

# 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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## The Coup in Burma and the False Promises of Democracy

The recent coup in Burma has overshadowed the much-watched systematic relocation of ethnic minorities in the Burmese frontier lands, which the previous ruling party endorsed through funding infrastructure and capital expansion projects. While the liberal bourgeoisie in the country has ravaged the landscape and the people who live on it, the Burmese military has amassed massive capital holdings in two large conglomerates, which have exported substantial amounts of capital across the planet. These corporations are entrenched into every sector of the economy, from mining and manufacturing to commerce to entertainment and tourism. The military's enterprises have been growing for decades, well before the push to democratize the country had solidified into the rule of the National League for Democracy (NLD), well before the National League for Democracy ignored the relocation activities in the frontier regions, and well before the military junta summarily overthrew the NLD-led government at the beginning of February 2021. The sins of the one pile atop the sins of the other, yet the whole national bourgeoisie continues to profit from the situation as they have up until this point.

Other bourgeois states in the region see opportunity even as they clutch their pearls over the failure of the democratic facade. India seeks to finally begin the vast infrastructure projects that have been planned to connect the two nations, taking advantage of the displacement of the Rohingya people and the push for development the military and the National League of Democracy has called for. India is responding to the intense Belt and Road Initiative investment and development projects the Chinese state has implemented in Northern Burma and along the coast. With a new road paved for them through the north of the country, the coup has only poured gasoline on the fires of competition between the two countries. They now quietly deal with the more structured and formal military economic management system, despite the crisis of democracy that the political officials of India and China continue to denounce when speaking to their fellow countrymen and other nations of the world. Australian firms still seek to drill the massive natural gas reserves off the country's shores, an enterprise the whole Burmese bourgeoisie welcomes, the coup not even registering for the Australian bourgeoisie.

The Chinese state watches this situation in a quiet and calculated manner. While the Burmese bourgeoisie attempts to divert the anger of the protestors in a racist and anti-Chinese sense, rather than a class sense, much is happening on the class terrain even if it is not the immediate focus of the workers. In Burma some demonstrators attacked and destroyed factories run by Chinese state. The incident must have had some significance because the official CCP press wrote an article about it condemning these incidents, demanding exemplary punish-

ment and even financial reparations. The targeted companies are in the Shwe Lin Ban Industrial Zone, Hlaing Thar Yar Township; most are clothing factories. With the increasing instability, China has given orders for Chinese nationals to leave the country and return to China.

In China, this is being framed as an economic attack on the Chinese State, citing the jobs the country has created in Burma. Yet again the Chinese state acts like the individual capitalist in less state-run economies. The Chinese state has mostly played coy, or been relatively nonverbal about the situation of the coup unfolding, but with their economic holdings, they stand to gain in profits and control with the military in power in Burma.

Western nations see this supposed affront to the Burmese democratic state as an opportunity to maintain their own facades of democratic representation: the European Union joins the US government's sanctions against the military junta, while making declarations in support of democracy to the rest of the world. However, EU officials have decided to only cut donations to Burma's government reform programs, claiming that further economic action would only endanger the general population. Europe keeps its doors open to the military, which is not concerned about the slap on the wrist the Europeans have given them. Rather than engage with the content of the theater created by the international bourgeoisie, the new US presidential administration sees this more as a way to demonstrate the power of the US state. The Biden administration has cut off technology exports to Burma, and also barred the military junta from gaining access to financial holdings that are kept in the US; otherwise the US has only sanctioned individuals in the military government. The US State Department is careful not to bar the export of products from Burma, as consumer goods must still continue to flow into the US to satisfy the tired and irritated American consumer. Nation states around the world verbally express their displeasure with the situation; but despite their empty finger-wagging, the international bourgeoisie is resigned to the military's abandonment of democracy. The death of democracy is condemned in words, but allowed in actions when money can be made off the tragedy of capitalist institutions!

The military is exercising an economic position it has slowly been building over the years, with which the liberal bourgeoisie has only recently been able to compete in a material manner. Still, the capital holdings of the bourgeoisie cannot be nullified by a democratic election. The democracy that the military and civilian government, as well as the ruling class of the world, sees is only the pageantry that happens on the floor of parliament. Not a calorie is spent on the conditions of the working class and minority ethnicities that continue to toil and are swept from their homes under the demands of an international capitalist economy. The reaction of the Burmese

working class has taken the form of widespread activity across various economic categories, reflecting the amount of weight placed on their shoulders to continue industrial production, even through a raging pandemic and a ruthless but fragile economy. The first workers to strike were hospital and medical staff. This quickly spread to other workers and workplaces, such as the garment industry, which includes 600,000 workers and has been subject to wildcat strikes and militant organizing in recent years. Soon, many of Burma's trade unions joined the protests, as did the civilian liberal bourgeoisie and their circus of parties.

The demonstrations that erupted have been loosely organized but massive in the number of participants, similar to the BLM protests in the US, the democratic demonstrations in Peru and Hong Kong, and the Yellow Vest protests in France. The working class still remains reactive, but is unconscious of the possibility for action on a larger scale. The working class has stayed caught in spontaneous activity that is easily controlled by cutting off social media networks; the bourgeoisie can take their toys away if they don't like the way the working class uses them. However, the anger and desperation stemming from the working class's economic conditions still motivate people across Burma to take to the streets and protest the coup. The conflict has been bloody indeed, as there have been over 500 proletarian deaths and counting in the demonstrations. It is up to the proletariat to make the next move, and currently the working class is attempting to defend a democracy that has already nullified itself. But this is the case when the energy the working class expends is channeled back into the very state that was only just forcefully undressed and then redressed again. Burmese garment workers are insistent that if the military junta commands political rule in the state, there will no longer be unions for them, as labor organizations are already being cracked down upon only a short time into the event. One garment worker and labor organizer, in an interview with the social-democratic rag *Jacobin*, says such things as: "We are fighting for the whole country. If the military leadership is to win, there will be no labor unions. And if there are labor unions, they will not be real labor unions: the government will intervene, and the union will become only for show." Only to hope for the return of the coddling hand of bourgeois democracy, as another organizer stated: "Workers want democracy because we have thoughts, and we are not passive. We need freedom to ask for workers' rights—protection and benefits. Only democracy can provide that."

The participation of the previous ruling party of Burma, the National League of Democracy, and other liberal bourgeois parties, is not foreign to any protest across the globe. If these situations are of any indication, then it is very clear that the Burmese liberal bourgeoisie has the influence to push these demonstrations back

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## Strikes and Repression in Piacenza and Prato, Italy

*Our comrades in Italy are involved with two significant struggles in the cities of Piacenza and Prato. In Piacenza, workers at a FedEx-TNT facility, represented by the rank-and-file union SI Cobas, are on strike against planned layoffs. In Prato, textile workers at Texprint, also members of SI Cobas, are on strike against sweatshop conditions and outrageous working hours. In both cases, many of the workers are immigrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Both strikes were met with severe repression from the bourgeois state, with picketers attacked by police and union militants arrested.*

*This article analyzes the strikes and their repression. It is followed by a leaflet distributed at a demonstration of striking textile workers in Prato. We would like to note that this was the first ICP leaflet distributed in both Italian and Urdu, the language of many Pakistani immigrants working in the textile industry.*

On the night of February 1, on the 13th day of the strike, police and carabinieri attacked Fedex-TNT picketers in Piacenza. In an especially disgraceful manner, they threw tear gas canisters between the legs of workers sitting peacefully in groups in front of the gates. This provoked the striker's anger and while being pelted with stones, the forces of order were forced to retreat.

This embarrassment couldn't be allowed to go on: in a society divided into classes, violence can only be legitimately used by the ruling class' repressive organizations. This is a necessity for the defense of the ruling class's political dominance and social privilege.

So, on March 10, a large retaliation was conducted against Piacenza members of SI Cobas: including fines of up to 13,200 euros; searches of workers' homes; two union leaders were placed under house arrest; five prohibitions of residence; and six cases seeking to revoke the residence permits of immigrant workers.

This is the way in which the bourgeois state is trying to break the strength of the SI Cobas union, which in the last 10 years has organized many fierce workers' struggles. Piacenza's logistics sector is also one of the union's strongholds.

On the same day, March 10, police also attacked another SI Cobas picket, at Texprint in Prato. Workers have been on strike there for over 50 days. In Prato's textile district, SI Cobas has been organizing the workers against their ruthless sweatshop exploitation. Demands include an 8-hour, 5-day workweek, instead of the common 12-hour, 7-day workweek!

Under the bourgeois regime, while the left hand offers promises and solemn commitments to protect so-called "workers' rights", the right hand repeatedly attacks workers fighting for their material needs.

"Rights" are a lie which goes hand in hand with the lie of "democracy." Both are useful to mask the oppressive nature of

capitalism and the dictatorial nature of the bourgeoisie's political regime. Workers have no rights because their needs are always subordinated to the demands of profit. Workers also have no power, which only exists in the hands of big industrial, financial, and landed capital. This exists both on the national and international levels.

For example, the "right to strike" is allowed only to the extent that it is used without causing excessive harm to the bosses. That is, only when it's ineffective in defending workers. When workers organize struggles with the real ability to defend their interests – strikes without notice and without a fixed deadline, along with pickets to block goods and scabs – and they do so organized in unions that openly make these methods of struggle at the center of organizational action, the bourgeois regime will show its true face, taking off its mask of democracy and unleashing repression.

As long as the workers remain under the control of the regime unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL) whose strikes are rare and mostly very timid – lacking picket lines, called well in advance and of fixed duration – the bourgeois regime can continue pretending to be sympathetic to the sufferings of wage-earners, and the clowns of the various institutional parties can even parade through the workers' mobilizations in search of votes.

The workers of Piacenza and Prato organized by SI Cobas understand they can only count on their own strength; that they have no friends or allies outside the working class.

In their defense, and in order to raise this awareness in the working class, the entire militant unionist movement – rank and file unions as well as the class-based CGIL opposition – must react in a united fashion to this attack, which is not only against SI Cobas but against all class unionism and all workers. An appropriate response would be to organize a united national strike in all logistics by SI Cobas, ADL Cobas, USB, CUB, SGB, and the opposition in CGIL.

Along the road of workers' unity of action and militant unionism, the working class will regain confidence in its strength, freeing itself from the control of the regime unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL).

The most militant section of the working class will adhere to the revolutionary communist party, necessary to overthrow the political power of the ruling class and open the way to the future communist society, without classes or exploitation.

### ICP Leaflet to Prato Textile Workers, March 20

Texprint workers,

Your struggle is a great example for all workers, Italians and immigrants, and of all categories! The working conditions to which you and all the textile workers of Prato are subjected are proof of how

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## Burma

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into the arms of the state, even if that state is now controlled by the military junta. The proletariat can't afford to rely on the bourgeois state, as the growing labor movement in the country has demonstrated.

For decades earlier, the military junta had been able to drive the labor union organizations into illegal networks, but it was unable to prevent the working class from acting spontaneously in response to their conditions. During the labor strike wave of 2009, the state was able to isolate the working class to their respective workplaces, effectively preventing the proletariat from uniting to coordinate its own activity nationally. This, of course, is a situation the liberal bourgeoisie prosper in, especially now as they continue to make the call for a "redemocratization" of Burma. The working class had been deprived of national representation until the rule of the liberal bourgeoisie, and the flocking of disparate working class organizations to the democratization movement illustrates the liberal bourgeoisie's strength to control the direction of the working class' actions. It was the democratization movement that had allowed the trade unions to become legal institutions, but it also dragged the working class into the service of the liberal bourgeoisie. But the working class still suffered under the custodianship of this class. Even when the democratic government held its regular tripartite forum with labor and employer representatives in March of 2020, trade union demands for temporary shutdown of manufacturing facilities with full pay were completely disregarded. Since this forum first on Covid-19, the government has used this space to further ensure that labor and production kept going. Both the military and NLD factions still hold their allegiance to capital and its fountain of wealth, kept flowing by a relationship that has been established between the ruling classes and the working class of Burma since the end of the World War II.

The military in Burma has a long standing tension with and opposition to the country's working class. Numerous workers were killed in the 1988 uprising, and more proletarian deaths also occur now at the hands of the junta. Then and now, workers have been fired, had their salaries cut, and been squeezed into dire situations for the purpose of squashing worker organizations. All the while, the military had historically been part of an "anti-fascist" front in the country – a farce as always! This relationship, the expenditure and instrumentalizing of human lives for the creation of profits and the expansion of economic influence is employed by the entire bourgeoisie of every country across the planet. In this the Burmese bourgeoisie are united, and it shows when the National League of Democracy denounces the undemocratic behavior of their adversary, while being responsible for the ethnic cleansing of minority populations and sacrificing workers to unsafe working conditions for the sake of profits. Furthermore, these endeavors are something the military is equally as interested in undertaking. This economic relationship is demonstrated, at an even higher level, by the callous

nature with which the international bourgeoisie have treated the situation, effectively shaking their finger at the military while continuing to do business that only solidifies the hold both the military and the liberal bourgeoisie have over the economy of Burma. This is a recipe for a repeat of what we have seen over and over again, a struggle over democracy as one faction of the ruling class denounces the other for undemocratic behavior.

Such Sisyphean activity can only tire the working class, as workers return to the conditions inter-bourgeois conflict has perpetuated rather than changed. The different factions of the bourgeoisie continue their gentlemanly duels, while using the activity of the whole species for their capricious musings on the amount of money they will get in return. The proletariat disunited only works for the ruling class, repeating in their politics the exploitative attitude the bourgeoisie have in the economy. What transpired after 2009 in Burma will happen in the wake of these protests as well, and only because the proletariat remains organized into diffuse isolated groups.

Coordinated class action can only be reached through coordinated class organization, and this is something that runs against the interests of both the liberal bourgeoisie and the military; it runs against the interests of the international bourgeoisie as well. However, the working class will not be free of the conditions that create their motivation to take to the streets and express their dissent to a coup, or even a change in pension funds, by continuing to place its faith in the machinery of the state the bourgeoisie spar over. In Burma, the economy will still function to the profit of the military, the liberal bourgeoisie, and the international bourgeoisie, so long as the production of commodities is continued. The state is only how the ruling class is able to exercise its repressive capabilities in order to maintain its own economic position, as is demonstrated by the military swiftly apprehending the leadership of the previous ruling government, fabricating their justification for the arrests after the fact.

The Burmese working class will struggle admirably, and they do this because they know something needs to change. But change cannot be found in democratizing the Burmese state any longer. The struggle for democracy in Burma has entered a cyclical state, just as it has become across the planet: a situation that serves nothing but the interests of the bourgeoisie. This will only keep the proletariat from organizing a united and coordinated international action that will overthrow the rule of capital across the planet. The result is the same as it has been in other nations: the class will be lured into thinking that the solution lies at the level of the national government. This only because the democracy that is being struggled for is the democracy of the bourgeoisie, who defends this sacred freedom by employing the body of the bourgeois state, from social media control to economic intervention. The coordination required to challenge this situation, however, is not found at the level of nations, but at the international level of economic relations. It is found in the class

party of the proletariat that has placed itself at the head of the international struggle.

## Strikes in Italy

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capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class.

These conditions are analogous to those of laborers, logistics porters, slaughterhouse workers, and thousands of factory workers, to which the bourgeoisie would lead the whole working class if only it were not afraid of awakening the workers' anger, their struggle, and their enormous and invincible power.

For this reason, for years, the ruling class has been acting gradually, attacking the working class with great prudence, to weaken it and increasingly shatter its unity and strength.

In all countries, for this purpose, one of the fundamental tools of capitalist regimes is the division of workers between natives and immigrants, both through specific discriminatory laws and by fomenting racism, so as to subject immigrant workers to more intense exploitation and worsen in this way the conditions of the entire working class.

The fact that your conditions of exploitation have existed for decades for a substantial part of the working class, and that they tend to expand and worsen, demonstrates what a rag the much vaunted constitutional charter is, which always works where it enshrines the rights of the bosses and never where it should protect workers.

The police repression of the strikes organized by SI Cobas, in Prato as in Piacenza and throughout Italy, is the demonstration of how much democracy is a perfidious deception against the workers. The workers can only count on their strength, their class trade union organizations, and their revolutionary party. From democratic institutions they will only receive promises to deceive them and beatings to bend them.

The fact that the conditions of exploitation in the Prato textile district and in many other jobs and production sectors have been perpetuating and worsening for years without CGIL, CISL, or UIL ever lifting a finger demonstrates how these are trade unions of the capitalist regime, unusable by the working class for its defense.

SI Cobas, which in Prato managed to organize the workers of various textile factories by conducting harsh strikes, has done admirable and very important work, giving workers a glimmer of light, a path along which to fight exploitation.

To strengthen your struggle, your union, it is necessary to break the divisions imposed by the bourgeoisie, uniting the workers above ethnic, national, and religious divisions. In Prato it is essential to be able to involve workers of all nationalities, from Italians to Pakistanis, Bengalis, Chinese, etc. in the struggle and in the trade union organization.

A very difficult task, hampered for the latter – who represent the majority of workers in the textile sector – by the ties that keep them locked up in the jail of the "national community," which obviously benefits only their bosses, but a task that is absolutely necessary.

Comrades, workers,

The trade union struggle and a true class union are absolutely necessary to put a stop to exploitation and as a basis for the political struggle necessary to eliminate it. For this purpose, the political party of the working class is necessary: the authentic communist party, which indicates how from the trade union struggle it is necessary to rise to the

struggle for the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the only way for the overthrow of capitalism and the liberation of a communist society, without classes and without exploitation, with which the dying society of capital already carries within it.

Proletarians of all countries unite!

## Istanbul Municipal Workers Strike

At one minute after midnight on February 16, 2,300 municipal workers in the Kadıköy district of Istanbul went on strike after seven months of negotiations with the employer. The workers are affiliated to the Public Services Employees Union of Turkey (Genel-İş), a member of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK).

Genel-İş - which is not tolerated in municipalities ruled by the right and where Hizmet-İş, affiliated to the Islamic regime trade union confederation Hak-İş is dominant - tends to organize in municipalities led by the Republican People's Party (CHP), which is one of the important players of the bourgeois left and has a special relationship with DİSK. Most DİSK leaders become members of parliament after their term of office expires. Under these conditions, Kadıköy municipality workers succeeded in going on strike and showed how fierce they were.

**What happened?**

Under the leadership of the metropolitan municipality, the social democratic municipalities of Istanbul, acting in class solidarity with the Kadıköy Municipality from the beginning, sent garbage collection trucks to Kadıköy to break the strike. Kadıköy municipal workers told their class brothers who were sent to break the strike that the struggle involved all of them. It seemed possible for workers from all over Istanbul to support the strikers of the Kadıköy municipality.

Late in the night of February 18, it was announced to the workers that an agreement had been reached. A prominent politician from the Republican People's Party took action to put an end to the strike by maneuvering with the headquarters of Genel-İş. The bosses and union leaders presented this as a victory, but the numbers were exaggerated and manipulated - the workers' real gains were small.

**What should be done?**

In their statements, the representatives of women workers for the Kadıköy municipality said: "This process showed us once again that everything is class ... Our union ignored the will of the worker it represented in line with the instructions of a political party. The strike of Kadıköy Municipality workers had the potential to set a precedent for all workers, especially the workers of other CHP municipalities, and it was very dangerous to that party if workers were to win. For this reason, it was prevented and suppressed by intervention from above."

The social-democratic DİSK is not only ready to be a regime union, but also does not hesitate to act as a regime union, due to its leadership acting in the interests of social democratic politicians, not workers. However, DİSK and other left-wing trade union confederations and professional organizations remain the only instrument with which workers can fight in most cases. We will see if these workers can prevent the leftist unions from becoming full-fledged regime unions. Above all, it is important that the

struggling workers in the left unions try to break the influence of bourgeois parties of all kinds on these unions and work closely with small but militant base unions to build the class unions of tomorrow.

## Disaster at Georgia Poultry Plant

On January 28, disaster struck for workers at a Gainesville, Georgia poultry plant. Roughly 130 employees at the Foundation Food Group, formerly Prime Pak Foods, were evacuated after a liquid nitrogen leak in the plant's refrigeration system was discovered. 6 workers were killed, while 11 more were hospitalized. Out of the 11 hospitalized, 3 were said to be in critical condition.

The response to the incident has been a show of typical and expected bourgeois paternalism. The US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board has said it will deploy a team of investigators to the scene. Meanwhile, a mere handful of news outlets, mostly local, have given press coverage to an event in which 6 people lost their lives. The lack of coverage on the risks workers across the US face daily, particularly during a global pandemic, is typical of the bourgeois press.

While the management at Foundation Food Group may act as if this disaster is an isolated incident, it is not. In Gainesville, which is called the poultry capital of the world, workers are not strangers to the health and safety risks common to the industry.

Since 2011 the plant has received numerous violations from the Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the US Department of Labor's workplace safety regulatory body. In 2015, the plant was issued 12 violations, including issues relating to machinery safeguards. Only two years later, 2 employees lost fingers after they were caught in machinery. An infraction the plant received last year cited the company for failing to meet eye and face protection requirements.

It is clear that Foundation Food Group cares more about their profits than the health and safety of its workers – like every capitalist firm!

There is the risk of COVID-19 infection as well. Poultry plant workers across the country, including those working at Foundation Food Group, are at higher risk of COVID-19 infection due to the close-quarters nature of the work.

Nearly half, by some estimates, of the workers working in the meatpacking industry are migrant workers. Indeed, the Mexican government has stated that 2 of its citizens are among the 6 dead in Gainesville. Migrant workers frequently face additional hardships as well as lower wages and greater precarity compared to their coworkers who are citizens.

In the poultry plants of Gainesville, and across the United States, there is a dire need for the formation of a class union to combat the negligence of the owners and management as well as the exploitation workers face in every workplace, and to protect the health and safety of workers. The importance of workers acting concertedly for their interests cannot be understated. The unity of action of the workers in their class union, especially across workplaces and industries, creates the conditions in which the working class can both protect itself from the bosses' negligence and, ultimately, liberate itself from capitalism's contempt for human life.

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