

The Communist Party

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UNITE WORKING CLASS STRUGGLES WITH A CLASS UNION FRONT

In the months of October and November 2016, the ICP organized a series of meetings in Italy – in the cities of Bologna, Florence, Rome, Genoa and Turin – around the theme of an United Class Union Front. The following is an explanation of our party's work inside the Italian unions and was presented to militant workers there. Obviously, this strategy cannot be replicated "as is" in the English speaking world, but we take it as inspiration for our activity in North America.

The theme for meetings was called because the issue of Class unions and unity affects a section of the Italian trade union movement referred to as "base" or "rank and file" unions to which we include the left-wing opposition within the mainline CGIL.

In July of 2015, the rank and file unions called separate and competing general strikes. The two strikes, called on October 27 and November 10, 2016 developed. The ICP is against these divisions. We advocate general strikes of unions based on class unionism and our comrades have participated with militants from all the different trade union organizations – the USB, CUB and the Cobas Confederation as well as the "Il sindacato è un'altra cosa" ["The union is something else"] – a militant opposition within the CGIL. We issued a leaflet entitled "For a United Class Union Front, For Working Classwide action, in Defense of the Freedom to Strike."

Our party has been agitating within the Italian working class as well as the trade union movement with the slogans "for a United Class Union Front." and "Unity of Workers Action". The Party leads by example – using its historical methods – to our fellow workers and militants in trade unions, where our union fraction acts in a disciplined manner according to the trade union policy of the party.

The "United Class Union Front." and the "Unity of Workers Action" are two pillars of the tactics of revolutionary communism, of that set of rules of action that the party, through all its historical experience and on the basis of its theory and its program, has selected as suitable and necessary to pursue its political

purpose, Communism.

Tactics are as crucial to the Communist Party as political theory and program, being the link between its program and practical action. The characteristic thesis of our current is what the party does determines what the party is, good tactics make a good party, and of course the opposite is also true: bad tactics make a bad party. Tactics are not an area where it is permissible to give vent to the most daring alchemy, framed according to the motto, the end justifies the means, but these must be in harmony with that. Our party is therefore distinguished by trying to define in advance the set of tactical rules that it intends to use in a given situation. This was one of the valuable lessons of the worst of the defeats of the communist movement, the degeneration of the Russian party and the Third International.

The report wanted to show how the two lines of action mentioned above are correct, both at the level of the trade union and that of the political objectives of the party, and how the first fully fits into the second.

The Current Situation

A brief overview of the world economic situation, and of the working class and trade union movement in Italy.

Here we just repeat how on the economic level capitalism continues to sink into a world crisis. The condition of the working class in the Western countries has followed a course similar to that of the crisis: the improvement in the norms of employment and life, which began in the early sixties, made through hard labor.

The trade union movement is dominated by traditional trade unions, which have for decades abandoned and denied the principles and methods of the class struggle and they have embraced an openly collaborative trade unionism. Most of the unionized working class are under the control of these unions. In contrast the smaller and more varied group of rank and file trade unions which, with not insignificant distinctions from each other, declare themselves supporters of class

struggle, and of "troublemaking" unionism.

The Necessity of the Unification of Workers' Struggles

While "regime unionism" - unions doing the work of the capitalist regime - have not yet had the opportunity to openly call for workers to sacrifice themselves to save the country they have constantly prevented the organization of defensive struggles against the capitalist crisis. In other words, they behaved like the generals of an army but kept the army immobile in the face of the enemy offensives.

Our party dealt with the problem of how workers can defend themselves in the face of the crisis of capitalism. In this regard, union actions are needed for the unification of struggles and overcoming company and industrial boundaries.

The struggle which limits itself to a single company or workplace will necessarily have to come to terms with the limits of the company. In a period of economic growth, such as the 1950-60s, high company profits offer wider margins to deal with workers' demands so struggles limited to a particular job, a company, or a single occupation can find improvement in work conditions.

But even then, the Party was in favor of a union action that would unify the struggles at the highest level in order to avoid indifference among workers to the fate of the rest of the class, the corporate spirit, and corporatism. It seems that today they are severely afflicted and that they are the product of decades of trade unionism of the CGIL, CISL and UIL regimes.

It is in periods of economic crisis where an orientation towards unification of workers' struggles becomes vital. Increasingly fierce competition between companies, bankruptcies or so-called restructurings limit company's abilities to the point of reducing to zero the ability to make successful demands and union actions are impossible to conduct in the single company. Or those margins make

it negative: you can make the workers accept wage cuts, layoffs, and other deterioration of working conditions to prevent the company from closing. Trade unionism closed within the confines of a factory in crisis becomes turned from the defense of the workers to the defense of the company. In thousands of disputes, which inexorably follow the same lines and which in almost all cases leads to defeat, workers are convinced that there is a certain commonality of interests between the worker and the company, that the life of the slave depends on the welfare of the master. The supreme bourgeois dogma is supported: either capitalism or death.

As long as the horizon does not go beyond the boundaries of the factory, workers are condemned to remain deprived of the possibility of unifying their struggles and objectives, when instead the satisfaction of workers' needs may occur not in comparison with the individual master but with the entire capitalist class – industrialists, financiers, landowners – and with its political regime. This allows trade union action to move within wider margins than those dictated by the narrow economic compatibility of the individual company and to develop on the basis of a much greater force.

The process of unifying the struggles of the working class must take place on two levels. The first, more elementary, is to strike together, in time and space: making the day of strike coincide and physically uniting the demonstrations, where numerical strength is powerful. The second level, which can only be established on the first level, is for the workers' movement to express demands that unite the whole class and justify and make necessary the unification of the struggles: wage increases for all categories, higher and lower paid; generalized reduction of working time for the same salary; full pay for dismissed workers; reduction of the retirement age and return to the wage system; social services (school, health care, transportation) free of charge for the working class.

The more a general class movement grows and affirms

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

itself, the less oppressive the condition of the worker in the single factory becomes.

It is important to underline that a general struggle of the working class for these objectives, while still preserving the form of a trade union movement, is already in itself a great political fact, which sees the two enemy classes of this society lined up in front of each other. In order to achieve this unification of the workers' struggles, an organization is obviously necessary. Even if there were a spontaneous movement of groups of workers in this direction, which we certainly hope for and which will certainly happen, this movement will have to express its proper organization to defend itself, to connect and to be able to grow.

Base Unionism

The situation in which the working class finds itself acting today is even more serious than that of a lack of such an instrument, because the battlefield, the network in thousands of workplaces, is controlled by the regime union structure whose conduct throughout the postwar period, and in particular over this forty-year span of long crisis, was primarily aimed at preventing this unification.

On the other hand, base unionism has so far proved inadequate for this task, partly because of objective unfavorable conditions but, in our opinion, also because of errors in union policy, one of the most important of which is the unity of action.

For example, the generally correct criticism of the conduct of the regime's trade union principles by base unionists was followed, in the vast majority of cases, by an indication that they should not participate in, or even boycott, the mobilizations promoted by them. This attitude certainly has its *raison d'être*: the confederal trade unions often commit a variety of atrocities in the workplace; the reaction of the delegates of the base unions is often to refuse to go on strike and to take to the streets alongside such traitors, with whom they clash on a daily basis. This direction, therefore, if it emanates from the leaders, is shared by a substantial part of the militants of the base unions.

However, if such conduct can be explained, superficiality must not be ignored: this is not a matter of fighting alongside the structure of the delegates and officials of the collaborationist unions, but with the workers they mobilize.

Not participating in the strikes called by the regime confederations is counterproductive for various reasons:

First of all, the base unions with this conduct appear to the mass of workers, still controlled by regime unionism, as deserters in the field of a battle: we are here and you are not here;

The most combative workers, who belong to the base union organizations, isolated in its action, strikes and demonstrations, abandons the rest of the mass to the control and influence of the

regime's unionism;

With a practice that has been refined and consolidated by long experience, when mobilizing workers, the regime's trade unionism is always careful not to order actions that are neither too weak, that appear to be its failure, nor too strong, that risk losing control of them. By depriving these strikes and demonstrations of the presence of the most combative workers, organized in the base unions, with their contribution of enthusiasm, energy, criticism and direction, it is easier for regime unionism to control its own mobilizations.

These considerations have a general value but it is always necessary to consider each mobilization on its own merits. Where, for example, there are companies or groups in which the regime unions have already been emptied and defeated by the base unions, the attitude may obviously differ. This is the case, for example, of important logistics companies where SI Cobas is the dominant force and the Italian trade unions are reduced to the condition of an extreme minority or even absent. On the contrary, among metalworkers, for example, the control of FIOM-CGIL is still robust and the organization of base unionism is very weak.

Nor should there be any illusions about the resilience of the regime's trade unionism, which still controls the majority of workers: if recent years have been characterized by a lack of mobilization by the CGIL, this does not exclude that in the future it might change, flaunting a new activism, setting up false mobilizations, as it certainly is able to do, think of what Landini of FIOM did after the Pomigliano agreement in June 2010 (see "FIOM's Façade of Opposition Backs the Corporatism of the CGIL"), an illusion for which a not inconsiderable part of base unionism also fell.

Our Party advocates to fight within the base unions for the affirmation of the opposite direction, consistent with the unity of action of the workers, of participation in strikes promoted by regime unionism, if they are likely to mobilize a substantial part of that fraction of the working class, and to intervene in the demonstrations organized by them with their parts, clearly visible and distinguishable, widely spreading among the striking workers their claims and their methods of action.

Opposing Conceptions on the Nature of Strikes

There are two fundamentally opposed concepts of the nature of the strike and the process of growth and development of the workers' movement here. First, that of unity of action, and second, that adhered to by the majority of the leaders of the base unions, which is to aim for separate strikes. The first of these is based on the real needs of the working class and on the need to defend them; the second places the factor of "conscience," of the understanding

of social rejection by the workers, at the center and motor of this process. In the workers' and trade union movement, first of all, the workers would come to a gradual, widespread and individual awareness of the reality of their social condition, and only then would they have the instruments of judgment, the rational motives and the ideal convictions to organize themselves adequately in combative trade unions and to take part in the struggle.

In our view, the process takes place inversely to this, in which consciousness is the ultimate result, and always partial, not the starting point. First, instinctively, one enters into battle together, and immediately understands that numbers are the first factor of strength, then, with long experience, the masses come to understand it. And one can evaluate the orientations of the various political parties and groups on the basis of experience.

It should be noted here that the base unions themselves were not born through a process of gradual awareness by the workers, but under the pressure of strong mobilizations of certain occupations. The realistic conception of the strike and of the development of the workers' movement does not put the head but the heart and belly of the workers at its engine.

Secondly, it seems to us that four decades of the practice of separate strikes by base unionism has clearly demonstrated its ineffectiveness. These mobilizations, especially ones not restricted to a particular trade or occupation, are always in the extreme minority, reduced to harmless demonstrations of opinion, never real proof of strength to bend the boss, which the majority of the working class does not even notice or, in the best of cases, considers a futile agitation of an extremist minority.

It is important to make a distinction between those who act in the workers' movement. At the base is the mass of workers. Part of this mass is framed within the trade union organization. This in turn distinguishes the bulk of the membership from the militants, the delegates, the territorial leaders, and finally the national leaders.

In general, in a healthy union, as one scales this pyramid, so does the degree of awareness of the problems associated with union struggle. If only because a worker decides to become more involved in the work of the union, for example by becoming a delegate, because they really have a passion for this struggle and, in carrying out this activity, over time and with experience acquires a growing knowledge.

Judging the union rank and file according to the same criteria as its leaders, considering both equally traitors to the working class, is therefore a serious mistake, useful only to justify the refusal to strike with them. This obviously does not mean ignoring the existence everywhere of individual opportunist workers or worse.

Strikes are a living social phenomenon with predominantly

irrational characters. They have often been compared to a fire: a strike needs certain conditions to ignite, fuel, oxygen, temperature, ignition; once it is lit, the more it extends, the more difficult it is to extinguish it; on the other hand, once it is extinguished, having consumed part of the fuel, for a certain period it becomes more difficult to light it again. It is not by chance that in the recent past, when the leaders of the regime unions were sent to the factories to break up and quell the strikes, they were called firemen. And significantly a whole series of agreements between employers and regime unions aimed at preventing real strikes introduce so-called cooling procedures that already confess their intentions in the name and show how the employers and the false trade unions sold to them are very clear about the true nature of the strike.

The strike is the primordial and elementary constituent of the class struggle. Elementary because it is the first way in which a group of proletarians collectively opposes, almost always unconsciously at the beginning, the oppression of capitalism. Primordial because in a real strike, even the smallest, all those factors, primarily of an emotional nature, which are destined to grow and mature throughout the development of the class struggle up to its final outcome in recognizing its party, the communist party, and which are able to continue the struggle towards the seizure of political power, must be recognized in embryonic form. The revolution is experienced as one great strike by the mass of the workers, viewed from below.

A real strike is a small revolution. The workers are involved in a completely different and new situation. They are freed from the oppression of work, with the elementary and simple availability of time to meet and think. The new collective situation frees up energies that ignite the need to deepen the problems of a trade-union nature, which fascinate them, and the willingness to test the strength of their class. It is in the focus of the struggle that the conditions for a more general understanding of the problems that afflict the class are created. And the more the fire grows and extends, through a process of unification of the workers' struggles, the more the conditions are created so that the conviction can be spread that it is possible and useful to address the question of the condition of the wage earner not only at the union level but also at the political level, looking at the various parties and social guidelines of which each proposes its own general solution to the history of the struggle between the classes.

All this hardly happens cold, in the absence of struggle, during the two hours of assembly in which workers find themselves listening to the endless sermons of two, three or four different unions, on complex problems, and often deliberately made more complicated, tired from work and aware of having to return to do it

after a short break. So for the mass of workers, unlike the small minority of trade union activists, action really comes first and understanding comes later.

Confusing roles and subjects, addressing and looking at the mass of employees as if they had the same false beliefs and prejudices as the leaders of their union, can only lead to serious mistakes and inability to intervene against them.

The question arises, therefore, as to what conditions are necessary to set real strikes in motion. In our opinion, since this is an elementary phenomenon, these are not complex in nature, although it is not at all easy to predict the right conditions to try to trigger it. We can reduce them to two: the presence of a real malaise in the workers, of a measure taken by the boss which is felt as a bite tearing into the flesh of their daily existence; and the fact that the workers see, feel that they have at their side an adequate number of worker comrades willing to fight. Since it is not the right of trade union activists to intervene on the first factor, if not to understand the mood and morale of workers, it is on the second that action is necessary.

The orientation of the unity of action of the workers operates in this direction: to fight within the base unions for their participation, with their own demands, in the strikes promoted by the regime's trade unionism, with the aim of creating the most favorable conditions for these mobilizations to reach a degree of strength that would overwhelm the control of the concerted trade unions over their members. Striking together with the regime's trade unions does not mean, as most base union leaders claim, to be confused with them and to favor them: the differences will be explained by the militants of the base unions to the workers in the strike. On the contrary, it was the most appropriate conduct to wear out these unions subservient to capital.

Because, and here we close this part of the report, for the mass of workers embracing class unionism and its demands is not a choice, but a problem of strength! It is when they feel strong that they understand that they actually have the opportunity to fight for more ambitious goals and more intransigent methods. As long as the claims, albeit sacrosanct and classist, are based on extremely minority mobilizations, the mass of the waged class is forced to turn to trade unionism, which appears to be stronger, more comfortable, and more patronizing. An opportunist behavior, of course, but that of an oppressed class until it finds the strength to face openly the enemy social force that oppresses it.

United Class Union Front

Therefore, on the part of base unionism, joining the strikes promoted by trade unionism does not mean striking with the structures of those unions but with the workers they mobilize. It is a question of following the direction

of the unity of action of the workers, which we believe is the most appropriate way to combat that unionism, not of seeking a common front between the base unions and the patriotic unions. Such a united trade union front would be in clear contradiction with the definitive nature of the CGIL regime and the consequent tactical direction we have taken since the late 1970s to rebuild the class union outside and against it.

The watchword of the United Class Union Front is closely linked to that of the Workers' Unity of Action but it does not coincide with it, it moves in parallel and it is in its function. In order to clarify this orientation, it is useful to explain the character of the Appeal for a unitary strike of all the base and class unionism that we have mentioned by introducing this relationship.

The Appeal was entitled "For a United Class Union Front:" the specification "class" also indicates that an agreement on the level of action was considered possible only within base unionism and with left-wing opposition groups and currents within the CGIL, but excluding that trade union.

The Appeal was addressed not only to "all workers" to join and support the strike, but also to "members and militants" of all base unions to pressure their leaders to overcome divisions and call for a unitary strike, and "members and militants of the left-wing opposition currents in the CGIL" to support such a strike regardless of what the CGIL leadership would do. It was not, therefore, an appeal to the leaders of the trade unions, as mistakenly understood by some initially, but to the base of these unions.

This is in the knowledge that over a period of now four decades these leaders have not only failed to achieve an organizational unity of base unionism but not even a unity in terms of action, indeed, instead of reducing divisions they seem to become increasingly serious, as demonstrated by the proclamation of yet another two general strikes separated by 15 days.

We are convinced that the complete and organic unity of action of base unionism will only be possible to the detriment of at least a majority of its current leaders. So the appeal, far from accrediting them, was an act of confrontation with them.

The unity of action of base and combative unionism will be the premise of the realization of a United Trade Union Front that will be "class" also because, being able to be accomplished and realized only through a struggle against the current leaders, will allow for an embrace of a trade union policy that is really such.

This objective will allow the creation of a trade union pole – harbinger of a single great Class Union – with such a mass as to generate an adequate attraction to contrast that, still today overhanging, of the regime unionism.

This does not mean that it is certain that the formation of the future Class Union will necessarily take place through the

organizational merger of the current base unions. It is possible that some or all of these organizations will not prove up to this task, and will give in to the bourgeois political regime's framing as already happened at the CGIL, or vice versa, and will be swept away by it, and that new bodies of workers' struggle will arise and meet this historical need.

This possibility does not contradict the trade union guidelines set out here and the work that the Party does for their affirmation in the workers' and trade union movement, since this task obviously can only be carried out in organizations that currently exist, not in those that have yet to come.

It is important to clarify the relationship between the two tactical directions in the trade union field that we have outlined so far.

The objective of the United Class Trade Union Front is an objective that we consider indispensable in order to achieve the most complete realization of the unity of action of the workers. Our Party does not exclude the need, and its task, to address the proletarian masses directly, indicating the need to unify the struggles and proposing, in addition to the unity of action, also unifying objectives. This would strengthen the battle conducted for the same purpose within the trade unions. But we must not delude ourselves that the unification of the struggles of the working class can be achieved by circumventing the task of the battle within the trade unions for the right course of action.

Trade unions are the fundamental and living subjects of the workers' movement. Ignoring their role and abdicating the battle within them can only lead to the general dispersion of forces. This is true not only in a historical condition such as the present one, in which the working class's weakness is manifested, but it will also have value in situations in which the workers will return to fight hard, gaining a much higher degree of awareness of their exploited class condition than the present one.

Our Party can affirm this on the basis of a great experience of a struggle that is now more than secular, since we consider ourselves faithful continuers of a political current that has had the historical occasion and the merit of fulfilling a leading role in the period in which the advance of the revolutionary proletariat, in the years from the October Revolution to 1923, was at its peak.

This current is the Italian Communist Left, which originated around 1912 within the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), was formalized in 1919 as the Communist Abstentionist Fraction and in January 1921 led the split founding of the Communist Party of Italy. The Left held the leadership until 1923 and the majority of members until 1926, when, at the Congress of Lyon, the centrist current prevailed, an extension of Stalin's counter-revolution in the Russian Party and in the Third International, with its

henchmen in the Italian Party (Togliatti).

Since the months following its foundation, the Communist Party of Italy has been engaged in the battle for the United Trade Union Front among the class organizations of the time. The Communist Trade Union Committee sent a letter to the CGdL, the Railway Union (SFI) and USI proposing "the establishment of a united proletarian front in trade union territory and the national general strike in defense of the working class" to face "the development of the capitalist offensive".

Even in those years in which the Italian and European proletariat expressed the greatest vigor, bringing the whole of Europe to the brink of the proletarian revolution, the divisions between trade unions played a role of obstacle and damage to the workers' movement, and the Party considered it its inescapable task to fight within them for the widest possible unity of action. At the same time, it did not fail to address the workers directly.

The reformist leaders of the CGdL called the communist proposal "demagogic and reckless". The Railway Union and USI, while declaring themselves in favor of the united front, did not take into consideration the invitation of the communists. The Party's tactic was to circumvent these defeatist and embarrassing positions with an appeal addressed directly to the proletariat. The report of the PCd'I to the IV Congress of the Communist International reads as follows: "The question was brought by the Communists directly among the masses in which they found the greatest sympathies; at the same time the CGdL was asked to discuss our proposal in a national Congress".

On September 7 and 8, 1921, a national conference was held in Milan called by the Communists, which brought together a hundred delegates representing more than 500,000 workers from all over Italy, belonging to the CGdL and the Railway Union. The final document stated: "The Communists set as their main trade union objective the achievement of unity of all economic organizations of the Italian proletariat.

The campaign for the united front began to bear fruit. The Board of Directors of the CGdL was forced to convene the National Council which was held in Verona in the early days of November 1921. The agenda was for the united front and the national general strike. It can still be read in the above mentioned report. "Against such a proposal almost all the trade union bureaucrats of the CGdL took sides.... Numerous trade union organizations, although not directed by communists, accepted the communist proposal.... Despite all the obstacles and all the impediments, the pressure of the masses pushes inexorably towards the united front.... The history of the reception given to our proposal in August 1921 can be summed up

in a few words: obstructionism on the part of the union leaders, ever-increasing sympathy on the part of the masses" ("Report of the Executive Committee of the PCd'I to the Comintern on the Tactics of the Party and the Question of the United Front").

Trade Union Struggle and Political Struggle

It is not a question, in the current situation of repeating the same tactical approach proposed in those years of maximum advancement of the revolutionary proletariat, of making a mechanical and forced transposition of the practical conduct of the Party, such as to make it a parody.

As we revolutionary communists believe we can recognize in the smallest strike those elements of proletarian rebellion against the oppression of capitalism destined to grow and mature in the entire course of development of the class struggle, so our doctrine allows us to identify the processes even in their embryonic formation. In the limited trade union activity that the present conditions allow us, we see those fundamental characteristics that have appeared clear and distinct in the experience of the great battles of the past and that we know will reappear in those to come:

- the opposition of the reformist and opportunist trade union leaders;
- the seemingly inexplicable attempt by political groups, such as anarchists, to speak out in favor of the united trade union front;
- the enthusiastic welcome of the proletarian mass, even of the workers who adhere to parties adverse to ours;
- the adhesion of trade union structures, territorial and of category, even if not directed from the fraction of the Party, to the communist trade union direction. After explaining the function of the two lines of action in the trade union field and the reasons why we consider them to be correct in that field, it is a matter of explaining how they fit into the political struggle for communism.

The relationship between Party and union is an ever-present problem in the union movement which only revolutionary Marxism correctly frames.

Our school foresees the growth of the Party in a determined relationship with the rekindling of the class struggle, but excludes the possibility of being able to lead the working class, directed towards the revolutionary conquest of political power, on the basis of an increase in the number of members through the sole activity of propaganda and proselytism. These are fundamental and necessary tasks, but not sufficient.

If we stick to Marx's thesis that in every age the dominant ideology is that of the ruling class, the Party will remain a minority of the class, and for a long time even after the conquest of power. The force that will catapult this revolutionary minority to the head of the working class is that of the social war, of the working class against the bourgeois classes, in particular the trade union struggle. It is in this field that the practical directives of the Party will be followed by the workers, even by the non-communist ones, because during the course of the struggle they will have proved to be the most appropriate to their needs.

In this, the genuinely communist Party does not need to exploit the workers' and trade union movement because the best development of this creates the most favorable conditions for the achievement of its political aims. Exactly as the Manifesto of the Communist Party states, "Communists have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole."

The Party therefore does not seek a forced "politicization" of the union. It translates the theoretical theses that distinguish it from all other parties into the right practical direction of action. For example, in the trade union environment, it does not propose watchwords such as "Capitalism cannot be reformed, it must be overthrown" but "Fight against capitalist exploitation to the bitter end," aware that in the course of the development of the class struggle the second formula will in fact coincide with the first. Or, it does not include anti-religious propaganda in trade union communiqués, but explains the need for workers' solidarity above all religious beliefs.

For example, one of the theses of the congress document of the Second Congress of the USB states that it would be necessary to "accept the challenge of politicizing the clash" (see "The Second National Congress of the USB"). Earlier this was SI Cobas leadership has often repeated that in the absence, in its opinion, of the revolutionary communist Party, the union should play a role of its "substitute."

Respect for the function and nature of the union does not mean devaluation of the function of the Party.

Party comrades who are workers and militants in trade unions should not hide their opinions and carry out propaganda and proselytism even within the union. But the fundamental function of the communist union fraction in the union is not to make it, little by little, become a half Party, which stands side by side and shoulders the first: this objective, which is considered obvious and necessary and

pursued by all other political forces, comes to deny the union or damage its healthy development. Instead, the primary work of the communist union fraction is carried out in respect of the nature and function of the union, different from those of the Party, in their defense and in fighting for the affirmation of the directions of action that favor its maximum strengthening.

The affirmation of a completely consistent classist orientation in trade unions and in the class is the result of the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, of which the struggle between its various currents is a reflection within the trade union movement, and the continuous and coherent trade union orientation emanating from the correct revolutionary policy of the Marxist Communist Party. Therefore, it can only be successful in the presence of the Communist Party. Without this, the trade union movement, led by other political parties and currents, can only occasionally and partially use the right method of struggle, but it is destined to betray or show its inadequacy with the deepening of the social crisis. In the individual battles, the communist trade union policy, demonstrating its adequacy and correspondence to the needs of the workers' struggle in its growth, will find the adhesion of workers who are not part of the Party and also of those of other political organizations. We have also had a small confirmation of this in the battle conducted in recent months in support of the unitary strike of base unionism. The same appeal was drafted not only by comrades of the Party, even if it fully answered our address.

The political parties acting in the field of the workers' movement opposed to the communist movement may occasionally find themselves sharing some of the communist union directives but, at best, they oscillate around the right course of action and only at moments coincide with it, and are destined sooner or later to have to try to bend, as it is said to manipulate, the trade union movement to its own political aims, revealing these not to be in harmony with them.

The opposition towards unitary strikes by some of the base unions' leadership has already shown a contradiction between the political aims of the opportunist political groups which direct those unions and the needs of the workers' movement. Besides, its a fact that among parties that call themselves proletarian and revolutionary, those who have given effective support to unitary strikes can be counted on one hand. This despite that everyone says they agree with unity of action and some of their militant

workers have expressed themselves in favor of it.

In this oscillatory movement of the parties around the correct line of classist union policy, the contradiction with their workers' base, with their union fractions, which will increasingly tend not to follow the direction of their political organizations but the communist one, is revealed.

It is in this way that the union will carry out that function of transmission belt between the minority of revolutionary Marxists organized in the Party and the mass of the proletarian class.

In this process, the guidelines of the united class union front and of the unity of action of the workers play a fundamental role because they are those that can lead the entire working class to move and clash with the entire bourgeois class and its regime. As Marx explained, when the trade union movement came to mobilize the entire working class for its interests, it was already a political movement.

The affirmation of the classist trade union policy, emanating from the communist fraction, and its sharing by a large proletarian base, leads to the mutual strengthening of the workers' movement and the Communist Party.

The general mobilization of the proletariat, determined by the advancement of the world economic crisis, comes on revolutionary ground as capitalism becomes less and less able to feed its wage-earning slaves. Taking advantage of the objective conditions of fragility of capitalism and its regime on the world scale, the general strike, finally directed by the only Communist Party, overflows into insurrection to seize power, the first step towards the emancipation of the working class and to communism.

This communist tactic on the ground of trade unions is counterbalanced, in addition to the rigorous distinction and theoretical and programmatic definition, by the rejection of all fronts on the political ground. Our Party does not pursue intermediate objectives to the revolutionary conquest of power and rejects all the political alchemies inevitably connected to these immediatisms that opportunism always proposes in the fake prospect of bringing the revolution closer.

It is from the combination of these two seemingly opposite tactical attitudes – maximum unity of action of the proletariat in the field of immediate claims, maximum independence and definition with respect to all the other parties – that we believe that the highest efficiency and revolutionary power of our class will develop.

2019 Strike at General Motors

48,000 members of the United Auto Workers of America (UAW), the regime union representing Auto Workers in the United States, went on an unexpected strike at General Motors from the 16th of September to the 25th of October. The strike cost GM more than \$2bn, according to Wall Street estimates. It closed 34 GM manufacturing and distribution facilities across the USA. It also disrupted operations in Mexico and Canada.

General Motors, which produces the Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, and Cadillac brands in North America, is North America's largest automaker.

Demands

It's hard to discuss workers' demands as there was no plan and no real membership discussion before the strike vote occurred. The UAW leadership was seen as using the strike as an attempt to regain legitimacy amongst workers after a series of scandals. As typical of regime unions, the scandals continued and the leaderships' handling of the strike has only increased anger towards them.

Labor Notes magazine observed: «The strike was declared suddenly, with no guidance from top bargainers on its goals. When I visited the picket line at Detroit-Hamtramck Assembly on the first day, workers couldn't tell me what they were going out for. But remarkably, a consensus soon emerged. Most workers I interviewed over eight visits to the line said their top priority was "make everyone equal" or "hire the temps"».

The above quote shows how workers are open to struggle when they feel and see that what is going on is a real strike. So the methods of struggle are as important as goals. This is the reason why the ICP always fights to organize real strikes: without notice, with no established deadline, with picket lines to stop entry and exit of goods and to wipe away the scabs.

Pay for GM workers is a series of tiers, depending on when you started. Older workers get paid more for work than more recently hired workers - this a provision pushed through by the "progressive" Obama administration in the U.S. Government's bailout of GM in 2008. More and more GM is also using temporary (precarious) workers who have no work guarantee and no benefits. In the US, the notoriously expensive health care system is provided, if provided at all, by your employer. By implementing tiered work scales and through the use of temporary workers, the company can lower costs in providing health care, placing workers in dire straits.

Corruption in the UAW

Just before the GM strike was called a series of corruption charges were brought by the US Federal Government against primarily UAW officials but some company executives as well. The charges dealt with bribes and kickbacks given to UAW officers.

We have to say that in our view is not just the corruption that make a union a regime one but its principles,

its methods of struggle, its internal life, and its whole history, since founding forward, across the class struggle. Nevertheless corruption cases like these are a manifestation of the nature of a union which has gone over to the side of the bosses for decades.

Counter Groups

There are small pockets of organized internal resistance in the UAW. The current UAW was called a "One Party State" by a militant and former official back in the 1950s. Since that time the union has become the party of the corporations.

Since 1990 there have been some well organized caucuses within the union fighting for a pro-worker direction.

"New Directions Caucus" especially seemed to have some movement until its leadership was pulled into the union leadership.

"Soldiers Of Solidarity" was more of a rank and file insurgency in the first decade of the 2000s.

Today there are no well organized rank and file groups.

The Solidarity Review is a group organized around publishing articles critical of the present leadership, which is important, but really has no organization.

"Autoworkers Caravan" is a protest movement more in line with Soldiers of Solidarity - loose knit and mainly a social networking phenomenon, but unfortunately not as organized as the Teachers union groups which won so much.

International Aspects

Canada and Mexico play important parts in Auto manufacturing in North America. Mexico makes many of the parts to be assembled in the United States - so the finished product can be marketed as "American made". Canadian auto manufacturing is much more integrated into the much larger American market with many parts and assembly plants located in the Canadian province of Ontario - just across the Windsor River from the center of American production in Detroit, Michigan.

The Canadian Auto Workers and American union were the same until 1985 when the Canadians split because of American union's willingness to sign concessionary contracts, often to the disadvantage of their Canadian members. The American habit of ignoring their Canadian fellow workers again popped up when the American's showed no organized solidarity with the Canadian wildcat strike against the closing of a GM assembly plant in Oshawa, Ontario which would eliminate 2,500 production jobs at the plant and 2,500 union workers in auto parts suppliers, etc. The Canadians repaid the American's lack of solidarity in kind.

The Maquiladora are special economic zones of Mexico which provide low cost labor for American industry. In Silao, Guanajuato, Mexico at least five workers at the GM - Silao plant were fired for trying to aid the American strikers by advocating a strike in that plant, a slow down against increased production to substitute for lost American production as well as advocating workers leaving the corrupt regime union. For more on the Maquiladoras see "Wildcat Strikes in Mexico" in "The Communist Party"

#12

Class Unionism's lack of Organization vs the Regime Unions

The contract which came out of the strike negated the strikers' desires articulated on the picket lines above. Multiple tiers of pay continue, temporary work remains temporary rather than permanent, health care costs and risks are being dumped upon the workers. The contract was accepted by a 57% to 43% margin. The success was ensured through a number of bribes such as tying bonuses to yes vote.

The failure of the strike is being widely presented as a case of greed and betrayal by the company and union officials. This is an important flaw in analysis.

First of all, capitalist companies are against the workers not because of the bosses' greed but because capitalist competition imposes a need, in order to survive, to exploit workers. This exploitation will grow more and more as the global economic crisis advances.

Secondly, it is incorrect to talk about a betrayal by the UAW leaders. This union and its leaders, like the whole AFL-CIO, have been for decades openly with the bosses and for class collaborationist unionism. The only class the UAW leadership could betray is the bourgeoisie - something that they will never do. The attitude of UAW leaders in this strike is just a confirmation of the regime nature of this union.

But this is just half of the problem. The other is the lack of organization by workers willing to fight and the militants of class unionism, inside and outside the UAW.

The strike failed because there was no counter-organization to the bosses and their union hirelings.

The militants of class unionism have to coordinate themselves to get recognition from workers in struggle that they are the real alternative leadership in the struggle and to achieve the possibility of effectively jointly organizing an opposition to regime unionism.

This "Coordination" can't be built on a party basis. It can't be a united front of parties - of any nature - but a united front of militant workers for class unionism. To keep it's own nature it has to be open only to workers, employed and unemployed, not to members of other classes or social strata.

https://www.international-communist-party.org/English/TheCPart/TCP_016.htm#GM

CLASS UNION OR OBU?

The ICP advocates for class unions dedicated to protecting the economic interests of the entire working class. The class union organizes workers across employers, industries, and national boundaries. It encompasses all occupations no matter if "skilled" and "unskilled", "blue-collar" and "white-collar". It promotes

the unity of action of the entire working class. It maintains a completely combative position against the bosses, never collaborating or cooperating with them under any circumstances. It pays no respect to the laws that protect the bourgeoisie, especially those that limit the workers' right to strike.

The class union should be as widely based as possible. In this respect it differs from party-unions and parties in place of unions, which are both promoted by the various opportunist factions. This is not to say that it should be apolitical. Not every worker is willing or able to join the communist party at any given time. Even so, they can still be of great help in workers' struggles.

The IWW

For the most part, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is mired in the anarchist and "libertarian socialist" ideologies which failed so badly in the post World War One revolutions and, more importantly, the Spanish Civil War. The concept of "autonomy" of local unions, individual workplaces, etc was alien to the classic IWW. IWW in the 1970s abandoned the industrial outlook of the OG IWW. So they "unionize" individual workplaces, which no longer seek unity with even other workplaces in identical industries.

The ideology of autonomy means the IWW currently lacks the ability to capitalize on its strengths. For example, its membership amongst workers in Education is not insignificant - 1300 across the US. Members in the "Educational Workers Industrial Union #620" - were leaders in the 2018 West Virginia School Strike. But there is no strategy for turning isolated groups of IWW militants into an organization fighting for the unity of all workers and unions. As long as it holds onto localist autonomy it cannot become the power it should be. Instead of unity of actions, there are small handfuls of Educational workers working on their own individual and local agendas.

"Local Autonomy" also encourages IWW projects like the "Burgerville Workers Union" - a union of fast food restaurant workers in Portland, Oregon in one business. It encourages them to think it is ok to negotiate a No Strike Clause in their contract with employers, even though such a clause is in direct contradiction to the IWW's constitution. Instead of attempting to spread their occasional successes to other restaurants, the duplicate autonomous unions for every workplace - a different burger chain is a separate and isolated union. One donut shop in a business of 10 shops (Voodoo Doughnuts Workers Union). As well as a bar going out of business! Each union is a little more tenuous and isolated for the collective power of workers to be effective.

The failures outlined above don't mean that the IWW should be written off. It still does many good works despite the above weaknesses. For example, it's organized militants within a number of major Canadian unions (eg CUPE) have been encouraging workplace actions which have won significant workplace improvements in a very hostile political environment.

Class Struggle on the BNSF

In the western United States, the transportation of commodities via rail is dominated by BNSF, the largest freight railroad in North America. The secret to their success, as is often the case, is the brutal exploitation of hired labor. Many BNSF employees have no assigned days off and are on call 24/7, which is the norm across the industry.

Unsatisfied with the present degree of exploitation, however, the company recently announced a new attendance policy that will, with very few exceptions, punish employees for taking a day off regardless of the reason [this point should be better explained]. To regain credit with the management, an employee needs to go two weeks without any absences. BNSF attributes this move to the "competitive freight environment". At CSX rail in the eastern half of the country, there is a similar policy already in place, only it takes six months to get good attendance points! Can we expect BNSF to continue to make changes – emulating the tyranny other railroads exercise over their workers – in order to stay competitive?

The unions representing BNSF workers, SMART-TD and BLET, opposed the proposal in negotiations, but their actions were weak. When negotiations broke down, they gave the company notice of their intention to call out 17,000 railroaders on strike. Predictably, BNSF immediately filed for a restraining order to prevent the strike. The bourgeois State, embodied here by the federal judge, sided with the railroad, and declared the strike illegal, wishing to avoid aggravating the ongoing national supply chain crisis (without, of course, excessively curbing the cost-saving measures of enterprises that gave rise to the crisis in the first place, so that the United States can remain atop the world market).

Indeed, the State has long recognized the railroads as a vital connective tissue for general commerce and therefore enchained those without whom the trains could not run. For instance, the Railway Labor Act makes it illegal for the rail unions to order its members to strike without first passing through a protracted series of negotiations, arbitrations, and waiting periods designed to sap the energy and collective bargaining strength of railway workers. If the union breaks the law, the State may confiscate the union's funds and even abolish the organization. If the rank-and-file bucks the union leadership and refuses to return to work despite the federal law, they thereby forfeit the protection of the union and so are liable to lose their jobs and their pensions.

Confident that there will be no consequences because the organizations for the defense of the workers are toothless against the State and capital, the railroads for the most part ignore the complaints of the unions and continue to drive their employees into the ground.

Union leadership, being threatened with jail and fines, capitulated to the State. As an example, the following was sent to all members Pursuant to the Court's Order, by The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) a division of the Teamsters Union. The union steering

committee is "Instructing all of its members employed by BNSF that they must NOT engage in any self-help against the railroad. This means that members must NOT engage in any strikes, work stoppages, picketing, slowdowns, sickouts, or any other activity intended to disrupt the operations of the railroad in response to BNSF's Hi Viz attendance policy. Further, pursuant to the Court's Order, BLET is notifying and instructing all members who are now or who may in the future engage in any strike, work stoppages, picketing, slowdowns, sickouts, or any other activity intended to disrupt the operations of the railroad to immediately cease and desist all such activity and to immediately cease and desist all exhortations or communications encouraging same upon pain of fine, suspension, or other sanction by BLET. This means that any member who continues to encourage other employees on social media, or in any other forum, to engage in a strike, work stoppages, picketing, slowdowns, sickouts, or any other activity intended to disrupt the operations of the railroad MUST immediately stop doing so. Members who continue to do so risk fine, suspension, or other sanction by BLET".

To many combative railroaders, though, these difficult circumstances do not exonerate the union leadership. These leaders, good citizens and loyal servants of capital, seem comfortable with merely going through the motions while collecting mandatory union dues and securing reelection – thanks to the historic inertia of the labor movement. Despite further proof of the inadequacy of the leadership's attempts to satisfy the workers using legal means alone, what sign is there that our dear labor leaders are preparing another strategy? Union representatives choose to represent the most docile tendencies and the narrowest interests among the working masses, rather than giving voice to the most formidable and class-conscious elements (the vanguard), lifting the strong above the rest, and uniting the working class around its most universal conditions and interests. They complain of mistreatment, but they do not stand up to and confront the abuser. This makes sense given the traditional relative security of a large portion of the American working class, which produces the illusion that if we just conform, things can't get that bad. That narrative conveniently forgets that the partial, precarious satisfactions of working-class life in the United States were won by labor militancy and class unity, despite legal repression and numerous betrayals by opportunist leadership! And now that the labor movement is incapacitated, those concessions are rapidly being taken back in the name of "free" competition. The problem is not that workers are not ready for struggle; what we lack is adequate leadership up to the task. Due to this impotence and absenteeism, thousands of angry railroaders must remain idle while their fury and outrage dissipate.

The national rank and file coordination Railroad Workers United (RWU) have called for the following actions:

"Whereas, current conditions appear to be ripe for railroad workers to mount a successful national strike, including but not

limited to:

- A general labor shortage where the rail carriers are unable to recruit and retain employees in the various crafts, including train and engine service.
- Supply chains in crisis, as goods in transit are hampered at every turn.
- Public opinion that has sided with striking workers throughout 2021.
- The record profits generated by the carriers, together with their alienation of shippers, passengers and communities, which suggest that railroad strikers would enjoy vast public support.
- Rail unions of late that have been largely standing together.
- The fact that the carriers have attacked ALL rail workers, solidifying workers from all crafts, unions, and carriers.
- The existence of a sitting President who claims to be "the most pro-labor President you have ever had".

Whereas, such favorable conditions for rail workers outlined above have not existed for decades – if ever – and will not continue indefinitely;

Therefore, Be it Resolved that RWU urges all railroad workers to consider the strike option, and to prepare for such a strike; and

Be it further Resolved that RWU urge the rail unions to educate their respective memberships on:

- the Railway Labor Act (RLA) under which our actions are governed;
- the history of rail strikes;
- the benefits and risks of taking such action with webinars, printed materials, presentations at local union meetings, and other means of communication".

The ICP would like to call for the following to fill out the demands of the RWU.

- Abolishing laws that restrict the freedom to strike should be a constant demand by the labor movement, agitated for in every strike.
- BNSF railway workers should build a strike together with the dockers and all the workers of the supply chain.
- Railroaders, dockers, truckers, warehouse workers and postal workers: all of these industries are, bound together, essential to the smooth functioning of capitalism. When workers in these sectors act alone – in isolation – they are powerless to confront the might of the capitalist class and its State apparatus. United, however, they have the strength to resist the repressive machinations of the State and bourgeoisie.

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Canada Post on Strike

The recent strike of postal workers in Canada has once again exposed the weaknesses of the present capitalist situation. Logistics, including shipping, warehousing, distribution, and computer systems, is vital in an economy dominated by offshore manufacturing and mail-order businesses. The month-long Canada Post strike had such a devastating effect on capital's ability to move product that the state stepped in to break it. This acknowledgment of workers' power by the bourgeois state should receive the attention of communists everywhere.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), with a membership of 50,000, has been in contract negotiations with Canada Post, the state-owned mail service corporation, since last winter. The negotiations have centered on the significant rise in parcels mailed over the past several years (20 percent between 2016 and 2017 alone), which has drastically increased the workload for postal employees. This has led Canada Post to hire more temporary workers (23.98% of employees and 29.97% of hours in 2017) and to impose mandatory overtime on permanent staff. Overwork has led to an increase in work-related injuries among postal workers. According to the CUPW, "one out of every 12 workers at Canada Post experienced a disabling injury in 2017".

With no contract after ten months of negotiations, the CUPW began rotating strikes on October 22. Workers walked out in different major cities on different days over the course of the following month. Though it stopped short of a complete shutdown, the effects of the strike were dramatic. By mid-November, there were 260 semi-trailers of undelivered mail at the Toronto processing plant, and over 100 in Vancouver. Canada Post was forced to reject international shipments, and Canada-bound mail piled up in foreign airports. Slowdowns on days when strikes were not occurring in the different cities prevented the postal service from recovering.

Bleating from capital and its government began immediately, and by the middle of November had reached a feverish intensity. On the first day of the action, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business declared, in biblical terms, that "every time [postal workers] even threaten a strike, more small business customers move to use alternatives, many never returning to Canada post". The message was clear: form a corporate connection with the bosses or become obsolete. eBay, the middleman for independent sellers who rely on primarily the postal service for shipping, publicly called for the government to ban the strike. Canada Post, in the official press release coinciding with its final contract offer on November 14, warned of "significant impacts to the Canadian retail economy," and, on top of this, that "charities and not-for-profits still use the mail for major fundraising activities".

The strike's timing was key to this very welcome disruption. The CUPW announced it on October 16, the day

before cannabis was to become legal in Canada. Cannabis sellers, including the state-run Ontario Cannabis Store, received tens of thousands of mail orders which they could not fulfill, damping the introduction of what is expected to be an economic boom for the country. The strike heated up precisely when businesses and the shipping industry were preparing for the Christmas shopping season.

Under this tremendous pressure from businesses, the Canadian government took action. After Canada Post's November 14 offer was rejected by the union, Bill C-89 was read before parliament. It became law on November 26. The strike was officially banned effective the following day, with severe penalties for the union and any union members if they were to continue the action. Rank-and-file members could face summary judgements of up to \$1,000 per day, union officers \$50,000 per day, and the organization \$100,000 per day of non-compliance. Non-compliance could be construed in nearly any way the government wished. While it maintained the pretense of forcing both the CUPW and Canada Post to comply, the real target was clearly the union. The CUPW called off the strike, while issuing an appeal for protest from the public and other trade unions. Protests occurred at postal facilities across the country, some of which interfered with mail processing.

The Canadian postal strike demonstrates clearly how much impact a relatively mild labor action can have on the economy if it takes place in a vital industry. One can only speculate as to what effects a complete stoppage would have created, and what this would have done for the postal workers' position. Large parts of the global economy are vulnerable if the workers who connect them take action in their own interests. Logistics workers in Italy, Israel, the United Kingdom, and Germany, among others, have realized this fact and taken action, as we have reported in the past. The bourgeoisie and its governments in every country cannot fail to take notice as well.

The unfortunate lesson of the strike is that wider class support came too late to be meaningful. While effective where implemented, solidarity pickets from members of other unions did not become widespread until after the Canada Post strike had been banned. Unfortunately that was a far cry from solidarity actions across the shipping industry in other countries. This points to a weakness of the CUPW and other unions in its position, namely, that it represents workers of only one firm. By contrast, capital has access to a variety of firms for its every need. Amazon.com, for example, ships through government postal services, commercial parcel carriers, and its own delivery network. Only workers' unity across and between industries can effectively confront capital on this scale.

Two Major Strikes in the UK

"It used to be that if a place treated you like crap, you'd just go somewhere else. It's got to the point where there's nowhere else to go. We've reached a tipping point. We're on minimum wage, on zero-hours. There's no such thing as overtime anymore, and now they're starting to mess with our tips. There's only so much more we can take."

With these words a young English worker describes his and many other's condition on the eve of an important and unprecedented direct action in the catering sector. On October 6, fast food workers belonging to McDonald's, TGI Fridays and Wetherspoons set up a joint strike to conclude, or give a new start we might say, to the particular struggles of which we saw several episodes happening in the last year. The cases of sexual harassment at McDonald's or the disputes over tips at TGI Fridays had only been the sparks on which the unavoidable need to end miserable wages and zero-hours contracts, as well as the disparity in remuneration that affects people under 25 had blown. And from isolated and scattered initiatives, the understanding that a coordinated action was necessary to give a greater impulse to the struggle had been gaining ground, mostly young people with no family support and no prospect of professional advancement, crushed by a labour market in a continuous downward trend, these workers have formed or joined grassroots trade unions impenetrable to bureaucrats and collaborative strategies of all kinds, that are mostly run by the workers themselves to meet their immediate interests, incompatible with those of their bosses. And where the consciousness that their situation will be difficult to improve if the existing production relations remain as such begins to spread.

The strike was mainly promoted by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), but GMB Union and the larger Unite the Union also back it up and push their members into action. Obviously, however, the anger was not limited to members of these unions. And so, when the strike action had already been defined, gig economy workers from the food delivery industry decided decisively to participate in the walk out. They were united by a very similar living condition, with very low wages and unguaranteed work hours, and also saw in the unity of the workers the only possibility of salvation. It must be said that this segment of workers lives in a condition at the limit of sustainability, since they are denied even the most basic rights. Although in most cases these are actual full-time jobs as well as the only source of income, these riders are told that they should see themselves as "entrepreneurs", who work when and how they want, who are real arbiters of their own destiny. The reality is that they have no choice but to suffer a wild exploitation with the incessant uncertainty of not being able to keep up with rent and bills. Working without holiday pay, sick pay and incentives in the event of adverse weather conditions.

As many as 9 cities in the United Kingdom have seen the joint mobilization of UberEats and Deliveroo drivers, with a very participated event in the city center of Cardiff. These workers are almost entirely organised by two other major grassroots trade unions, IWGB and IWW in a single network, the Couriers Network. It certainly seems rather premature at this stage to talk about the establishment of a single trade union front, but it is surprising how quickly and easily these unions can reach full agreement on unity of action, so as to inflict as much damage as possible on the opponent by means of the strike. In a very precarious sector where it has always been difficult to organize the workforce due to its fragmentation, as many as 5 unions have managed to combine their efforts in a relatively short time.

But this was not the only episode of bold struggle that crossed the United Kingdom in recent months. Much attention deserves the genuine organizational experience of London cleaning workers at the hands of the United Voices of the World trade union. Nearly all immigrant proletarians, these workers toil at the city's most renowned public offices only to make the misery of the national minimum wage, set at £7.83 per hour. This, if perhaps it will be enough to guarantee a wretched life outside London, in the financial capital is equivalent to being able to pay for rent and little more. As a matter of fact, the minimum wage for living in London, called the "London living wage", is indicated at £10.20 per hour and highlights the significant difference in the cost of living between the capital and the rest of the country.

With 100% of votes in favor, the cleaners at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Kensington and Chelsea Council (RBKC) decided to be

Dockers of Puerto Cabello Venezuela fight for a Wage Increase

Port workers in Venezuela suffer from harsh capitalist exploitation by the government, its companies, as well as private capital. Their low wages aren't enough for food and endure unsafe working conditions and environment.

It makes no difference if the "wincheros" (crane operators who do the loading and unloading of ship containers), whether they work on payroll or as "temporaries", or if they work for state companies or private companies that operate in the different ports of the country. Wincheros are not given lunch, they have to bring it from home. A good part of their scarce wages goes to pay for transportation. They do not receive uniforms, footwear, equipment and safety gear. They must work long days without breaks. They are not allowed to organize themselves and make demands and if they do, they are classified as terrorists. To give you an idea, in January 2019 a wincheros received a wage of less than 100 Bolivars (11 cents according to the official exchange rate and 3 cents according to the parallel market) for a 12-hour day.

The employer-government alliance in Venezuela has opposed the demands for increased wages for workers. But the wincheros in Puerto Cabello, decided to take action, demanding wage increases.

Their employers do not want to accept their organizing an union. The bosses have proposed that they organise a cooperative or civil association. This trick is so that they don't have to deal with the workers as wage earners, but rather with a contracting company, in order to get rid of everything related to collective contracts, social benefits and other wage complements.

The "Bolivariana de Puertos" (BOLIPUERTOS) Port Workers union has turned its back on the struggle of the wincheros.

The wincheros have begun to organize and had the courage to stop the unloading of ships, even without the support of the union. The employer began to pressure some workers to restart

the operations and break the strike.

In this struggle our party's message to the Winceros was:

1. Understand that the struggle for wages is a permanent struggle and that the main victory will be the rank and file organization of the workers.
2. Turn the wincheros' struggle into a struggle of all port workers and all workers in general, in Puerto Cabello, in Carabobo, in Venezuela and throughout Latin America.
3. We need to organize of the struggle of the working class on the rank and file, both inside and outside the workplaces. Build Rank and File Workers Committees to pressure unions to convene assemblies and to aid the struggle. These Committees should integrate active workers, pensioners and retirees, permanent and contract or temporary workers and meet outside the work centers, grouped by neighborhood or town. The wincheros must pressure the union to take up the struggle. To accomplish this it is necessary that they extend their rank and file organization to all dock workers.
4. In the docks the workers must build unity and the struggle for the following demands:
 - (a) Raising wages, starting with 15.000 Bs per 6 hour day, adjusting the salary monthly, adjusted for inflation.
 - (b) A 6 hour work day (meaning 3 to 4 work shifts per day) and a 30 hour work week.
 - (c) Establishment of cafeteria services
 - (d) Provision of appropriate work clothing, footwear and personal safety equipment.
 - (e) No repression of workers' struggles or persecution of worker-leaders.
5. Strikes and mobilizations are the main weapons of working class struggle and need to be resurrected. Use agitational and informational pickets to make workers' issues and demands known. Seek to incorporate the rest of the class into rank and file workers' struggles.

The winceros' strike lasted 4 days. On the fourth day, 5 wincheros returned to work. On the fifth day all the strikers returned to work empty-handed, at the same starvation wage. Without organizational preparation, without a pro-strike fund, without union backing, the winceros strike movement was defeated.

Port workers should continue to learn from each of these experiences of confrontations with the bosses and thus assume the struggles with a proletarian class approach, combative against the bosses and their governments encouraging a greater participation by all workers.

Port workers should continue to learn from each of these experiences of confrontations with the bosses and thus assume the struggles with a proletarian class approach, combative against the bosses and their governments encouraging a greater participation by all workers.

THE ONLY DEFENSE OF DOCK WORKERS IS IN THE UNITY OF WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE

On Friday May 23 the ICP distributed the following leaflet during a 24 hour strike of Italian Port Workers.

This strike had been called by the regime unions (CIGL, CISL, UIL) for the new national collective agreement.

We want to acknowledge the SI Cobas Port Workers in Naples who have joined the strike. Joining strikes, even those of the regime unions, is the correct position for them to take. The ICP believes rank and file unions, when the regime unions have support of the majority of workers in a company or in a sector, must join strikes organized by the regime unions. This way rank and file unions get the opportunity to bring their message to workers mobilized by regime unions. And if they are able, they should distinguish themselves by organizing one more strike.

So we have to say the SI Cobas acted correctly and joined the dockers strike.

Unfortunately, the Port of Trieste USB union, which has significant membership, told its dockers to feel free to do what they want.

USB leaders often encourage workers not to participate in strikes organized by regime unions. This is a behavior our party's union fraction fights constantly. Both inside the USB as well as the wider union movement.

To the Port Workers of Genoa,

The internal logic of capitalism pushes for the maximum exploitation of the labour force. International competition worsens working conditions in the various ports of the Mediterranean and Europe, as it does in every working class job.

While in past decades your strength inside the port was sufficient to defend you and to improve your conditions, for years this is no longer true.

It is increasingly evident, however, that the road of the "defense of the port", or even – as the statement of CGIL, CISL and UIL for today's strike – "Italian ports" will not lead to the defense

of port workers but will endorse competition between ports, encouraging lower wages and increasingly higher work rates.

The only way to follow is that of the unity of the dockers between the different ports, both within Italy and across national borders.

In Genoa, a battle was won against working the cargo of war material bound for Saudi Arabia on the Merchant Ship Bahri Yanbu. This refusal followed similar struggles in the ports of Le Havre, France and Santander, Spain and shows that an international union of struggle is possible.

It is also necessary we need to go back to calling real strikes. Pickets need to block goods and fight scabs. Strikes also need to be open ended, not "timed", that is, without a duration established in advance, which almost never exceeds the single day.

Also dockers must join the rest of the working class, seeking unity of struggles across industries, which CGIL, CISL and UIL Union federations keep from happening.

At least six million other workers, not just dockers, are without a national collective

agreement: metalworkers, railway workers, garbage collectors, public servants... Uniting the struggles of all these workers would express a strength far greater than a bunch of separate strikes.

What hinders this union, more than different industries and even national borders, besides the bosses and their State, are the regime unions in every country, which surrender working class interests to an alleged "common good". The "common good" being the interests of the company, of the port, of the national economy, that is, to the profits of the industrialists.

It is up to the most combative workers to take on this task. We need to break with the CGIL, CISL and UIL's trade unionism which for years has been signing off worse and worse collective agreements. We need to unite as workers in struggle and achieve full unity in class unionist actions, bringing together the opposition groups within the CGIL and the independent rank and file unions.

Internationalism Will Defeat Racism! The Juneteenth Port Workers' Strike

Though the attitude of the state and the action of the police against workers of color, specifically black workers, has not changed over the course of American history, neither has the reciprocal push labor has taken to stand against the racism of the state. Nothing more exemplifies these actions against racism than the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) of North America. For more than a century the ILWU has wielded its class power at the ports along the west coast of the United States to oppose racism and supported black workers across the planet: from striking after the shooting of Martin Luther King Jr. and the apartheid regime of South Africa, to establishing housing coops and providing training and education the union has shown the power working people have as an international class.

In their demands and in its opposition to employers for racial equality through the years, the ILWU has also shown that the working class is international in character, standing together against this oppression strengthens ties of the working class across countries and racial lines. Even within their own organization, the ILWU has been able to combat the pervasive racist sentiments that are encouraged in capitalist society. The economic system, and the political state that maintains the economic dominance of the ruling class, benefits from the indiscriminate killing of workers of color. Labor itself has a massive role to play in the protests against this pervasive social relationship. Society depends on the flow of commodities both in the market and across the globe to stay profitable; and it is this profitability above anything else that capitalists and their institutions listen to. The flow of commodities is where the working class can make its actions noticed! This fact is what has given the ILWU the ability to defend its members through a strike.

Anti-racism, especially that which has grown and been the cause of waves of protests and riots across the United States, can only be functional and potent in bringing racism to its knees by the international union of the working class. Racism has been historically enriched and perpetuated to the benefit of the ruling class and capitalist institutions. By allowing this division among the working class internationally, between white and black workers

especially, capitalist society is able to prevent the class from uniting under a common banner to make its demands known and realized. From the continuation of discriminate killings of black people by the police across the globe to the quietly ignored but ever more apparent profiling of communities through redlining, the historic racist policies of the various capitalist states comes out from under its pleasing mask of democratic representation.

And so it is the case that on the 19th of June, the ILWU takes actions it has taken in the past to protest the racism that has been perpetuated against so many black people, in particular the killing of George Floyd. The union will walk off the ports, 29 across the west coast, to make their demands, much like in the 1973 strikes against apartheid. The impact to the shipping ports will be a loss in profits to capitalist institutions across the globe, as this wretched economic system is starved of its own life blood, the actual products that make it function.

Except, the union will have little power to make the demanded changes to the state that have been called by many across the country. What lessons the ILWU's actions show the working class is that its power is at the workplace and in the fact that it can stop the flow of commodities; it is not only the class that produces them, it is the class that distributes them too! Without the coordinated effort of the working class across the whole planet, united as the working class of the whole of society, these demands will slide into the background, as capitalist institutions play their impotent parliamentary games in hopes that they will be able to hide their half-hearted legislative attempts to balance their favoring of capital over human lives. They only give in to the demands of the working class to placate a revolt on the scale of a social revolution! But the working class can only see the change they demand from the state through this revolution, a coordinated effort of the united international class, using state power by their own hands and the destruction of the state that exists to perpetuate capitalism! This effort can and must be achieved, realized only by walking hand in hand with the class party, the international communist party, who has been able to guide the class through the quagmire of capitalist democratism and the racial divides that have plagued society for centuries. It isn't any one movement of workers in any one specific location or industry that will put a stop to racism, it is the international working class that will make that possibility a reality.

AGAINST CLASS COLLABORATION, FOR A PROLETARIAN ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT

The Black Lives Matter (or BLM) is a human and civil rights movement, which took shape within the African-American community around 2013. It grew as a reaction to the infamous verdict that granted full acquittal to the local man who, on February 26 of the previous year in Sanford, Florida, had shot - certainly not in self-defense, as established by the court - 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, killing him on the spot.

The demonstrations which have filled the streets of the great European capitals with young people in recent days are partly linked to the BLM. The intentions of what began as an online campaign were, in 2013 as today, to stir the "consciences" of American and international public opinion to denounce the episodes of "war on Blacks", the systematic attacks on the lives of black men and the police brutality that acts in the indifference of justice.

The individual local "structures" that adhere to the BLM and the multitude of organizations that participate in the network do not respond to any central body, a refusal that corresponds to localistic prejudices, but also to the interest of withholding funding from external subscriptions. This has not prevented in the last few days between the member structures a coordination in the organization of the protests, the request for signatures on petitions, unified under the same slogans and claims.

But what kind of claims? We read on the Black Lives Matter website: "The mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in the violence inflicted on black communities by the state and its agents. By fighting and reacting to violence, creating room for Black imagination and innovation, and putting Black joy at the center, we achieve immediate improvements in our lives."

Here, we call together the black communities, in their inter-classist totality, to defend against the attack of "white supremacy". It is an interclassist movement, therefore bourgeois, expression of a persecuted racial minority, bourgeois who want their small slice of local power recognized by the White State, without being cut or massacred by the police.

Therefore, the BLM has little to offer the black proletariat, imagination and innovation aside.

Both the demands and the ways to go, sometimes delirious, in the movement often diverge. But widely shared are the criticism of the Trump regime; a reform of the justice system; stricter penalties for violent police officers; the containment of

systematic racism; the definition of local police departments (in the city of Los Angeles, 53% of the police expenditure goes to the police department, a value in line with that of other American cities); support for businesses and small businesses owned by African-Americans.

These popular claims have also attracted many young white, petit-bourgeois and proletarian youth to the demonstrations, ready to express their solidarity with the cause of antiracism and their discontent with the American picture as a whole.

From media multinationals, Apple, Nike and Adidas and others, promises of long-term investment in black communities where they wave the flag of anti-racist progressivism in exchange for good business have recently arrived.

It is inevitable that the social and racial discontent tries to vent in the electoral swamp: we hear the need for the black communities to complete the electoral registration practices so that they can vote, in the next presidential elections, "blue" against the tyrant Trump, guilty of giving voice and protection to the white supremacists. In short, the Democratic Party has as its objective, nothing new, but to bring home as many African American Voters as possible.

Without continuing to plough through the various utopias of social reform within the BLM movement, one more unlikely than the other, today more than ever, the need for revolutionary theory and the Marxist party, in America and beyond, arises.

We associate ourselves with the denunciation of the condition of poverty of the black proletariat, violently affected, first, by the ongoing economic crisis of world capitalism, and then, by the Covid-19 pandemic - which in the USA has seen about a third of its victims being members of the African-American population - which has marked a surge in unemployment, already historically very high in the black communities. We denounce the absence of essential services, particularly in the health sector, the absence of housing...

The prevailing Democratic ideology pushes the proletariat of every race towards the traps of interclassism and boasts progressivism. Only if led by its class organ, the International Communist Party, only by overthrowing capitalism and its state, can the proletariat be freed once and for all from the grip of racist brutality, its murderous violence, and the moral misery of obtuse bourgeois prejudices.

ON CHARLOTTESVILLE: OUR STANCE ON ANTI-FASCISM (5/18)

Anti-fascists, currently flying under the “antifa” banner, however radical they may appear, are not communists. In the 20s and the 30s, communists opposed the fascists because they represented one of the parties defending capitalism. Now communists must once again shout from the rooftops: it is not enough to oppose fascism unless you also oppose bourgeois democracy. On the other hand, as we have shown in countless articles in many languages, historical and recent, anti-fascism has proved to be a very effective weapon against communism, both before and after the 2nd World War.

The political United Front tactic, which was proposed by the Third International in 1921, and rejected by our current as opportunism, involved a rapprochement between communism and social democracy. Subsequently the Communist International would consider fighting fascism to be more important than fighting what had given birth to it – capitalism. For the Comintern it became the duty of the communists to preserve left-bourgeois governments in the face of fascism. Even worse, the communist parties actively destroyed their own organizational integrity: filling the ranks of the communist party with boilerplate leftists and bringing genuine communists together with social democrats of every type. This opportunism of the Stalinist parties resulted in open class collaboration and suffocated the communist struggle... against fascism as well.

In the May 1934 edition of Bilan, we instead read: “...if the proletariat is really strong enough to impose a governmental solution on the bourgeoisie, then why should it stop at this objective, rather than posing its own central demands for the destruction of the capitalist state? By contrast, if the proletariat is not yet strong enough to launch the insurrection, then doesn't pushing it towards a democratic government mean in effect spurring it down a path that will make the enemy's victory possible?” (“Anti-Fascism: A Formula for Confusion”).

Far from being “purists” the left communists maintained that the fight against fascism necessarily needs to be a fight versus both fascist and democratic parties, not of communists and democrats parties versus fascism.

The left communists were right in predicting that the bourgeois parties couldn't be expected to stop fascism. Indeed, nearly every party ended up deeming Hitler and Mussolini a non threat and a defence against revolution. They supported them, and paved the way for them to win state-power. It cannot be forgotten that the united front not only destroyed the communists' political independence in the name of “anti-fascism”, but it didn't even stop fascism from taking power.

That is the root of our distrust of antifascism. Yes, many say, that is all well and good, but this isn't the interbellum era, times are different, and besides, there is no working class movement. But capitalism still reigns now as as then. Sure, there is no large working class movement, and the communist party doesn't have a large following. But there definitely won't be if its independence and principles are sacrificed. If we are to build a communist movement it is the principles that count: not principles that are deemed true for all time, but ones resulting from 1) what the world is 2) what the world is in the process of becoming.

The “leftwing” antifascists say they aren't like that. They don't participate in the ruse of electoralism and they certainly don't take sides in intra-capitalist conflicts (nevermind, though, that if pressed hard enough they prefer the social democrats – and in America, even worse, the Democrats!). They fail to understand they are just a “street” (and thus more “militant”) component of bourgeois anti-fascist, interclassist politics, which loudly screams yet offers no solutions: they are not for anything, they are just against fascism. They present no program, they do not organize into a communist political party, they do not work for working class autonomy. Their political activity does not go farther than organizing against fascists. They are still stuck in the trap of “fascism vs

democracy”, where fascism is everything they don't like and democracy is meant in a “true” sense that excludes Congress and Parliament, but what it actually means remains a mystery. Both in theory and in practice, these antifascist positions have nothing to contribute to working class politics. The theory must be rejected and different tactics and strategy must be pursued.

It is a theory that is needed, along with tactics and a strategy to follow.

A paper written in Italy in 1920 called “Lenin and Abstentionism” (Il Soviet, 1 February), discusses opposition to parliament on the basis of political principles, that running for parliament is detrimental to the attainment of communist objectives. We read there that Communism is an innate need, that you join the communist party in order to commit yourself to actively channelling the energy of the “masses” onto a clearly communist political path.

Of course, this isn't to say that the alt-right, the kkk, neo-nazi meth gangs, christian identitarians, or whatever racist group, aren't a problem. Of course they are, and of course they must be fought. But unlike the antifascists, communists must fight them from a class-oriented perspective, i.e., from within a political party which encourages independent working class organization. If such a perspective is lacking, fighting in the streets is simply not enough.

Recently in Charlottesville, at a “Unite the Right” rally, clashes with protesters resulted in deaths. The anti-fascists are keen to remind us of these tragedies in order to justify their activity and their politics.

But even on these occasions communists must do their utmost to point out that these defeats demonstrate not only the limitations of antifascism, but the need for methods of action that are purely class-based. There is certainly a need, let us be quite clear, for workers and communists, and of course for ethnic communities as well, to defend themselves from right-wing attacks. It is rather the interclassist and democratic stance, typical of anti-fascism, that we are criticizing here, not the fact you need to defend yourself and consequently also against these nazis. We cannot however let the response to this be “we need more antifa” but rather “we need working class politics”. And not in the vulgar sense of repeating what the bulk of working class people think, but in the sense of the politics that is in the interests of the workers.

Communists do not offer a “solution” regarding

what the relationship between the bourgeois State and Fascism should be. They don't call on the democratic bourgeois State to repress anti-democratic fascism. We don't, for instance, have a position on whether the white supremacist Richard Spencer should be evicted or not.

We say that racist and nationalist ideologies will only be overcome in a communist society. What the anti-fascists fail to realize is that even if there are times when it is relevant to confront racists and fascists, and with violence, in the workers' organizations and mutual aid networks (never in the party) nationalists and racists will always be around, etc. The solution is showing that they are wrong, that workers of all races and countries must unite in their common struggle and cast aside racist ideology. Unfortunately, we must live in the real world, where the solution is not beating everyone up all the time.

It is a fact cops did nothing while counter-protestors were shot at and killed in Charlottesville. It is undeniable that the police are racists and have been infiltrated by white nationalists. And it is undeniable that the state will transfer power to the fascists when it needs to. Logically speaking, therefore, every anti-fascist should be an anti-capitalist, and every democrat a communist. But that is not the reality of this situation.

Meanwhile, Cruz, Romney, and Bush have come out to condemn white nationalism, and Clinton specifically referred to the alt-right as “deplorable”; and it is a fact that the FBI has, and will continue to, infiltrate the Ku Klux Klan. Indeed, several of these racists found themselves fired shortly after their tiki torch stunt. But communism in fact doesn't want to fight fascism as such, it wants to fight capitalism, be it democratic or fascist.

Ideologically, antifa is framed in a street style radical social democracy, and organizationally it is nothing beyond an organizer of brawls. To go beyond that, to be for communism and for broader working class organization and mobilization, not against just racism but for other class issues and ultimately for communism, the antifa initiate must first know our critique of anti-fascism; and then, our continued condemnation of the hardcore antifa activists. The duty of communists is therefore to continue to critique antifascism, giving no ideological grounds to it.

Communists must hold onto the dogma – proven time and time again – that the only way to fight capitalism in all its loathsome reality is through class war.

Life Of The Party

Party Meetings in the US

Minneapolis: First Saturdays at Hard Times, 1821 Riverside Ave, Minneapolis 3-5pm

Portland, OR: First Saturdays at Neighbors Taproom on 13th and E Burnside: 11am. All ages welcome.

Meetings also in:

Akron, Raleigh, Tampa, Yakima

to contact email: icparty@interncommparty.org.

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