

The Communist Party

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

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Pandemics and World Capitalism Communism Will Liberate Science to Serve Humanity

In the present moment, it is instructive to review past epidemics of the 20th and 21st centuries. Some species of wild animals are vectors of pathogens that can pass to other animals, to livestock on farms and then to humans. Domestic and farm animals share the greatest number of viruses with humans and, like pigs, are carriers of eight times more pathogens than wild mammals. Human activity brings our species into contact with viruses that our immune system is not familiar with. The Ebola, HIV, and Covid-19 viruses thrived in animals before infecting humans.

Influenza is a viral disease transmitted to humans by animals. It mainly infects birds, both wild and domesticated. The passage to humans often occurs through pigs. It is caused by an RNA virus characterized by a significant ability to mutate and to integrate the genetic material of different viruses. Some of the human influenza viruses are derived from mutated viruses, the genes of which are a recombination in pigs and chickens of previous animal viruses. They circulate for a period of time ranging from one year to a decade and then disappear; they can reappear in winter in temperate countries and all year round in tropical and subtropical countries. Influenza, of types A (the most virulent and greatest risk of pandemic), B, C, D, usually causes between 290,000 and 650,000 deaths a year worldwide, mostly children and the elderly suffering from chronic diseases. According to the Pasteur Institute, in France 10,000 to 15,000 deaths are recorded each year due to seasonal flu, with 2-8 million infected and a mortality rate of 0.1%.

Coronaviruses, identified in 1965, are a large family of RNA viruses. With the quills of their crowns, they adhere to cells through a specific receptor to penetrate and multiply. They are widespread in birds and mammals and some can be transmitted to humans, being the third most common cause of upper respiratory tract infection. Some are very common, others very virulent because, like all RNA viruses, they have considerable genetic variability due to mutation and recombination. The more pathogenic variants attack lung cells, compromising the cells of the vessel walls and causing asphyxiation.

The insane population density in the monstrous and unhealthy metropolises of capitalism, the intensive breeding of animals, and the convulsive movement of goods and people imposed by the capitalist system of production are an explosive cocktail for diffusion of these diseases. The Covid-19 virus emerged from China in the context of the explosion of that country's industrial activities, and of immense urbanization with unhealthy working and housing conditions, just like the other big capitalisms of previous centuries.

Epidemics occurred in England in the eighteenth century, where capitalism first developed. Farmers planted fodder in a

monoculture for the breeding of cattle, and cattle imported from continental Europe brought soil diseases with them.

The 1890 epidemic of rinderpest (a viral disease of cattle and buffalo) in Africa originated in Europe, which was then experiencing a great growth in agriculture. The Italians brought it to East Africa; then it spread to South Africa (where it exterminated the herds of the white supremacist Cecil Rhodes). By killing 80-90% of the livestock, it caused unprecedented famine in the predominantly pastoral societies of sub-Saharan Africa. The lack of grazing animals created a habitat for the tsetse fly which spreads sleeping sickness, limiting the region's repopulation.

Lyme disease, caused by a bacterium carried by ticks, had spread in North America before arriving in Europe, where it decimated animals before moving on to humans.

The influenza of 1917-19 was called Spanish Flu because only Spain, a neutral country in World War I, made it public news, while other governments imposed disinformation and military secrecy: it was forbidden to talk about the outbreak and no protective measures were taken. For the safety of world capital not enough proletarians had died on the war fronts!

The "Spanish" flu originated in 1917 in Kansas, where there was intensive pig and poultry farming. Its spread to a third of the world population was accelerated by the war and the movement of troops. It killed at least 40 million people, many in India and China, and mostly young adults. Finally it disappeared, inexplicably. The high mortality rate was also due to malnutrition, the unhealthy living conditions of the soldiers and the population (including secondary bacterial infections) and mainly affected the poorest strata of society. Today we know that most of the deaths were not from the virus but from a bacterial infection, pneumococcal pneumonia, now fought with antibiotics. The virus was finally identified in 1931 in pigs: the A/H1N1 virus, which circulated in humans until 1958.

The 1956-58 'Asian' flu pandemic was caused by the recombination of several other flu viruses, including H1N1, in wild ducks in southwestern China. The resulting A/H2N2 virus was responsible for the deaths of over two million people worldwide.

The virus circulated for eleven years, finally leading to the third influenza pandemic of the 20th century: the "Hong Kong" flu, from the summer of 1968 to the spring of 1970. The A/H2N2 virus, which in the meantime had caused seasonal influenza epidemics, was replaced by the A/H3N2 virus. It left central China in February 1968 and spread through air transport, which had become more accessible by that time, causing one million deaths, of which 50,000 in the USA (autumn 1969) and 40,000 (winter 1969-70) in France. Even then the hospitals were overwhelmed. However, the international press remained measured and reassuring; the term

"pandemic" was not even used, and it went almost unnoticed by the population.

The practice of mass vaccination then started, and international alert and research networks were strengthened.

It was with the economic crises of 1975-82 and the launch of austerity plans at a global level, which forced the reduction of health care spending in many countries, that we moved from under-information to hyper-information on infectious risks. From the 1980s, after the great economic crisis which convinced the world bourgeoisie to adopt the austerity policies of economic pseudo-liberalism, the dissemination of information on epidemics, such as AIDS and the contaminated blood scandal, also began. The discretion of the media turned into its opposite, denouncing the unfaithful executives; since then experts of all kinds have followed one another on the screens, often quarreling among themselves; continuous hygiene lessons are given. Catastrophism becomes a kind of show that the population grows tired of.

The mad cow disease outbreak in the late 1980-1990s, which began in Great Britain, was caused by ruminants fed on the remains of sick animals. An abnormal protein, called a prion, by simple contact with brain tissues causes irreversible neurological degeneration. Transmission to humans was very low, but the "scandal" highlighted the dark paths of factory meat production.

SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome, emerged in 2002-2003 with a new coronavirus. It appeared in China in 1997, originating in bats and then passed on to civets and then to humans. The epidemic hit 30 countries but killed only 800 people, and none in Europe. Then it inexplicably disappeared in August 2003.

Avian influenza H5N1, a variant of flu virus A, infected wild ducks and domestic animals, mainly chickens and pigs, in 2004, but is difficult to transmit to humans. In 1983, that disease raged in Pennsylvania, forcing the slaughter of 17 million chickens. And in 2004 an outbreak in Southeast Asia spread to the rest of the world. The World Health Organization thought it possible that avian flu could cause a human pandemic with up to 100 million deaths. This did not happen.

The influenza pandemic with the A/H1N1 pdm09 virus of 2009 is known as the swine flu. This virus first appeared in Mexico on a farm, an H1N1 variant that brought together viral segments of four viruses of different origins: North American pig, European and Asian pig, avian, and human influenzas. Official publications described the possibility of extreme mortality. Governments ordered widespread vaccination of the population. This flu, which began in the summer, ended suddenly in December with the arrival of the seasonal flu.

We observe here that the seasonal flu of early 2020, with the usual H3N2 and B viruses,

did not circulate in the presence of Covid-19.

2014-16 saw an outbreak of the Ebola virus and the resulting hemorrhagic fever. Originating in bats, the virus first infected chimpanzees and then humans. The first human cases appeared in 1976 in Congo, but the epidemic finally occurred in 2014-2016 in Congo and in West Africa in 2018. The death rate was frightening: 50% according to the WHO. In 2015, there were 20,000 infected and 9,000 deaths.

In 2010, a cholera epidemic was brought to Haiti by Nepalese soldiers of the United Nations.

At the end of 2012 there was an outbreak of the coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease began in bats in Saudi Arabia, and then transmitted to camels. MERS remained mysteriously localized to the Arabian Peninsula, with an additional minority of cases in South Korea.

In 2013, the new H7N9 virus infected birds and chickens on factory farms. It killed only 250 humans and remained localized in China.

Finally, Covid-19 is still ongoing. As was the case in the Spanish flu, the virus was able to spread rapidly due to the increased circulation of human beings. It appeared in Wuhan, mainland China, in December 2019. The origin is believed to be in the large bat colonies of the region, then passed on to the pangolin, a prized meat in China. Wuhan is a hot and humid region, highly urbanized and industrialized. Agro-industry, with its intensive livestock farming, presses against the crowded city and suburbs; these brought together animals that favor viral mutations and the conditions for their spread to and among humans. Mortality was very high at the beginning of the pandemic because the cases examined were all already very serious; estimates later dropped from 5.6% to 0.5%. The disease has spread to the rest of Asia and the world through the movement of people. In 80% of cases the symptoms are moderate and mortality mainly concerns very elderly people, especially those with underlying conditions or in a state of poverty. The body responds to the disease, which can go unnoticed, especially in young people, with an immune reaction; in some cases this response is disproportionate and targets the cells of the respiratory mucosa that transfer oxygen to the blood. Covid-19 also causes damage to the vascular walls. At this point the disease is no longer viral but autoimmune. But many elements are still incomprehensible. Because epidemics sometimes remain localized, because they cease, there are questions that science has not yet answered.

The Road Ahead

The race for profit drives the world dominated by the capitalist mode of production (along with its irrationality), plunging the very intelligence and survival instinct of the species into chaos. This generates the spread - expanded by bourgeois propaganda - of a general distrust of science and openness to irrational and esoteric "new age" ideas. Some prostrate themselves in front of an "anti-science,"

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The Origins of the Nigerian Uprising

The riots that rocked Nigeria in October, which resulted in massacres by police forces and sabotage and looting by the dispossessed masses in many cities of the country, began earlier that month with a protest against the violence of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the national police. For many years, the SARS has been responsible for violence and murders against the subordinate strata of the population, and for some time a protest movement has existed to oppose it. The October protests finally compelling the government to dissolve the SARS.

However, within days it was discovered that this measure was limited to changing the name of the department. The a growing mass of proletarians then returned to the public squares, already exasperated by misery and unemployment.

As has been repeated hundreds of times in countries on the periphery of world capitalism, where the average age of the population is remarkably low, crowds of young people, condemned to a condition of oppression and marginalization, have taken to the streets to express their anger. They met with ruthless police repression, leaving us many dozen dead.

The roots of the discontent of the proletarian youth of Nigeria are all in the bankrupt budget of this country, which 60 years ago managed to free itself from the yoke of British colonial domination.

Before independence, agriculture was the most important part of the economy. Colonial rule forced the cultivation of crops destined for the world market, such as cocoa, palm oil, and peanuts, which made up 70% of exports, to which were added cotton and gum arabic. However, this never supplanted subsistence crops, which were left to meet 95% of the country's internal food needs.

In 60 years of political independence, the country's economic and social imbalance has only amplified. While the population has multiplied by four, reaching about 200 million inhabitants, 60% of the working population is still employed in agriculture, and in the countryside small, inefficient subsistence farms predominate. This inefficiency means that agriculture's contribution to the national economy does not exceed 40% of the Gross Domestic Product. Despite tens of millions laboring in the fields, Nigeria must import \$3 billion in staple foods annually to meet its internal needs.

The government has repeatedly tried to stimulate local production, but without success. To this end, it has tried several times to close the border with neighboring Benin, which sells cheap food products, mainly rice, to Nigeria. However, these still make it into the country through smuggling.

Another source of "distortion" in the country's economy - which we understand

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Pandemics and Capitalism

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opposing to its methods of study and research the lazy ignorance and individualism of the petty bourgeoisie, which flaunts its pessimism - a sense of impotence, uselessness and death, resigned to its next ruin and without a future.

Behind these sentiments, the regime of capital hides its inability to foresee and prepare plans for responding to entirely predictable emergencies. This would cause unnecessary expense!

On the social level, states take advantage of the emergency to prohibit trade union meetings and strikes, but never prohibit work itself in the confined spaces of factories, construction sites, and warehouses.

To all this it must be added that managers, including health care managers, serve the health of capital rather than that of people, thirsty for earnings and now strangled by the economic crisis, of which has been enormously deepened by the collapse of consumption, despite the fact that production continues. The workers must risk their lives, as soldiers at the front, in the merciless economic and commercial war between the various world bourgeoisies.

Because the great fear of the bourgeoisie is not Covid but the revolt of the exploited workers of the world!

Only the world proletariat, armed with its economic organizations and its class party, is able to prepare its dictatorship, which will make possible the destruction of the capitalist mode of production, always deadly and criminal, and give life to communist society - the bases of which have been present for more than a century - with its science, finally free, placed at the service of all humanity.

Nigeria

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to be the inevitable result of capitalist anarchy, which orients production according to the opportunities for the accumulation of capital, regardless of human needs - is the convulsive history of Nigerian industry.

With independence, the local bourgeoisie promised to establish a national manufacturing sector that could replace many imported goods. But this fell by the wayside with the development of oil extraction which, promising large revenues, has channeled the bulk of investments into the petroleum sector. This lack of investment has caused other areas of industry to stagnate, and exports of manufactured goods have now fallen to a third of the maximum reached before the 2008 crisis.

In this depressed economy, both in agriculture and manufacturing, the only relatively prosperous sector is oil. Nigeria, with a daily production of just over two million barrels, is the leading African producer of petroleum. But even in this sector not all is well: today's daily production is at least 300,000 barrels per day lower than the peak reached in the first decade of this century, when the country's population counted 50 million fewer. In such a context it is increasingly difficult for the Nigerian ruling class to face the explosions of discontent from a young proletariat which, thanks to its numbers and concentration, will resolutely take the path of class struggle.

Covid in the UK Nurses Strike in Alberta

Currently the UK is in the throes of the expected second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The management of the restrictions on the population has been left to the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, while England is under the control of the central government of Westminster.

The first lockdown in March closed all non-essential businesses and services to restrict people's movements to curtail the spread of the disease. Measures were rushed through in order to provide income for those workers officially furloughed, while many employers rushed to take part in this government subsidy of their workforce. The state was to pay 80% of their salaries, up to a fixed limit. It was initially set to end in September, then extended until the end of October. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the new Job Support Scheme would not be so generous, and that laid-off employees would receive only two-thirds of their salaries, mostly paid by the state, but after complaints from employers, the Labour Party, and the trade unions, the furlough scheme was extended until the end of March 2021.

By late summer layoffs were taking place in the aviation, tourism, hospitality, and consumer sectors, as the decline in economic activity led to employment "shakeout" and businesses going bust. Redundancies, and the rise in unemployment, were climbing in their hundreds of thousands.

Conservatives and business interests claimed that the national lockdown was too restrictive, as some areas were not so badly affected, and that some businesses should be allowed to operate. That is where the localized, decentralized approach to travel and personal contact restrictions came in. Each of the four countries of the United Kingdom came up with its own levels of restrictions in tiers - England has three tiers, Scotland has five tiers, Wales opted for a 17 day "fire-break" which ended recently, Northern Ireland is busily enacting harsh restrictions.

The three-tier system in England was initially applied to the Greater Liverpool area, then quickly extended to central Lancashire, then Manchester, and then more generally across the North of England. London and other areas moved into the second tier, with others being added to the list. Then Westminster ordered another four-week Lockdown, which is due to expire on December 2.

Government plans for the furlough scheme to run until the end of March 2021 have been greeted with enthusiasm by all sections of the capitalist establishment, from businesses to the Labour Party and the trade union leaders. Vast sums have been borrowed to keep the economy - that is, employers - in one piece. The state is concerned for the future of these capitalist organizations, and the workers will have to survive as best that they can. The question of who will pay for this economic burden has yet to be answered. Already the Chancellor of the Exchequer has suggested a three-year pay freeze in the public sector, on the basis that there has been a decline in pay levels in the private sector. There will be a push to get the economy working again, with the unemployed being pushed into whatever jobs are open.

Nurses Strike in Alberta

In response to the threat of privatizing 11,000 hospital jobs in Alberta, Canada, several thousand workers went on spontaneous strike on October 26, affecting 45 facilities in the province. The workers are members of the Alberta Union of Public Employees (AUPE): nurses, laboratory technicians, cleaners, cafeteria workers, and orderlies.

The United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) were in solidarity with the strike: "We encourage our members to join the picket lines of their striking colleagues and not to replace the workers of the AUPE on strike," said the president of UNA.

The workers' demands include staff increases, the revocation of public-sector health privatization plans, and no retaliation against strikers. In response to the strike, the government of Alberta, currently controlled by the United Conservative Party, has called for the dismissal of assistants and nurses and the reduction of doctors' salaries.

On the evening of the strike, the Alberta Labor Relations Council ordered the "wild" strike to be stopped. AUPE executives said they would notify their members of the obligation to obey the directive.

The hospital strikes in Alberta are part of a fighting tradition in western Canada that goes back to the One Big Union, miners, and lumberjacks.

A joint organization of public-sector workers should be formed in Alberta. Teachers are now facing similar privatization threats. Postal and construction workers' unions also recently conducted unannounced strikes.

Postal workers have organized themselves through networks of militants, both inside and outside the established union. Similar efforts by union militants to form worker coordinations would provide the basis for broader strikes.

The lesson of the wildcat postal strikes of 2016, which blocked Canadian post offices across the country - with solidarity pickets to circumvent laws that restrict striking - could be the basis for the growth of a united front from below to defend the interests of the working class.

High Speed

Whenever any of capitalism's faults are exposed, the baying wolves of its media machine immediately step in to defend it, laying the blame either on natural or unforeseen events or, when all is said and done, on the workers. We determinists, on the other hand, blame the relations of production. Our view is confirmed by the derailment of the "Frecciarossa" high-speed train near Lodi in Lombardy, Italy on 6 February 2020, in which two drivers tragically lost their lives.

The press reports on the causes of the derailment are contradictory. Programmed maintenance works were being carried out on a set of the junction points (railroad switches). And having been unable to replace them during the nocturnal hours (the only time when no trains are running, from midnight to 4:30 in the morning), the workers in the maintenance team, all experts in that line of work, confirmed that they had reset them to the normal - i.e. straight - position.

They also reported they had disconnected the power supply to the faulty switch. An error showing up an hour later cannot therefore be attributed to an internal wiring problem within the switch mechanism, as is currently being hypothesized (which would shift the criminal

and civil responsibility from the railway network, the Rete Ferroviaria Italiana, to the manufacturer Alstrom).

Neither is it explained why the switch fault was not picked up by the sensors and passed to the control room in Bologna, and why there was no signalling line-side, or signal sent to the drivers' cab or to the trains automatic brake mechanism.

All this, at the moment, is unknown. But what is for sure is that there were failings both in the way maintenance procedures were carried out and the checks on the safety and signalling equipment.

In more general terms, the cause of the tragedy must be sought in the ongoing conflict within the Italian railway system between maintenance requirements and traffic flow, a conflict in which the management of the latter, which "returns a profit", prevails over the former. There is constantly mounting pressure to speed up and simplify maintenance and repairs, made out to be of secondary importance, something that needs to be contained so as not to jeopardize traffic flow.

But the underlying cause of this disaster, and of so many others, is the constant pressure to do everything in a hurry, propelled by capital's insane concern not to lose time: "Time is money". And in the present phase of the crisis the need for capital to reproduce itself more and more rapidly is becoming particularly accentuated.

What is really responsible for the derailment of the Frecciarossa is admitted openly by Confindustria (the Italian employers' federation) in its newspaper Sole 24 Ore (By taking the cuts too far they risk damaging themselves rather than saving money!)

"It seems that nobody checked the position of the switch, or if somebody did, they didn't look very hard. If that can be demonstrated, it can be explained by lack of motivation: to cover another 500 meters in the cold, at night, at the end of a shift could be perceived as an onerous task.

"But it may have happened due to pressures arising within a system which can tolerate no setbacks or mishaps. Over the last two years the high speed lines have reached saturation point, causing delays that they now want to avoid as much as possible so as not to compromise the image of a profitable service.

"Those additional 500 meters, and the check on the switch, could have been considered by the five technicians and their superiors as a loss of time which might have risked delaying the first train of the day, causing a chain reaction affecting all the later ones".

The history of the construction and running of the railways has its cycles, its heroic deeds. It was a revolution which went on to shake up the economic geography of every country, one after the other, in the old world, new world, and in all the regions peripheral to them. For capitalism it was an outlet for enormous investments and a corresponding source of profits, financial speculation, and revenue from the land the railways crossed.

Following the Second World War, coinciding with the imposition of "mass motorization" and the construction of the motorways, the profitability of the rail business began its slow decline, resulting in increasing debts and the state stepping in to bail it out. As the incipient crisis loomed and the state became less and less able to put up the cash; even though it was in the interests of the national capitalist system as a whole, costs would increasingly be passed on

to passengers, and a series of massive fare increases would be imposed. This, in turn, made rail travel less competitive than travelling by air in many cases. The only hope for attracting investment lay in the high speed trains. And thus in many of the countries of both old and new capitalism massive construction projects would soon get underway to build new national networks adapted to the new high speed passenger trains.

This new infrastructure actually often ends up overcoming major delays in capitalism's transportation network due to it being set alongside tortuous stretches of line which were designed a long time ago, like the Florence-Rome line, or when it significantly increases the capacity of lines which had become totally saturated.

But, and this is another cause of the crisis, the latter situation is produced by the anarchic, chaotic, and unplanned, effect of the competition between the various carriers: trains, planes, cars and coaches, all of which want to grab a share of the market, whereas, according to basic common sense, all of the means of transport, in a communist society, could be harmonized and inter-connected according to the benefits which each of them, due to their particular characteristics, can offer.

Thus the "customers," previously known as "passengers," have imposed on them not only the utility of the new line, but high speed as well. Everything must be done "at pace," trains running at a "normal" speed, of around 160 kilometres per hour, don't exist anymore. It is just one more false need created by capitalism.

Until a few decades ago, the capitals of the European mainland, and the major cities, were linked by night trains with sleeper cars: the 'signori' dined in the restaurant car and after a good night's sleep returned there for breakfast, arriving in good time at their destination. Proletarians would travel, and sleep less comfortably, on the same train.

Nowadays, all of us pay a 'signori' price tag for our ticket, and both 'signori' and proletarians can travel from Rome to Milan in three hours, jammed into their plane seats. So, more free time then? To do what? To work more of course; and when all's said and done, to get more tired out, more worn out. And who's the winner there?

It is clear by now that the railway system, along with the rest of capitalism, can only resist the tendency of the rate of profit to fall by resorting to the crazy, short-sighted expedient of speeding everything up. Not only is maintenance entrusted to reduced personnel who are deprived of adequate breaks during the day and on the weekend, but it is done in the middle of the night and under severe time pressure: no longer is it possible, as used to be the case, to move trains temporarily onto sidings, because this would result in a delay, and timetables do not take maintenance into account.

There is only one way for the working classes to oppose these massacres on the job: by returning to the class struggle to defend their health and physical integrity, and not only demanding a wage that covers their needs, but by opposing the punishing pace of work and the conflation of roles and tasks.

Tomorrow, when communism has been achieved, we will proceed at reasonable pace, and get our lives back, and get the time back in which to live it.

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