

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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Protests in France For the abolition of capital and wage labor! Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat!

Cities across France erupted in protest at the end of November. There were two sparks that lit the fuse: the National Assembly passed a repressive security law that would criminalize filming the police while allowing greater police surveillance of citizens, the same week that multiple videos emerged of police officers abusing black and Arab workers. Tens of thousands went to the streets in opposition to this reactionary violence and the legislation that seeks to perpetuate it.

As has been the case with so many protests in the past year, the demonstrations in France quickly grew to encompass all the social effects of the pandemic and the economic crisis. It should come as no surprise that the largest demonstrations were combined with the trade union movement. The first Saturday in December is a traditional day of union demonstrations in France; last month these combined with the anti-police actions. Our French comrades distributed the following text at the demonstrations on December 5.

Crisis and unemployment are constant elements in the history of capitalism. Crises are experienced chronically, despite (and because) of the immense development of the productive forces.

The pandemic sweeping the planet is a product of capitalism, of its urban and productive development. Obviously, it affects the whole of society, we think especially of small businesses, petty trade, the travel and tourism sectors (which represent 10% of global GDP), and especially the many precarious workers who have lost their jobs. If this crisis affects the petty bourgeoisie and the small employers, it hits the precarious workers even more severely.

Unemployment is increasing in industrialized countries, and it will increase further, because capital no longer succeeds in extracting surplus value through the market, and neither can it do so by other means such as speculation, in which the sum of the profits and losses cancel each other out. The crisis is not due to "incompetent" bosses or "corrupt" politicians, as the opportunist unions and parties say, whether on the right or on the left. Fools and thieves have always existed, just as evildoers have always served capitalist society (crime can also be productive for capital). The bourgeoisie sacrifices us for its national economy, to defend its markets and its production. They tell us that it is important to develop industry through technological innovation, to accept sacrifices to save jobs, etc. There are many examples of workers who have accepted everything for years, including wage cuts, only to see their businesses shut down and find themselves unemployed.

But the only truth is that too many commodities invade a market that fails to absorb them; productivity grows, but with it unemployment increases. Proletarians have always lived in a more or less precarious condition, depending on the

economic situation. This precariousness is - and always will be - the condition of millions of human beings. Today, with increasing automation, with a large workforce available, employment becomes a mirage, and a growing part of the population becomes redundant for capital. The prices of goods, and of labor power, collide in a market that has become thoroughly international, the salary of a French worker thus not being able to compete with that of a Polish or African worker. Competition between the labor force of different countries causes the displacement of entire sectors of activity from one continent to another, and becomes the seed of an economic war among the poor.

The capitalists maintain this competition. Unemployment is a weapon in the hands of the bosses and their state, to divide and foment competition between workers. In Marxist terms we call the unemployed the reserve army of labor, from which the bourgeoisie draws according to its needs and which it can use to break the unity of the workers. This reserve army can, however, desert the bosses and help to give strength to the struggle of the proletariat! The class union is a tool to change the role of the unemployed, from an amorphous and passive mass into an army of combative and organized proletarians.

The division of trade unions by labor category must be fought all the more when the general tendency of capitalism is one of increasing proletarian precariousness exacerbated by competition. A territoriality of struggles is imposed by the union leadership, while flexibility, precariousness, and relocation reign in society. Limiting the struggle to a single category, territory, or the company is nonsense, a betrayal which prevents the unity of the workers and deprives them of any truly effective action.

The defense of proletarian interests, their working and living conditions, is a problem of balance of power: trade union organization develops and asserts itself through struggle. It is also a question of the method of struggle, of organization, and of the program of demands and tactics which must constantly seek to unify workers across all divisions, regardless of their professional category, territory, or company.

The struggle also depends on the alignment of forces (fixed employees, unemployed and precarious workers, etc.) at our disposal, and today, in this area, the trade union movements have practical delays, imposed by a union leadership who are in the hands of opportunist parties. Fighting for the class union means a central focus on the organization of the precarious and the unemployed (flexible contracts for precarious production): labor councils, committees of precarious and unemployed workers, which will promote unity across categories. If we want to fight for a real class union, we cannot ignore the precarious workers and the unemployed, who are growing in

number every day.

Salaries increase or decrease according to the economic situation, but above all because of the balance of power between classes; however, the rate of employment is historically destined to decrease, according to the law of capitalist accumulation, because it is not jobs that are lacking, but in reality the work, freed by machines and by increasingly automated and streamlined processes. Today there is more unemployment and a greater intensification of work, a sign of the crisis of an outdated economic system in which we are forced to live.

If the class union is necessary, to give strength and organization to the resistance of the proletariat (employed or unemployed) in its daily struggle for survival, it is not sufficient to achieve the emancipation of the workers.

The emancipation of the workers occurs through the overthrow of the bourgeoisie - industrial, financial and landed - by its expropriation and the transition to a communist society, whose economic basis is the large-scale socialization of the productive forces already taking place under capitalism.

But the indispensable weapon to achieve this goal is the organization of the proletarian vanguard into an International Communist Party, depository of the communist program, which will guide the proletarian masses towards the final goal.

- Fewer working hours and more pay!
- A salary for the unemployed!
- For a real class union!
- For the International Communist Party!

A Cure for Capitalism The Covid-19 Vaccines and the Economic Crisis

It was reported in late December that the United States has administered only ten percent of the Covid-19 vaccine doses it had promised by the end of the year. The federal government's "Operation Warp Speed" program promised that 20 million doses would be administered by the end of the year, yet by December 28 only 2.1 million had been administered. No one seems to know the reason for this shortfall, which is sure to delay the effective control of the virus and cost thousands of lives.

This does not seem to trouble the hucksters who run the for-profit medical industry, who are now enjoying the fruits of their "success" against the coronavirus. When the Pfizer vaccine's efficacy was announced, causing its share price to shoot up, the company's CEO sold \$5.6 million in stock (more than workers make in their entire careers). The executives at Moderna, maker of another major Covid-19 vaccine, have sold more than \$100 million in their company's stock this year. Stock prices for AstraZeneca increased more than 2 percent in the hours after its vaccine was approved for use in the United

Kingdom. Even outside the pharmaceuticals industry, the owners of capital are looking forward to a day in the near future when the "normal" exploitation of labor can resume. The high price of short-term stock futures indicates that the bourgeoisie is gambling on a fast return to profitability. For those with access to capital, are fortunes to be made even on the expectation of a post-pandemic recovery.

In spite of the huge technological advances which made the coronavirus vaccine possible, the pandemic is just another classic crisis of capitalism: the bourgeoisie scramble for every dollar like rats on a sinking ship, then leave the proletariat to drown. Then they salvage the whole wreck and pick away at the scrap, and celebrate their great ingenuity for doing so. This is capitalism, normal, just like before.

As the bodies literally pile up, some confidence-men have the nerve to claim that the rapid development of vaccines shows that capitalism is the best of all possible systems. An opinion piece in November 14's New York Times (paper of record for the small bourgeoisie) claimed that the pandemic shows us "what is amazing about capitalism, and how the free market alone comes up short in solving enormous problems." "Amazing" is one way of putting it - in the same way one would be amazed by the plague pits of the Black Death or the trenches of World War I. And the free market does indeed "come up short" - even bourgeois economists have recognized for a hundred years that truly free markets are a sad fantasy.

That particular piece is a love letter to state capitalism. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were developed by corporations with the support of massive state subsidies, which absorbed all of the financial risk. The author believes this is a perfect situation, which should be the pattern for capitalism going forward. As he puts it, "big business needs big government." Very true, the capitalist system needs a bourgeois state to prop it up. The function of the capitalist state is to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie, whether it is protection from financial risk or from the proletarian revolution. But in the confused ideology of U.S. progressivism, which knows nothing of class or the real function of the state, the idea that "big business needs big government" might even be considered a socialist opinion. The solution to capitalism is more state support for the bourgeoisie - socialism indeed!

A more recent editorial in The Washington Post (Jeff Bezos' pet project) took a more blasé attitude. The editors commented that further economic stimulus payments are unnecessary because "the economy has healed significantly and coronavirus vaccinations are underway." The war is over, back to work!

The purpose here is not to take shots at a couple of newspaper articles, but to show the direction of bourgeois propaganda as we enter (hopefully) the later acts of the pandemic. The vaccine will be presented as a panacea, a cure not just for Covid-19 but for all of capitalism's failings - most obviously the hundreds of thousands who died in a

pandemic caused by that system's disregard for human life. First there will be a period of national mourning, where the dead will be eulogized as a loss for the nation and a wound to its pride. Then we will be told to forget all of that and be grateful for what we have: jobs (with lower wages than before), freedom (for those who can afford it), and wealth (which never touches the proletariat). This happened after the trauma of the world wars. That was the tragedy; here comes the farce.

Communism is the only cure for all the injuries that capitalism inflicts on the world. Just as the human body is cured of illness by eliminating a pathogen from it, the social body will be cured by the abolition of the bourgeois class and its state. We greet the new vaccines not because we want to return to "normal" capitalism, but because we wish to live to see our communist future.

The Rise of Amazon

On November 27, the New York Times reported that in the first 10 months of 2020, the online sales giant Amazon had hired 427,300 workers, bringing the number of employees to 1.2 million. From about 350,000 in 2017, this growth is impressive, taking the company to third place in the world after Walmart, which employs about 2.2 million workers, and China National Petroleum with 1.3 million. These numbers should be enough to refute those who claim that the working class no longer exists. Amazon is listed on Nasdaq, the New York technology stock exchange, with a capitalization of \$1.3 billion. In the list of GDPs of the various states it would be in thirteenth place, close to Spain, Australia, Russia, South Korea, and Canada. Yes, the stock market is just a big lottery for the rich, a house of cards that the spark of the crisis of capitalism will reduce to ashes, but here it is only to give a sense of proportion.

Such a giant inevitably raises tides, which sweep the world economy up in various emotions, resentments, and ideologies.

The last of these is represented by the French "petition" #NoëlSansAmazon ("Christmas without Amazon"), in which consumers are asked not to use Jeff Bezos' company for the purchase of gifts, favoring neighborhood shops instead. The list of signatories is long, from the "socialist" mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, to various intellectuals of the French "left" and personalities from the world of culture and politics. Among the signatories there is also José Bové, the leader of the French "anti-globalization" movement who became famous twenty years ago for his fight against McDonald's.

The populists on the other side of the Alps could not miss the opportunity: the reactionary Matteo Salvini posted a survey on Facebook and Twitter where he asks followers if it is "right" to boycott Amazon. "I buy gifts at home, rather than with a click," he said. Maurizio Gasparri of Forza Italia agrees with the idea "totally." The ex-fascist Giorgia

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Lenin, the Organic Centralist

New Translation from Our Party

We are pleased to announce a new translation from our party, Lenin, the Organic Centralist: Organic Centralism in Lenin, the Left and the Actual Life of the Party. This major work, never before published in English, shows that our party's organizational principles are in complete agreement with the real traditions of Bolshevism. The brief excerpt below recounts the history of the Bolshevik party from its foundation until World War I.

The entire book is now available in digital form on our party's website.

The Formation of the Bolshevik Party

The International Communist Party is not only the heir of the Italian Left; it is our firm belief that there are no substantial differences between our way of understanding the party and that of Lenin, obviously after having appropriately assessed the historical and environmental differences between the situations in which the two organisations have found themselves operating. This work intends to read the experience of Lenin and his party, underlining the characteristics that are of general value, the same characteristics of our small movement today.

To understand what the revolutionary party meant to Lenin, and to interpret his position correctly, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the context in which Lenin operated, especially in the period of defining what the Bolshevik Party would be, before and after the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). A brief historical preamble is therefore necessary to allow us to define the characteristics of the various political actors, movements and ideologies that circulated in Russia at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Lenin gives us a description of the origins of the party in Russia both in the conclusion of *What Is to Be Done?* and in the preface to the *Twelve Years* collection (1907).

It was in the 1880s that Marxism penetrated Russia, where the populist movement had developed. The Emancipation of Labour group was established abroad around Marxist theory and with correct propositions on the tactics of the proletariat in the double revolution.

In *What Is to Be Done?* Lenin claims that that group possessed not only theory but had also developed a tactical plan for the perspective of the Russian revolution and the function of the proletariat in it.

In the first period, 1880-1898, the Marxists' struggle was directed above all against populism, a political movement that developed in Russia between the last quarter of the 19th Century and the early 20th Century; its aim was to achieve, through the propaganda and proselytism carried out by intellectuals among the people and with terrorist direct action, an improvement of the living conditions of the lower classes, in particular of the peasants and serfs, and the realisation of a kind of rural socialism based on the Russian village community (the mir), in contrast to western industrial society. To confront this doctrine it was not only authentic Marxists who intervened, but also a whole series of actors for whom the criticism of populism meant the need for a passage to bourgeois democracy. This was the era of "legal Marxism".

The struggle was therefore

waged on two fronts: against populism and against petty bourgeois Marxism, and the first socialist writings are dedicated to this struggle, mainly by Lenin and Plekhanov. The year 1890, Lenin's debut in the political arena, simply coincides with this: the appearance of the working class in Russia. In this era, Russian Marxists were reduced to a small group; what Lenin writes in *What Is to Be Done?* is important: this group of intellectuals had already worked out everything; they did not wait for "the masses".

The first notable workers' unrest occurred in 1896, and the group of intellectuals threw themselves into the struggle, indicating to the movement not only its immediate tasks, but its entire perspective up to socialism.

The effects of this and subsequent movements were as follows:

- the established ties to the working-class masses;
- the party separated itself clearly from legal Marxism;
- the party organisation was formed (1898).

Lenin states in all his works, including *What Is to Be Done?* that from 1896 onwards the Russian proletariat was never static. The situation was that the party organisation was inadequate to guide the lively movement of the working masses. So the crucial question is posed in *What Is to Be Done?* precisely: what must a party fit for the purpose of leading the workers' movement be? It was in the face of this exuberant workers' movement that the economist deviation manifested itself.

This is a first characteristic trait that must be noted if we truly believe that the party is a product and a factor of class struggle. The difficulties regarding the formation of a revolutionary party must be seen in the particular situation of Russia compared to other industrialised countries, or on the way to industrialisation. The workers were very few in percentage, and concentrated in some industrial districts; the rest of the vast country was a large countryside with small and medium-sized farmers (in addition to large estates with wage laborers or former serfs), from whose ranks came the generation which, at the turn of the century, constituted the industrial proletariat. Trade union tradition was almost non-existent, as was socialist propaganda. The revolutionaries therefore had to speak to a predominantly illiterate and suspicious audience.

This was a situation, however, that could reveal positive aspects; indeed, not even the opportunistic poison had penetrated that much into the class, and it was easier to confront proletarians with the reality of their conditions, and to help them to draw valuable indications from the struggles as to who were their friends and who their enemies. On the other hand, the bourgeois-oriented opportunism of a bourgeoisie that had to be revolutionary towards absolutism did not have the weapons typical of opportunism, or had little of it: propaganda, traditions, electoralism. It was therefore at first an opportunism little equipped with theoretical tools, although rapidly evolving, even within the socialist movement, and also thanks to the development of opportunism in western Europe in those years.

The second characteristic that must be taken into account: since 1894-1895 the Russian working class never lost contact with its party. Its size can be deduced from Lenin's data on members:

- 1894-1895 –several hundred workers
- 1906 – around 33,000 members attend the Stockholm congress
- 1907 – 150,000-170,000 members
- 1913 – 33,000-50,000.

Lenin provided these figures in 1913, while arguing with Vera Zasulich, who claimed that Russian social democracy was composed of intellectual currents. It is natural that this situation needs to be taken into account when dealing with organisational problems. It was Lenin himself who categorically stated this in the preface to the aforementioned *Twelve Years* collection.

Pennsylvania Nurses Strike

On November 6, 800+ nurses at St. Mary Medical Center in Bucks County and 260+ nurses at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital in Delaware County, organized by the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals (PASNAP), announced (10 days in advance) their intention to strike to Trinity Health, the hospitals' parent company. Within the ten days' time, the Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital capitulated to the threat and yielded their demands: gradual increase in pay and better staffing. This, however, did not happen at the St. Mary Medical Center, hence the nurses went on strike on the 16th of November. Initially, they had intended it to be 2 days long, however they were locked out for an additional 3 days by St Mary. During the strike, Trinity Health hired scabs from a union-busting firm with an intent to weather the storm.

Ever since Trinity Health took over the two hospitals, both have endured understaffing and staff-turnover issues; these must be understood in the context of a drive to increase profit by intensifying labor, laying off a portion of the workforce, and depressing wages, thereby lowering costs. It is no coincidence that St. Mary Medical Center is one of the most profitable firms for Trinity Health in the region. Profit is unpaid labor; is it any wonder then why St. Mary nurses are being made to do twice the work of an average nurse with no increase in pay, especially in the midst of a recession?

The struggle was not centered around wages, however, but around the issues of understaffing and staff turnover, hence when St. Mary proposed to only raise wages, the nurses turned it down; an increase in wages does not necessarily translate to an increase in staffing. Understaffing results in overwork. This has very real consequences; according to a study published in the *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, every increase in patient load per nurse results, on average, in a 7% increase in mortality rates. There were various reports of trauma from the St. Mary nurses as a consequence of their patients dropping like flies. Yet another example of the antagonism between profit and human life.

Post-strike negotiation for a contract in St. Mary is occurring but no contract has been arrived at; St. Mary refuses to budge with regards to wage scales. New operating room and critical care hires are being paid significantly more than the medical center's long-standing nurses. The St. Mary nurses have asked to be treated equally to the new hires with regards to pay but without success so far.

We must keep in mind the context of these negotiations, however.

The PASNAP did not make the call for the unification of the Mercy Fitzgerald and St. Mary

strikes; it did not call for the Mercy Fitzgerald nurses to strike for St. Mary and vice-versa; the Mercy Fitzgerald union branch did not demand the concessions yielded to it be yielded to the St Mary nurses as well. This, we believe, is a mistake. Capital has been significantly concentrated into the hands of a few, massive firms, meaning that they can, in many cases, easily weather a localized strike; consequently, strikes of this sort are rarely successful. Working class unity is more necessary than ever (especially today) and this translates to, in this case, unified and simultaneous strikes across several branches of a firm or even across multiple firms. The struggle at St. Mary and at Fitzgerald is not an isolated one: the same struggle is unfolding across the entire United States and beyond; it just requires unification to be successful.

Another point to take note of is that the St. Mary strike was not an indefinitely prolonged one; it was intended to only be 2 days long. We believe this is another road to failure, for the same reasons highlighted above. A large firm such as Trinity Health can easily hire up scabs and wait it out for 5 or so days relatively unscathed. Union-busting firms are expensive, however; an indefinitely prolonged strike could have made the costs from hiring one become more than it was worth and Trinity could have capitulated. The purpose of strikes is to force out concessions; the road to success is to not stop until either you get the concessions you want or you use up your strike fund (make sure you have a bountiful one).

Additionally, during the St. Mary picket, both an AFL-CIO representative and a state representative showed up and gave speeches offering aid and support. It seems the state and AFL are attempting to cozy up to either the St Mary nurses or the PASNAP. Do not trust these hucksters; they will stab you in the back the moment you pose a real threat.

The nurses approved a new contract on December 20. It increased wages while also equalizing pay between all nurses with the same level of experience. It also included measures to improve staffing.

Amazon

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Meloni called for "a Black Friday for our entrepreneurs, let's buy Italian."

But even in Italy the "left" are on the same wavelength, with too many adherents to list here. Aid to the petty bourgeoisie, in fact, holds appeal across the political spectrum.

The economic laws inherent in the capitalist system of bring the middle classes to ruin, as predicted by Marxism. If we accept capitalism we must accept this phenomenon, which cannot be separated from this mode of production. The centralization of production, and consequently of distribution, do not occur by chance or by the greed of individuals, but are the products of the laws of competition and cost reduction.

If it is true that in certain phases of the economic cycle, and in certain countries, strong growth has allowed the proliferation of the petty bourgeoisie, crises, such as the one that began a few decades ago, unleash unbridled competition that allow bigger companies to

suffocate the small ones.

The need for capital to accelerate value creation has pushed the economy towards ever larger and more effective logistics and distribution organizations. Amazon is an excellent example of this process, and proof of the Marxist description of capitalism.

But, removed from any sentimentality and idealism, for Marxism the development of the productive forces is an objective fact, which it observes and describes. Its effects, even its tragic consequences, are ultimately positive because they create the conditions for the proletarian revolution. The socialization of the productive forces, which increases everyday under capitalism, cannot be contained by the old relations of production, and pushes for new forms.

This transition took place through a continuous historical process. The future communist society will also be able to take advantage of the technological progress that has taken place under capitalism, which will no longer used to infinitely increase the accumulation of profit, but to favor the satisfaction of the needs of the human species in a more full, satisfactory, beautiful, complete, and complex way.

This transition will not be automatic - it requires a political transition, the revolutionary seizure of power and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Today the technologies that Amazon uses are applied only for the unbridled search for profit. But in them the future society is already ready, at hand. The development of communication systems such as the Internet, of logistics in distribution as in Amazon, the increased use of robotics in production and distribution processes, already prefigure a communist society. Even if today, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, they are nothing but infernal tools that crush the international working class.

We communists therefore do not get lost in the petty-bourgeois slogan of "boycotting Amazon", in a defense, however desperate, of small business. Instead we aim to defend the living and working conditions of those who work in that company. Precarious contracts, crazy rhythms, perennial blackmail are typical of the hellish world of Amazon. Communists are turning to those workers to organize their defense, which is the same as the workers at Walmart and China Petroleum, as well as the world working class.

Because communists know that there will come a day when the proletariat will find itself having to face this system more and more combatively just to improve its living and working conditions. This process, under the leadership of its class party, pushes the entire capitalist system towards its overthrow.

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