2024. In Germany and the Netherlands, bankruptcies increased by 23% and 52%, respectively. The year 2024 began with a higher level of insolvencies worldwide than before the pandemic. According to statistics from the insurance company Allianz Trade, the number of companies in trouble, that is, having difficulty repaying their debts, is 15 percent in the United Kingdom, 14 percent in France, 9 percent in Italy, and 7 percent in Germany.

Since the great international crisis of 1974-75, world capitalism has been running on debt, a level of indebtedness that has accelerated since the great international recession of 2008-2009. By 2022, some of the debt incurred during the epidemic had been repaid. A table showed that apart from the United States and China, which continued to increase debt (+6% for the United States and +14% for China) all other countries except Russia reduced their debt. Russia, on the other hand, has increased its debt by 25% because of the imperialist war in which it is involved. This will cost it dearly because its foreign exchange reserves are at their lowest and it will be forced to go back into debt to its "friend" China, at rates that are certainly not "friendly."

However, this reduction in financial commitment is only temporary: the forward march of debt is set to resume inexorably. It is in this context that the U.S. government must roll over its colossal maturing debt of \$8.9 trillion. Although the dollar is a safe haven currency and attracts capital from all over the world because of its high interest rates, it is by no means certain that the transaction will go smoothly, as the fewer and fewer foreign institutions participate in these purchases. These now account for only

10 percent of the market. Before 2015, foreign investors bought 40 percent of U.S. "Treasuries." China, for example, holds only 3 percent of U.S. debt. And Japan no longer has the resources to absorb much of the U.S. debt. So a collapse is not impossible!

Another deadline: \$4.2 trillion of real estate loans, with very low interest rates, deposited in regional banks, are about to expire and must be renegotiated in 2024. But rates are no longer the same, so the risk of default is high. So we can expect a cascade of bank failures in the United States.

As for Europe, it will have to borrow 1240 billion euros by 2024 to meet the needs of its member states. At some point, money will become scarce and very expensive, and the whole Ponzi scheme will collapse. But before that happens, central banks will be forced to resort to "quantitative easing" again, as long as they can.

A look at the inflation curve shows that inflation has fallen to 3.4 percent in the United States and 2.4 percent on average in the euro zone. In China, after negative increases, it is at 0.3 percent. In Europe, inflation has fallen to 3.8 percent in the United Kingdom, while it is at 2.2 percent in France and Germany and 0.8 percent in Italy. Italy is on the brink of deflation.

With the looming trade war with China, which has a gigantic surplus in all sectors, the deflationary process is likely to return. As a result, the FED, ECB and Bank of England are likely to start cutting interest rates between now and the end of the year. This will reinvigorate capital accumulation in the hardest hit sectors, such as construction.

A quick look was then taken at industrial production, the heart of capital accumulation, in the major imperialist countries.

After a sharp slowdown, industrial production in the United States is now practically in a mild recession, ranging from -0.1 percent to -0.8 percent. Compared to the high reached in 2007, the industrial production index still shows a slight increase, of +1.4 percent. However, if we consider only manufacturing production, we note a 7.5 percent decline. In fact, like most of the old imperialist countries, manufacturing production has never recovered the 2007 level. What is no longer produced in the United States is produced elsewhere, in China or Mexico.

Note the decline in increases in the transition from the 30-year "boom" period to the next cycle: in the U.S. the increase halves, from 4.7 percent to 2.4 percent, the result of the downward trend in the profit rate. This decline is even more pronounced when short cycles are considered, although there was a temporary recovery in the 1990-2000 cycle. Another noteworthy aspect is the number of recessions that have characterized postwar accumulation in the U.S.: four, compared with one for France, Germany and Italy, and no recessions for Japan during this period. All four of these countries experienced great destruction during the war, which led to more vigorous capital accumulation and virtually no overproduction crises.

Since the early 1990s, Japan's capitalism has been supported by "quantitative easing" and, of course, the relocation of some industrial production to Southeast Asia and China. Its interest rates remain close to zero, if not negative, because with non-financial sector debt of 413 percent of GDP and government debt of 263 percent, it cannot exit "quantitative easing" without collapsing. The yen is only a shadow of what it was, trading at 160 per dollar! Despite all this, inflation, which until recently was deflationary, remains moderate, standing at 2.7 percent in February. This is explained by the fact that because wages are very low, workers are not rushing to buy a sedan or an apartment; instead, they are saving and consuming very little. In terms of salaries, for example, a software engineer now costs 35 percent less in Tokyo than in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, and 70 percent less than in Silicon Valley, California.

The result is a recession, with a contraction in 2023 of 1.4 percent from 2022, but 19 percent from 2007. In long cycles, the decline is staggering: from an average annual growth rate of 13% during the thirty years after the war to 1.9%! The decline is even more pronounced in short cycles, from 4% in the 1985-1991 cycle to 0.8% in the last cycle 1997-2007. And industrial production has been declining ever since.

Germany, which in 2018 managed to exceed the high reached in 2008 by 7.5%, finds itself, like everyone else, in recession, with -1.2% in 2023 compared to 2022, but -9% compared to 2018. And again, the fall from cycle to cycle is very evident: from an average annual growth of 7.3 percent in the 30-year postwar period, to 1.6 percent for the cycle from 1973 to 2008, and finally falling to 0.7 percent for the latest cycle.

If we analyzed the various imperialist countries one by one we would find the same picture: for example, Belgium, which in 2021 had exceeded its 2008 high by 38 percent, finds itself with an output decline of -7.5 percent in 2023, which is no small feat. Poland, which was still skyrocketing in 2022 with 10% growth, finds itself in recession in 2023 with -1.2%. Korea regressed by 2.6 percent in 2023 and that Italy by 2.5 percent. This general recession is reflected in the international trade of major capitalisms, with a sharp decline in exports and an even sharper decline in imports. We can therefore expect an intensification of the trade war, especially with China forced to dump its huge surpluses on the international market.

This system will hold until there is a general, irreversible financial crash that will bring the whole system down. Only then will there be a return to class

struggle and the rebirth of the international communist movement.

On the Agrarian Question

After the comrades provided Engels' text "History and Language of the Germans," it was considered to expand the first part of the work.

Frederick Engels recalls the presence of man in Europe since the period between the last two ice ages: "After the second ice age, with the climate becoming progressively milder, man appears throughout Europe, in North Africa and Asia Minor, as far as India. The tools of that era indicate a very low degree of civilization: very crude stone knives, axes or axes of pear-shaped stone, which were used without handles, scrapers for cleaning animal skins, drills, all of balenite: roughly the degree of development of the present natives of Australia. In none of the regions where they appeared, not even in India, are preserved human races that can be regarded as their prosecutors of present-day humanity."

In the caves of England, France, Switzerland, Belgium and southern Germany, the tools of these vanished men can still be found, but from a more recent period, more skillfully crafted and of different materials: "These men probably arrived from the northeast: their last remains today seem to be the Eskimos (...) These too, hitherto documented only north of the Pyrenees and the Alps, have disappeared from Europe. Just as the American Redskins were repelled, still in the past century, to the far north by a ruthless war of annihilation, so too it seems that in Europe the new race now appearing gradually repelled the Eskimos and finally exterminated them, without having merged with them.

"This new race compared with its predecessors was at a considerably higher level of civilization. It knew agriculture; it had domesticated animals (dog, horse, sheep, goat, pig, cattle). He knew pottery; he could spin and weave. His tools were still made of stone, but worked with great care and mostly polished (they are distinguished as Neolithic from those of earlier ages). Axes are immaneled and for the first time, therefore, useful for making wood; with this it becomes possible to hollow out tree trunks to make boats, on which it was possible to reach the British Isles."

Settled primitive peoples used hunting and fishing most for their livelihood, while agriculture was largely unknown except for what nature gave spontaneously: various herbage, fruits, and rare seeds. Later nomadic peoples, who dominated various settled populations, introduced pastoralism and animal husbandry to these dominated populations.

In "Agrarian Production and the Forms of Land Ownership," Frederick Church describes this early stage of the introduction of pastoralism: "In the early stages of the development of pastoralism animals are allowed to graze freely on the vast plains and hills, except to take possession of them and their products when the need arises. The care required for breeding and rearing requires a relatively high degree of development, which is not always achieved before grain cultivation is reached."

To follow these flocks in their wanderings in search of pastures, in the plains during the winter, and in the mountains in the summer, induced populations to nomadism.

"Agriculture has a complementary character among pastoral peoples (...) struggles are fought for the acquisition of pasture, both among pastoralists and with hunters. Frequent migration does not allow wide utilization of agricultural land. Real cultivation of the land does not occur except by exception."

Having to transhumance herds in search of pasture required preferring animal species that were small and more productive and easier to move.

"Pastoralism was in its origin necessarily nomadic. The causes that cause the differentiation of occupying societies from herding societies are in evidence. In the former the horde prevails and in the latter the gens. The former is an economy in which what is purchased is immediately consumed; while the herding populations pass on the ownership of herds to heirs."

The prevalence of the gens over the horde contributes to the establishment of the family and facilitates its development with the replacement of patriarchy by matriarchy, and with the formation of aristocracies, determined in relation to the property accumulated by each family. In addition, cattle-breeding societies differ from occupationist ones in an initial division into classes, using prisoners of war reduced to the status of slaves.

Raising livestock is more profitable and less time-consuming than hunting. In idle times, herders are devoted to processing animal products to meet the needs of the family. It is therefore noted that in peoples who maintain a nomadic life, no remarkable economic-social transformations take place, for which population density, stable dwelling and division of labor are required. "Nomads do not progress, but neither do they grow old, and it is only with the introduction of agriculture that the common laws of human development have the upper hand over them."

In these peoples there is not internal trade but external trade, brought about by the need of the various gentile organizations to barter as much as they overabund. Nomads are not only initiators of external trade but also become intermediaries of trade due to their abundance of cargo animals and their migrations.

"In the agricultural state, family ties are strengthened, and while nomadic peoples are generally polygamous, agricultural peoples are

monogamous. This is due to the necessity that arises in the early stage of the development of stable agriculture, namely, that families do not become very large and do not grow too fast vis-à-vis what was being produced from the land.

"The development of agriculture makes it necessary to organize the ownership and use of land and to protect and defend one and the other. Which causes the rise of an authority that is apt to accomplish such protection and that can, at the same time, dictate rules that guarantee the ownership and use of land and permit its succession among heirs or its alienation in favor of third parties. In this way from the horde of hunters and the tribe of nomads we come by agriculture to political life, to the state."

Engels explains how the Germans penetrated Central Europe through the plains that lie in the northern slope of the Carpathians and the mountainous region on the borders of Bohemia.

"The way of life of the Germans proves that they were not yet sedentary. They lived chiefly from farming, from cheese, milk and meat, less from grain; the main occupation of the men is hunting and the use of weapons. They practiced agriculture a little, but only marginally and in the most primitive way."

"But the Germans encountered by Caesar are far from being nomadic in the sense in which the horseman peoples of Asia are at present. For this the steppe is necessary, and the Germans lived in the virgin forest. But they were just as far from the level of sedentary peasant peoples."

Sixty years later Strabo says of them:

"From Asia they had brought knowledge of agriculture, as comparative linguistics proves. But it was an agriculture of semi-nomadic warrior tribes, moving across the forested plains of central Europe, which served as a means of fortune and a secondary source of life."

"A good century and a half after Caesar, Tacitus gives us his famous description of the Germans. Here things are already presented quite differently. The tribes have stabilized. One cannot yet speak of cities. The buildings still lack square stones and roof tiles; they are crudely made of rough logs."

About agriculture in the Roman Empire we added to the report a remark about the concentration of land ownership: "The defect of versatility of slaves and the continuous culture of the same product soon exhausts fertile land. Slave labor even becomes passive; hence the need for ever new fertile land. Hence the concentration of land ownership: the entire vast Roman Empire was owned by no more than 2,000 citizens. The latifundium became the princely regime of agricultural tenure; exploited with extensive cultivation it had a production that was not proportional to the increase in population, thus causing continual famines, which led landowners to prefer pastoralism to agriculture."

"Dispossession of the rural population and its removal from the land," thus titles a paragraph in 'Capital' in the chapter 'Process of Capital Accumulation,' large passages of which we quoted at the meeting.

"In Italy, where capitalist production develops earlier than in other countries, the dissolution of serfdom relations also takes place earlier than in other places. The emancipation of the serf makes him a proletarian who already finds new masters ready in the cities. "When the world market revolution after the end of the 15th century broke the commercial dominance of northern Italy, a movement in the opposite direction began. The workers in the cities were thrown back into the countryside en masse and increased small-scale farming, performed on the example of horticulture, to an extraordinary extent.

"In England serfdom had actually disappeared toward the latter part of the 14th century. The overwhelming majority of the population consisted in those days, and even more so in the 15th century, of self-governing free peasants."

Marx continues, "Such a state of affairs, coupled with the development of the cities, characteristic of the 15th century, resulted in the achievement of a popular wealth, but one that excluded capitalist wealth.

"The revolution that laid the foundations of the capitalist mode of production had its prelude in the last third of the 15th century and the first decades of the 16th. A mass of banished proletarians was thrown into the labor market by the dissolution of feudal ties.

"The new nobility regarded money as the power of powers. Consequently, its watchword was to turn arable land into pasture."

The Military Question - The Civil War in the Donbass

On January 15, 1919, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg had been arrested and killed in Germany.

The fear of the rise of the "enemy within," following the example of the victorious Russian proletariat, required all bourgeoisies as much to oppose economic demands from the workers as a fierce repression of revolutionary movements, which tended to assume power. But workers' struggles during the Red Biennium in Europe had different developments in different countries without being able to achieve the hoped-for and expected successes for the proletarian revolution. It had an ominous influence on the support provided by the Social Democratic parties to the national parliaments, which in 1914 had approved war credits to finance military expenditures, effectively bringing about the end of

the Second Socialist International.

To give direction to proletarian struggle initiatives, fostering the formation of genuine communist parties worldwide for the international communist revolution, the First Congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow from March 2, 1919. It was able to be attended by 51 delegates from 30 countries, after overcoming considerable travel difficulties and police impediments.

Since 1918, strikes and demonstrations had taken place in almost all European countries, especially in those directly involved in the world conflict, against the war and over the deep economic crisis it had generated and which, aggravated, was affecting the proletariat, both in the victorious and vanquished countries. Even far from the fronts, in the United States there was a widespread general strike in Seattle and in Canada violent unrest forced the governor to insist with London that Canadian troops not be used in the civil war in Russia.

Anton Denikin, commander-in-chief of the counterrevolutionary forces, after no less than three failures to capture Caricyn (later Stalingrad), shelved offensives against the strategic city on the Volga for the time being and favored on the southern front the campaign for control of the rich mining and industrial basin of the Donbass. He then established a new arrangement that took into account the changed engagement in the Russian Civil War of the Entente forces, mainly Franco-British, following Germany's exit from the war and the subsequent withdrawal of German troops from Ukraine, which had facilitated the Red Army's occupation of Kiev on February 6, 1919.

The revolutionary forces were positioned as follows: the western flank on the Sea of Azov was held by the Ukrainian 2nd Army, which was joined by formations of the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine, which together formed the 14th Red Army.

We briefly reported on the expansion in Ukraine of these insurrectionary bands. They had arisen as an armed response to the allocation of part of Ukraine to the Central Empires, sanctioned by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 3, 1918. The Black Army, i.e., the anarchist formation headed by Machno, which in early 1919 numbered 15,000 men, all volunteers, organized into cavalry, infantry and artillery, came to have 83,000 infantrymen, 20,135 cavalrymen, 1,435 machine guns, 118 cannons, 7 armored trains and some armored cars in December of that year.

They were reorganized to operate jointly with the Red Army. But complex and tumultuous was the relationship with these anarchists, who fought by making shifting temporary alliances. Because of their anarchist conception they tended toward the economic and political self-administration of the various productive, autonomous and federated communities, according to the egalitarian and anti-authoritarian principle, which was not at all compatible with the total centralization of the proletarian dictatorship. Finally, after bitter contrasts and clashes, they were defeated in 1921 by a Bolshevik expedition led by M. Frunze.

There was a need to take immediate advantage of the failure of the White Cossacks' three attempts to take control of the Caricyn junction and of the crumbling of their formations, which for the most part had surrendered, even without fighting, due to their weakening and lack of all kinds of supplies.

Văciētis, at the head of the Revolutionary Military Council (RVSR), now glimpsed the final victory on the southern front and the conquest of the Donbass, the entire Don region and the North Caucasus, which had hitherto been excluded from the plans, was imminent. The previous approach aimed at outflanking the Whites further north at the Millerovo junction, without advancing into the Donbass, thus, however, depriving themselves of the help of the substantial number of workers in that industrialized region through an insurgency of their own behind the backs of the Whites.

The new defensive set-up of the Whites aimed at defending the Donbass, now considered the epicenter of the entire southern front, however, forced Văciētis to rectify plans by quickly concentrating the available forces to the west, toward the Donbass, for a large-scale offensive.

But the change of direction was by no means easy for the exhausted Soviet divisions, in the absence of usable rail lines, which the retreating Cossacks had destroyed.

Greater involvement of Antonov-Ovseenko's troops and the Anarchist Group was required for the Soviet maneuver. Gittis, the Red Front commander in that sector, prepared the new general deployment, which took place by sustaining several skirmishes, with mixed fortunes due in part to an early melting of the ice on the Donec and its major tributaries, which effectively interposed a mud barrier between the opposing lines.

After various placements, by mid-March the line of departure for the offensive for the Donbass roughly followed the course of the Donec, where some 130,000-150,000 Soviet troops had converged against some 45,000-55,000 counterrevolutionary troops.

An attack was decided on March 17 for units that could operate unimpeded by the river. This allowed important centers around the Donec to be occupied.

Antonov-Ovseenko's forces advanced from Ukraine to the Azov Sea, forcing the Crimean Corps to retreat to the peninsula, leaving the left flank of Maj-Maevsky's White forces unprotected along the coast near Mariupol, which was occupied by

Machno's anarchists.

Gittis, seeking to make the most of the situation and the precarious numerical superiority of the moment, devised a new plan, not without risk, to bring, after a rapid movement of substantial troops, including Machno's anarchist brigade, a mighty attack on the flank of Maj-Maevsky's troops, while a meager Red formation was to attack the Whites stationed in Lugansk.

Initially the plan worked, and Maj-Maevsky's formations were forced to retreat from their positions, but when the white command realized that in front of Lugansk the Reds were clearly outnumbered, Denikin ordered an immediate counteroffensive in force in that sector, producing between March 27 and 28, a breakthrough in the red lines. The vigorous and successful White attack on the weak and secondary Red position disjointed Gittis' plan, who was forced to quickly reposition troops to stem the extensive breach that had been created near Lugansk. From this, Škuro's Caucasus Cavalry had penetrated by attacking the rear of the Soviet attack group from behind, forcing Gittis even to relieve the first line of attack to counter them. In their raids, Škuro's Cossacks sowed terror and destruction in the villages and took a fair amount of military booty and 5,000 prisoners.

As a result of these negative events the Red forces were forced to give up some of the ground they had gained. Further attacks by Škuro's "wolves" forced the Black Army of anarchists to leave Mariupol. The original situation was re-established.

The failure of Gittis' plan was also brought about by the strong rebellions in the rear, where numerous communities in the Cossack villages around Vesenskaya and Kazanskaya, which had already rebelled against Krasnov's troops, now revolted against the Bolsheviks, especially over requisitions of foodstuffs. The Bolshevik attempt to take complete control of the situation resulted in thousands of killings in a matter of weeks. Trotsky in "Rebellion in the Rear." May 12, 1919, wrote, "The rebellion of a part of the Cossacks has been going on for some weeks already. It has been provoked by counterrevolutionary officers, agents of Denikin, and is supported by the Cossack kulaks. The kulaks have dragged along a substantial group of average Cossack peasants. It is very likely that in certain cases the Cossacks had to endure injustice from certain passing military units or from certain representatives of the Soviet authorities. Denikin's agents were able to make use of them to fan the flame of revolt (...). A rebellion in the rear is to the soldier as an abscess in the arm for the worker (...). That is why our most urgent task is to cleanse the Don of troublemakers and suppress riots" (Military Writings I - The Armed Revolution).

In April Gittis organized a new attack on the Donbass mainly by moving the 9th Army from the east. The elaborate maneuver, taking advantage of the retreating waters of the Donec, involved some divisions, newly repositioned behind Millerovo, striking the right flank of the Whites, already engaged in countering the 8th Army, thus allowing the 9th to advance deep beyond the Donec. Unfortunately, the 9th Army moved with slowness and confusion; instead of cooperating with the 8th according to plan, it advanced haphazardly, crossed the Donec settling for small tactical achievements, by the way not even well exploited. The other Red divisions in the complex maneuver, which found themselves across the river, with their flanks exposed and under counterattacks by the Whites, were forced to return to their original positions. The Whites took advantage of this to throw the Reds back across the Donec, occupy Lugansk and from there try to control the passage north of the river. They were stopped, however, by the bridgehead of the 8th Army hitting them on the flanks from Kamenskaya.

This was the first heavy defeat, not only militarily, after months of onerous Red offensives in the Donbass. Trotsky ordered Gittis to organize another vast attack as soon as possible to retake Lugansk and penetrate deep into the Donbass.

From the Archives: "The only, real struggle against fascism is the struggle against the capitalist regime"

This article was written by German comrades in the context of an outcry from democrats and leftists following the electoral breakthrough of the neo-Nazi Nationaldemokratische Partei (NPD) in the late 1960s.

The war cry of the democratic Saint George, riding into battle against the fascist dragon, resounds again today in Germany. All "true democrats" – and who isn't? – the peaceniks and the Maoists, the SDS (1) and the newly born DKP, all call for a holy fight against the resurrected "Nazi". Almost 25 years after the end of the Second World War, the alleged final victory of democracy over fascism, we are "none the wiser!"

Anyone who only observes things superficially would be inclined to pity poor Saint George: he can cut off as many of the dragon's heads as he likes, but new ones keep growing back; the devil must be behind it! And truly, all democratic attempts to explain fascism are limited to incantations: Vade retro Satanas! Let those who believe in the devil as evil incarnate be satisfied with

such explanations and jab their pens at him. By contrast, let us briefly set out the following basic principles of Marxism:

1) Fascism is neither a "relapse" into pre-democratic forms, nor is it "madness", but a necessary tendency of capitalist society.

2) Hence there is no struggle against fascism unless it is the struggle for the annihilation of capitalism through proletarian revolution and dictatorship.

3) Every call to defend democracy, every attempt to fight fascism on the basis of democracy, every alliance of the proletariat with "democratic" parties and classes leads to the destruction of the proletarian movement and paves the way for fascism.

We didn't invent these principles just now. The Marxist left, which led the Communist Party of Italy at the beginning of the twenties and then fought against the degeneration of the Third International, set them out as soon as fascism first appeared, and half a century's experience has only confirmed them.

For the democrat, the essence of fascism is that it openly uses "illegal" violence and abolishes democratic rights and freedoms. And it is precisely against this that they whine so pitifully. For us there is neither reason to whine, nor to be satisfied with such a characterization. We have always denied that the class struggle could be refereed by an allegedly superior authority, like a football match; we have always maintained that the working class cannot conquer political power democratically, that even the most democratic constitution serves to protect the capitalist form of production, that democracy masks the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie even when it is not – like it has done so often – drowning the labor movement in blood. Rejecting violence, invoking the legality of democracy, means renouncing the revolution from the outset! By contrast, we rejoice when the bourgeoisie throws off the velvet glove of democracy, openly shows the workers its iron fist and thus proves to them that there is no "justice" that stands above the classes; that the law expresses nothing other than the balance of power of the classes.

We have, on the other hand, recognized something quite distinct in fascism, namely the attempt, first, to overcome the differences within the bourgeoisie itself, and second, to deprive the workers' movement of any independence.

Democracy became the appropriate political form through which the various sectional interests of the bourgeoisie could express themselves. During the epoch of supposedly "peaceful" expansion of capitalism across the globe (around 1870–1910), this form could prevail in the most powerful bourgeois states; just as the bourgeoisie could allow an independent workers' movement at the time, since it was able to satisfy some of the workers' immediate demands. The bourgeoisie even had the opportunity to bribe the workers with improvements in their economic condition, to distract them from the revolutionary struggle, and to convert their organizations to reformism.

In the age of imperialism this became increasingly difficult. Imperialism means not only the concentration of capital, but also the intensification of all contradictions in capitalist society. The bourgeoisie must try to overcome these contradictions. This means that the interests of the "private capitalist", of the individual enterprise, of this or that stratum, must be silenced in the overall interests of national capital (and sometimes of world capital). As the representative and manager of this general interest, the state becomes more and more centralized, and even legislation cannot be left to the free debate of parliamentary spokesmen of the various capitalist factions; rather, it falls almost directly into the hands of the agents of big business, which is forced to take control of "managing" capital in its entirety.

At the same time, the bourgeoisie cannot tolerate any independent workers' movement. This in no way means that it does not tolerate any workers' organizations at all (as was the case during the initial rise of capitalism, for example), but that it tries to deprive these organizations of any political class character and to integrate them into state administration as corporatist unions.

In short, the bourgeoisie tries to prevent political struggle between classes, to organize its society as a single unit and to "manage" it, ostensibly in the "common interest". Of course, this attempt is doomed to failure; or rather, it can only succeed for a short period of time. For the uninhibited operation of the laws of capitalist the capitalist economy, which progresses according to exclusively "mechanical" criteria (or so it seems!), reproduces the contradictions of capitalism on an even larger scale and inevitably leads to new crises in society. This is also the reason why fascism appears nationalist and bellicose from the outset: the bourgeoisie can only solve crises through war, and even then, only momentarily.

It is now clear that this necessary and general tendency of capitalism does not develop in a linear and uniform fashion, but that its manifestation and speed are determined by each specific situation. After the first imperialist war, this revealed itself first in the weakest capitalist countries: Italy and then Germany. It is true that the bourgeoisie succeeded in repelling the first revolutionary onslaught with the help of social democracy; but on the one hand the proletariat still posed a threat, and on the other, these bourgeoisies had the greatest difficulty in getting their post-war economies going. The need to unite all bourgeois classes, both against the proletariat and for the organization of the capitalist economy, revealed itself in these countries first. As one of the weakest, the Italian bourgeoisie showed the way

to the others. Here, too, much more so than in Germany, the violence of fascism became apparent. For the proletarian movement was still strong and could only be destroyed by force, whereas by 1933 it was already hollow and rotten in Germany.

It was a great mistake of the Communist International to describe fascism as "reactionary". Of course, it was reactionary, but only in relation to the proletarian revolution: it was the most pronounced form of bourgeois counterrevolution, and at the same time, bourgeois progress. This became very clear after World War II: the "democratic" states defeated the "fascist" ones, but fascism defeated democracy, and all countries became, some quickly, other slowly, more "fascistic". We had foreseen this, and we will not be distracted by the "peaceful" nature of this fascification. In 1922–24 the strength of the Italian workers had to be broken in street fights (sometimes with the participation of the Italian navy); in Germany after 1933, only police terror and concentration camps were necessary to suppress the workers; after 1936, however, the Communist International was so rotten that the "Communist" party in France voluntarily subjugated the workers to the national interests of the "fatherland" and prepared them for the Union Sacrée; and even this was unnecessary in England and America. It was the opposite of Goethe's Erklä König: if you are willing, I don't need violence.2

The degree of sheer violence depends only on the resilience of the workers; we are far more interested in the content of fascification, and this has unfolded almost universally since the war: progressive concentration of capital and at the same time political power, as well as the integration of workers into the "people", into national unity. It is characteristic that the development of trade unions (e.g., in France) makes them more and more like Mussolini's sindacati. Trade unions that recognize the capitalist system of production as given once and for all, defend the interests of the factory and the fatherland, and at best only defend the corporate interests of their industrial sector as "partners" in this factory and in national production.

But it is not only proletarians who are increasingly oppressed by capital; the middle class also suffers from the totalitarianism of big business. In the period immediately after the World War this pressure was still weak, as the general reconstruction drove sales of all products. But with the first signs of saturation of the world market, with the harbingers of the general crisis, international competition sharpens, and every nation is forced to "rationalize" its production, to produce at lower cost, not only at the expense of the workers, but also of the petty bourgeois and small and medium sized enterprises. France is particularly characteristic in this regard: the old form of capitalism based on "usury" was forced to "modernize" itself and, among other things, to remove 800,000 people from agriculture over the past ten years; likewise, a great offensive is under way against the retail trade (witness the protests and demonstrations by shopkeepers!) (3) and the state is openly promoting the concentration of enterprises in order to increase the competitiveness of French production. Of course, this cannot be done without resistance from the petty bourgeoisie, a resistance that is all the greater since no proletarian attack threatens the foundations of capitalism. The history of Gaullism, which has only partially achieved its objectives, shows how difficult it is for the bourgeoisie to establish unity in the absence of an acute class struggle.

In Germany, after the annihilation of any labor movement, the defeat and destruction in the War allowed the bourgeoisie to win this unity "peacefully" and "democratically": all classes submitted to the needs of the reconstruction of German capitalism. But capitalist miracles don't last long. Pumped up with American capital, fattened by the peaceful exploitation of the workers it attracted from all over the world, German capitalism (which Lenin cited as a model of capitalist concentration as early as 1916) is already so plump that it is suffocating within its frontiers, all the more so as international competition shrinks these frontiers. (One of the reasons for the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 was precisely the need to prevent German capital from entering this hunting ground.) Thus, of course, capitalist expansion leads to capitalist crisis, which puts an end to the social peace (4) and world peace. The classes are in turmoil again and the nations are starting to wrangle

with each other: "peaceful" fascism, the "democratic miracle" has failed and its legitimate offspring, brutal and bellicose fascism, is already showing its face. The NPD, for example, is both an expression of the objective expansionist force of German capital and an attempt to overcome the approaching crisis and social conflicts.

From the foregoing it is now clear that there is no point in weeping over this development. Statements such as: «The conduct and utterances of members of the leadership and spokesmen of the NPD... have shown that a militaristic, National Socialist and otherwise undemocratic mentality [!!!] is alive in this party» (7. Federal Congress of the DGB) (5)

And assertions such as: «The development that led to the disasters of 1918 and 1945 must be prevented in Germany» (Chairman of the DGB regional district of Baden-Württemberg)... are just as ineffective today as they were then. Their only real result is maintaining the illusion that people can freely "choose" between democracy and fascism, between peaceful and violent exploitation, and between peace and war. Behind all these phrases lies the miserable old dream of the petty bourgeois, naively formulated by the DFU [the German Peace Union] as follows: «In a peaceful and democratic Germany all citizens can live contentedly and at ease from the fruits of our peaceful labor», the dream of the peaceful coexistence of classes and states, the dream of capitalism without contradictions!

But this is not just a childish dream. This ideology is an opium that is administered to the proletariat, all the more hastily and urgently as harsh reality threatens to open its eyes, making its class positions clear and tangible once again. There is no "choice" between democracy and fascism (i.e., between the hidden or open dictatorship of capital) nor between war and peace.

As long as capitalism exists, it goes its way, with its maniacal cycles of production and destruction, drinking the sweat and blood of the workers by turns. The true alternative faced by humanity is Dictatorship of Capital or Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Only the communist revolution, the annihilation of the bourgeois state and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship can break the yoke of capital, shatter all its economic laws and free humanity from its "prehistoric" sufferings.

We are not fooling ourselves or the workers: we know that the communist revolution is not for tomorrow morning. Not because workers lack the physical strength to do it! But because this revolution is only possible if the workers regain their class consciousness and their class organization. These were destroyed in the counterrevolution, and not so much with guns and truncheons as with democratic ideology. The enemy who appears openly as such is easier to fight than the cunning democrat who dissolves the clear awareness of class antagonisms in the "unity of the people"; he appears as the liberal petty bourgeois, who on the one hand wants the proletariat's support against big business, but at the same time works to undermine all proletarian class politics before converting to fascism because "there is no alternative". The result of the wrong tactics of the Communist International confirmed our position: such "brothers" are the most dangerous.

The real fight against fascism is the fight against democracy, the fight for the reconstitution of the proletarian class movement, with its class program and its class organization, the communist party. For many, this takes too long: "Fascism is coming, let's quickly unite all men of good will to fight it, now," they say. But in reality, such people are nothing other than defenders of capitalism.

The tenacious defense of communist positions; patiently reintroducing these positions into the working class; the daily connection of isolated struggles over wages with the ultimate historical objective of the proletariat; the struggle against democratic and pacifist ideology; these are the basic conditions for the reawakening of the proletariat.

However long it takes, this is the only way, and therefore the shortest way. Today there is no longer a fight "for democracy". Such a struggle still made sense when it was a question of breaking up pre-capitalist forms and organizations of society through democracy. But today it is a matter of smashing capitalism: only the proletarian dictatorship can do this!

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