

The Communist Party

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

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which there was, on one hand, the generous will to rebuild the true communist party, and on the other, the need to wait the time to draw the balance of the worse counter-revolution in the history of our movement.

Naturally, we cannot here provide a complete and exhaustive exposition of all the huge work the party made to “rediscover” its original path: our party’s entire body of works and theses is freely available to comrades. But we will provide here some minimal clarifications with respect to what is stated in this article.

We no longer work for the creation of a new, heterogeneous, International workers’ association comprised of separate, nationally independent communist parties. Instead, we fight for the development of a unitary world communist party, which is centralized organically and international in scope.

At that time, a segment of our party had theorized their own abandonment of the need to work within the trade unions. We firmly argue for the need of the rebirth of class unions and of the work of the party inside them.

And, finally, we must emphasize that our approach to looking at the national and colonial question is the application of a rigorous Marxism, which can only look at the colonial and semi-colonial world and its revolutions on the basis of whether they are individually historically progressive or not. It is not true that – in 1948 – there were no longer bourgeois or progressive revolutions, nor is it true that all anti-colonial struggles at the time were themselves imperialist.

1948 ARTICLE

The leaders and parties in the electoral campaign of 1948 present a picture of paradox. The conflict between Russian Imperialism and Anglo-American Imperialism dominates all other issues. Within the framework of this conflict, the mask for world Imperialism, the United Nations, masquerades as the world public, impartial arbiter between Eastern and Western Imperialism while it is actually the world market place for Eastern and Western Imperialism, for making deals on atomic armament; partition of Germany, export and import of capital between East and West; spheres of influence in the colonial and semi-colonial areas. It is the mask under cover of which American Imperialism promotes the Marshall Plan for

the subjugation of the world. It is the cloak under which Russia promotes the Moscow Imperialist plan. Together, they add up to a War plan.

Internally, the drive of the capitalist class of the U.S. against the working class sharpens. It saddles the working class with the Taft-Harley law, no-strike injunctions, anti-radical and Stalinist spy scares. This is the pattern for mobilization for Imperialist War III, emphasized by the Military Draft.

President Truman and his competitor Thomas E. Dewey present themselves as champions of freedom and liberty against the expansion of Russian Imperialism, while they support military dictatorships in Greece, China, Korea and Japan (MacArthur democracy). Truman and Dewey claim to be leaders in the fight against war, yet they promote the Marshall Plan, which is the political-economic phase of military measures in time of war. They both support the military draft. They are, in words, for the independence of all people, yet they promote the E.R.P. which makes the whole of Western Europe dependent on U.S. Imperialism. Truman states that the Republican Party is opposed to the working class and Dewey states that the Democratic party is against labor. They are both right. Both parties have united to dragoon the American workers so that the labor costs of production (wages) would not rise, along with capitalist profit. Truman announces that the Republican Party is the party of economic depression, and Dewey announces that the Democratic party is the party of inflation. Both are correct. Dewey snorts that the Truman foreign policy is a weak and vacillating one, yet Democrat Marshall and Republican Dulles are carrying out a bi-partisan foreign policy, which will inevitably lead to War.

The leaders of the Republic and Democratic parties expose each other and reveal that they are nothing but political office boys for capitalism. Taking advantage of the resentment against the Republican and Democratic declarations of bankruptcy, of a large minority of the American workers and middle class, Henry Wallace in alliance with Stalinism, has launched a party, called the Progressive Party. This party performs a two-fold function. It is a pressure instrument for Russian foreign policy, and a party for small capitalists. As far back as the year

1943, Wallace trumpeted that small business people, to him, meant employers of five-hundred workers and up. He has continually reiterated in this campaign that he supports free-enterprise capitalism while he advocates nationalization of basic industries. This means he wants the capitalist state to become the main investor in the economy while allowing room for the wealthy middle strata of capitalists, like himself, to expand. Wallace supports the Imperialist Marshall Plan in concealed form by support the Stalinist foreign policy, which is in favor of a Marshall Plan with clauses, favorable to Russia. On the other hand, he is “a knight in shining armor,” who, in the best traditions of Imperialism and nationalism, claims he will make America “strong, free and happy.” His apparent militancy on behalf of the Negro and Jewish workers is so much decoration [?] to catch votes. His program is pro-capitalist and anti-working class.

The most comical picture of paradox are the Trotskyites and the Socialists. They want a labor party which is at the same time militant and anti-capitalist; bourgeois democratic and revolutionary. (They want opportunism without opportunists.) They want a Marshall plan that is anti-capitalist and pro-working class, all in one. They are for a maximum of democracy for the working-class and advocate at the same time the highest degree of totalitarianism, nationalization of basic industries (under capitalism). Norman Thomas advocates Socialism while he proposes to use capital to buy out the biggest capitalists. Of course, Thomas will have to exact a promise from the capitalists not to reinvest the capital with which he proposes to purchase their industry, and thus continue accumulation of capital. Confiscation with compensation on the heels of a hypothetical Trotskyite-Socialist parliamentary victory as a substitute for the class struggle, is the road to ruin; the road of state capitalism and bureaucracy. Norman Thomas wants an Imperialist War which at the same time is “pro-working class.” He supported World War II and advocated the impossible, an Imperialist war with “democratic aims.”

Clearly support for any of the parties and leaders at present dominating the American political arena is support for capitalism and wars. Instead of a vote for the parties of war and capitalism, we

advocate the building of a working-class revolutionary party in the U.S. with the following basic principles:

Our conception of the world and the society proper to it that of Marx’s scientific socialism.

For the reconstitution of a revolutionary International against the Internationals of Betrayal (Social Democracy, Stalinism, Trotskyism)

Against collaboration with the bourgeois and pseudo-proletarian parties which uphold the false and deceitful banner of “true democracy.”

The trade unions of the C.I.O., and A.F.L., Railroads Brotherhoods and “Independent Unions,” are part of the legal apparatus of the Capitalist State. Working class unity will be achieved on the basis of the platform of the party of the revolution, and, under its leadership, within those organisms, created in the revival of the proletarian class struggle.

The farm-workers are the class brothers of the Industrial proletariat and must be won over to class-solidarity.

All so-called movements of colonial independence have an Imperialist base. There does not exist for the colonial and semi-colonial areas, any longer the problem of a bourgeois revolution. The only road is that of proletarian revolution.

The proletariat must work for the defeat of its own bourgeoisie and its satellites in the advanced industrial sectors of world capitalism, as well as for the defeat of its own bourgeoisie and satellites in the colonial and semi-colonial areas of world capitalism, in time of war.

The defeat of the bourgeoisie, on a world scale, accomplished through the civil war of the proletariat, under the guidance and leadership of the Revolutionary International Party, will be the beginning of the Socialist Reorganization of Society under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, will serve as the transition to the classless society of Socialism, where the state, as known under capitalism, will disappear, and Government and Tyranny, will become the history of the past.

The Dictatorship of the proletariat is not to be understood as a defense of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the dictatorship of the proletariat will arise in Russia, which is now an Imperialist State, through Socialist revolution.

USA, Ontario, Turkey Bosses' Legal Attacks on Strikes

American Rail workers!

Capitalism seeks ever new ways to drive down wages in the capitalist class’ pursuit of ever-increasing wages. But their profits also depend on their businesses delivering. The entirety of American business depends on your rail lines running. The bosses don’t run the trains themselves. We do!

The government has shown that it does not have your back; instead, they side with your bosses because it is more important to keep business as usual than allow you to live your lives. But they don’t provide you with a life worth living at all!

Follow the example of Ontario education workers. Their government, just like ours, has once again shirked their so-called responsibility to us as citizens and sided with the employers, all to maintain profits at the expense of working peoples’ livelihoods. The Ontario educators refused to sit down while the Canadian government steamrolled their right to strike.

We must stand together, rail workers of all crafts, and even those employed outside of the railway industry! In dividing us by craft, our bosses are able to push us down individually. Our strength comes from our unity.

The only solution in front of us is to strike anyway. The union leaderships may have their hands tied, but we do not! We must not stand idly by while our right to collectively bargain is stripped from us.

We should carry this onward, expanding this struggle into ever larger and more organized struggles. Don’t wait for the leadership to do it for us, or it may already be too late! Connect with longshore workers! Truckers! Those working in warehouses!

Work toward building a united front of class unions – a unified network of all the rank and file organizations employed in the supply chain – so that we can put a halt to their bottom lines!

The capitalist system needs us, but we don’t need them!

Ontario Education Workers stand up to Illegalization of Strike with threat of General Strike

Class struggle has been in full swing in the Canadian province of Ontario, where a long and difficult struggle over wages in the education sector has caused a desperate attempt by the bourgeois regime to prevent a work stoppage across the province. The provincial government, in the face of an impasse in these negotiations, hastily passed legislation that would outlaw a strike in the province by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) if a new contract was not negotiated. The pretense of the law would be to suspend CUPE’s “right” to strike by using Article 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Popularly known as the Notwithstanding Clause, it allows a 5 year suspension of constitutional rights for specific acts by specific groups. The clause, based on the World War I “War Measures Act”, allowed banning socialist and communist organizations and publications. The Notwithstanding Clause has, for example, been used to allow Quebec to ban Islamic headscarves and other regressive measures.

The showdown in Ontario demonstrates the real stakes of the capitalist system. Confronted by effective union mobilization, the Province sought to temporarily revoke the workers’ “right to strike” as guaranteed by the Canadian constitution. This shows that our position that even in so-called “free” countries, the rights contained in any bourgeois constitution are only promises in the abstract, and therefore are not inalienable. The only thing that is inalienable in this society is the right of the bourgeoisie to extract as much surplus value from the proletariat as possible, with the aid of the bourgeois state. Education, public service—these terms are as meaningless as human rights as long as private property, and its system of wage labor, exist on earth. The pitiful state of public education around the world shows that capitalism (and its regime unions) hold utter contempt for anything that enriches human life in general.

With the passing of this legislation, the CUPE continued on with their

USA Elections, 1948

(2022 Introduction)

This article, whose title we've preserved here, was published originally in a periodical, called International Bulletin, by the section of our party based in New York City from the late 1920s through the '50s.

After the rise of fascism in Italy, the communist left had scattered across Europe and outside. Many comrades, those fortunate enough to have not been arrested, or worse, found themselves exiled from Italy.

Meanwhile the comrades of the left of the Partito Comunista d'Italia had been expelled also from the party by stalinists.

In 1943, the internationalists remaining in Italy, with the support of many of those comrades living in exile, reconstituted their party under the name Internationalist Communist Party, which came to be known by the name of its publication Battaglia Comunista.

Despite the collapse of Mussolini's government, Italy was splintered. In the south, the Allied forces had launched their invasion in order to "liberate" the country from fascism; simultaneously, in the north, Germany occupied the rest.

The communist left remained fractured too. Comrades, primarily in the north, managed to formally organize once again into a party, and would be joined by militants from the south not long after. There was a need to analyze the events of the prior two decades. It became clear in the party that there was a dire need for the reassessment of the party's positions before any real and firm reconstitution of the party could occur. A lot had happened in the history, in the economy, in the fight between classes and in the international communist movement in particular. By then we had been faced with an enormous counter-revolutionary turn of events, and the party would have to adjust accordingly.

The list of principles printed below contain the main positions, which we still maintain. The first, for example, is the basis for our materialist conception of history.

But we must understand the context within which this article was published, during a period in

centrals and federations, have promoted the struggle for their demands. There are also union leaders who have promoted struggles individually. That is why we must act without sectarianism, since the important thing is to unite all those who want to fight; at the end of the day the traitors and waverers will be unmasked in the heat of the struggle.

5. Only class demands should be raised. There are demands that not only distract the workers, but also go against their interests. The struggle of the workers should not be put at the service of any electoral or parliamentary campaign, nor should the defense of the national economy be claimed, because it is a lie that if the economy and the companies are doing well, the workers are doing well too. Likewise, the struggle of the workers cannot be placed at the service of the defense of the homeland or against the sanctions imposed by other capitalist states, because with or without sanctions, the bourgeois homeland is sustained by the exploitation of the wage-earning workers. Nor does it make sense to fight against the privatization of enterprises and institutions since what is relevant is to demand wage increases, reduction of the workday, a hygienic and safe work environment and rejection of layoffs, and in this struggle we should not differentiate between public or private employers or between national or transnational capitalists, against all we have to confront them all united, because they are all united in the bourgeois front of the exploiters.

6. TOWARDS THE GENERAL STRIKE! The maximum expression of the unity of action of the working class is the General Strike. The only way to defeat the bosses and the bourgeois government and to win the workers' demands is the General Strike. And it must be without notice, indefinite and without minimum services. That is why it is necessary from now on, not only to continue with the rallies and mobilizations, but to advance in the construction of a strong organization of struggle, with broad participation, based on local assemblies. This will not be easy because the majority of the trade union centrals and federations will oppose the rank and file organization of the workers and because it will be necessary to confront the whole legal and repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state. But the strike movement will only be able to impose itself with the broadest participation of the rank and file.

For a class trade union united front!

Converge and unite the struggles of the working class!

For a general movement for strong wage increases against the high cost of living!

Towards the General Strike!

sector, we are all united by the fact that we are wage earners, that we give our labor force in exchange for a salary. We are the working class or the class of salaried workers. It is very common that in the same institution, facing a single employer, workers are divided by affiliation to several parallel unions. It is also common that there are unions in a company that do not communicate or do not unite their struggles with those of other unions. Class unity means getting rid of any artificial and unnecessary divisions. The unity of class action means acting together inside the company and outside it, together with comrades from other companies and institutions. WE WILL NOT ACHIEVE A CLASS VICTORY IF WE DO NOT MAINTAIN AND BROADEN OUR UNITY OF ACTION!

2. Among the workers of the public sector the demand for the repeal of the ONAPRE Instruction has become generalized. The government remains silent on the matter and the Supreme Court of Justice, as was to be expected, sided with the bosses. This Instruction has been the symbol of the robbery of public sector workers. But even with the repeal of this Instruction, salaries continue to be miserable. So we must not lose the north of the struggle: TO CONQUER A WAGE, PENSIONS AND RETIREMENTS THAT ARE ENOUGH TO LIVE ON, and that are regularly adjusted above the amount of the Basic Basket, together with a Reduction of the Working Day. According to available information, the minimum wage, as well as pensions and retirement pensions should have a minimum amount equivalent to \$1,000 per month. Likewise, the fractioned payment of Christmas bonuses and of any contractual "benefit" should be rejected.

3. Let's rescue the assembly practices. A United Front of Struggle of the Working Class must be a grassroots movement. And a grassroots movement must rise up through the meeting of assemblies, which preferably should be local meetings attended by workers from different companies and not only union leaders. The area of territorial influence of each local assembly should be that which facilitates the broadest attendance and participation of all, moving on foot, by bicycle or urban transport. And regional and national communication and coordination mechanisms should be established between all local assemblies. The assemblies should plan actions and designate working commissions. There are already initiatives of integration of workers' organizations; these initiatives must be deepened by incorporating the grassroots as much as possible, promoting assemblies and promoting local organization.

4. All the trade union centrals and federations in Venezuela, those that support the government and those that do not, are bosses' organizations that divide and demobilize the workers. But there are grassroots unions which, even though they are affiliated to these

the so-called "patriotic pole" is nothing more than an amalgam of bourgeois and reactionary currents, from which the working class can expect nothing but demagoguery, deceit, corruption, repression and anti-worker measures.

Meanwhile a delegation of the ILO visited Venezuela to bring together the tripartite government - employers - unions. Only the CSBT, ASI and CTV were given access to the meetings with the ILO. The other trade union centers were left out; but nothing would change if they gave access to the rest of the trade union centers. In this "tripartite" mechanism, all parties represent one: the capitalist, public and private businessmen. In this way, the Venezuelan government is moving towards the reactivation of the tripartite mechanism in wage setting, which is applied in a good part of the world. In the debate on the wage increase, the blackmail that the wage increase will bring with it a spike in inflation is being used; and in this way this tripartite alliance of government-employers-unions, unites to continue depositing the weight of the economic crisis on the shoulders of the workers. The representative of the Venezuelan businessmen in the ILO and in the Tripartite stated that "neither the businessmen nor the Government can pay a (minimum) wage of US\$430". But this cynical alliance Government-Businessmen-Union has not lifted a finger to adjust the current minimum wage of US\$15 per month. And this starvation wage is supported by all the opportunist groups and parties, by all the vote seekers who call for the rescue of the homeland and the national economy, so that the few live well, surrounded by leisure and privileges, and the great majorities sink into the abyss of misery, hunger and disease.

The reality, between parties, announcements of "economic recovery" (repeated to exhaustion by all the media and social networks) and arrogance, mistreatment and repression towards workers who mobilize and make claims, is that another year of miserable salaries is coming to an end for the workers, of lack of access to health services, of non-compliance of the government and the bosses with the payment of debts contracted with the active and retired workers and of significant masses subjected to unemployment or to precarious "jobs" or pushed to migration to be subjected to over-exploitation by the capitalists in other countries. The only way out is the struggle of the workers, and this struggle must be taken up in a united way and with the broadest participation of the rank and file of the wage earners in all the workplaces and in the streets.

In this sense it is important to:

1. To maintain and broaden class unity without distinction of party or union affiliation. No matter the trade or level of qualification of the worker, no matter what economic activity or branch of industry is worked, no matter the nationality, no matter if we work in the public or private

followed those of October 18, 2021 and May 20, 2022, and made two proposals:

- That regional or inter-regional demonstrations be held on the day of the strike, so that on the one hand they could concentrate forces a little, and on the other hand allow for easier participation of striking workers in the demonstrations, better than could happen with a national demonstration;

- that the preparation of the strike be as unified as its proclamation, and that for this purpose the assembly give a mandate to set up in each city "unitary territorial strike committees" - open to all workers and trade union bodies that supported the strike - which would take charge of preparing it with territorial assemblies, posters, leaflets; this was also to serve to broaden the unity of action of conflict unionism beyond the perimeter of Rank and File unionism, involving the combative workers' groups still framed in the regime unions and the class union areas in CGIL.

Nearly all subsequent speeches, including those by various national leaders, had rejected-explicitly or implicitly-the two proposals. What had emerged from them was little concern about the problem, obviously crucial in a strike, of getting the broadest possible wage-earning masses to join it, and to that extent the proposal for the formation of unitary territorial strike committees had been ignored. The strike would be prepared "each union for itself."

Nor had consideration been given to the problem of involving combative workers in the regime unions and class union areas in CGIL. Instead, more emphasis had been given to seeking the participation in the demonstration-which was to be national-of the so-called social, inter-class movements. The central goal was the success, in terms of numbers, of the national demonstration, in order to gain so-called visibility.

In addition to this, all the Rank and File unions except SI COBAS-thus USB, CUB, Confederazione COBAS, SGB and other minor ones-stipulated that they would organize a national demonstration in Rome on the very day of the strike, Friday, December 2. The SI COBAS, on the other hand, would organize a national demonstration, also in Rome, but the next day.

The assembly had then given instructions to participate, in order to promote the general strike, in two already scheduled

Kolivar were certainly sensational, the fact that it is the leaders of such middle class organizations, rather than the leaders of actual workers' organizations such as DISK, KESK and even the more militant small unions around Umut-Sen (Union of Hope) and İşçi Hareketi Koordinasyonu (Coordination of the Workers' Movement), demonstrates that the Turkish government is still hesitant of targeting the leaders of workers' unions directly, afraid of provoking workers' reaction.

Fincancı, like the rest of the leadership of DISK and KESK, is an opportunist, affiliated with a political party allied with Kurdish nationalists.

Especially Fincancı's arrest was protested in numerous Turkish and Kurdish cities by the local Labor and Democracy Forces, which are political front groups made up of leftist unions, professional associations and political parties. Without a doubt, the proletariat should be opposed to such political repression. However, the way forward is not a front of unions and opportunist parties from above, but an actually class-based front of workers' organizations, and workers' organizations only, from below, employing methods of class struggle rather than democratic protest against bourgeois repression.

Italy General Strike against the War economy. Fewer Weapons - Higher Wages!

ICP Preface:

The two days clearly showed the limits of the unitary course embarked upon for the past year and a half by the leaderships of Rank and File unionism, how because of their political opportunism they are incapable of following through to the end the increasingly urgent and necessary directive of the unity of action of combative unionism, and how therefore that unitary course is shaky, constantly in danger, always revocable.

On Saturday, October 15, at the national assembly convened in Milan by all the Rank and File unions to promote the strike, one of our comrades, speaking on behalf of the Coordinamento Lavoratori Autoconvocati (CLA), had welcomed the new united general strike that

planned strike. They picketed for two days and as a result, the provincial government rescinded the legislation banning the strike.

The liberal petty-bourgeoisie are crowing that this is the end of the post-war era of compromise between the government and the public sector unions in Canada. By "compromise", they mean defeat for the working class. Collaboration of any kind between labor and capital is suicidal for the working class. The bourgeois state, as we reiterate again and again, exists only to oppress the working class for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. If defeat has the appearance of compromise, it is only because bourgeois ideologies have captured the trade unions, making them into just another body of armed men organized against the working class. Now the economic crisis that began with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has incited workers everywhere to pull back the curtain, to see where this compromise, that collaboration, really leads them.

So with the head to head match between CUPE and the Ontario government undressed and out in the open, a tentative agreement has been proposed and voting on this agreement began November 11th. Despite this agreement being reached, many in CUPE feel the contract falls short of what has been asked. Leadership of CUPE has even claimed that the new agreement is the very same the government presented not two weeks prior. The back and forth has certainly not abated, and it will be difficult to tell what will transpire until after the voting period ends on December 17th.

But what we do know is: Union solidarity stopped state repression in its tracks. This knowledge should be taken up by American rail workers as well as the West Coast dockers. Union leaders, beholden to various political parties have spent years trying and failing to accomplish what the workers, acting as a class for their class, accomplished in a few days. With the communist party and the class union (which are the only expressions of the real unity of action of the working class), the working class can and will end the bourgeois state and its repression.

Bourgeois Repression in Turkey: Heads of the

Turkish Medical Association and the Bread Producers' Union Arrested

As the crisis increasingly dominates its national economy, the Turkish state has been increasing the level of repression in the country. The latest victims of this repression were Sebnem Korur Fincancı, the head of the Turkish Medical Association, and Cihan Kolivar, the head of the Bread Producers' Union.

Fincancı was arrested in late October following a statement she made on a television program on the claims that the Turkish Armed Forces used chemical weapons on PKK guerrillas. Fincancı said that the claims were worth investigating, and moreover, they seemed true based on the footage of the deceased guerrillas. President Erdoğan himself personally targeted Fincancı, saying she should pay for her words and also be replaced as the head of the Turkish Medical Association. The prosecutors and the police did not waste much time in charging Fincancı with terrorist propaganda and arresting her afterward. She is currently awaiting trial.

Kolivar was arrested in early November, again following a statement he made on a television program. Stating that bread was not a healthy food, Kolivar said societies fed by bread, such as the people of Turkey, are foolish and thus elect leaders like the Turkish government. Kolivar was charged with insulting the Turkish people, its president, and bread itself, and put in prison. Kolivar was released soon after, above all because he'd merely offended the current Turkish government rather than expose the Turkish national state like Fincancı, however his trial will continue.

Although the Turkish Medical Association, along with the Union of Turkish Engineers' and Architects' Chambers, has long stood with DISK (Confederation of Progressive Workers Unions) and KESK (Confederation of Public Employees' Unions) and taken part in strikes in the medical sector, it is a professional organization rather than an actual union. As such, it includes proletarians as well as doctors who own their own practices. As for the Bread Producers' Union, it too is not an actual workers' union but an organization of small bakery owners. While the statements of Fincancı and

production comes online, then, prices will begin to fall, as the supply increases. This will result in reduced profits. Additionally, harvest season for corn (maize) is approaching, which will impose its own pressures on shipping.

The problem shows no sign of abating in the near future. Even if rainfall levels were to increase suddenly, drought-parched soil would absorb most of it. Further, there is such thing as too much rain. The soil is only capable of handling so much water, and it needs time to percolate down from the surface so as not to wash away the topsoil and refill the aquifers and springs. These rivers and the soils that grow the crops transported on them also rely heavily on spring snow melts to supply water, which, if absent, would further compound the problem.

The bourgeoisie, however, is unwilling to take the steps necessary to mitigate this problem. The great capitalist powers remain locked into fossil fuels, especially petrochemicals, as a huge source of their profits and rents.

It is not only energy that is obtained from oil but the chemicals for fertilizers as well. The warming caused by fossil fuel emissions, along with the disruption of the nitrogen cycle caused by overuse of fertilizers, has severely disrupted the natural climactic cycles that sustain life on this planet. The destruction of the trillions of dollars of capital investment in this industry is unthinkable; too much money is at stake to transition. While negative carbon emissions and restoration of the nitrogen cycle (to facilitate the growth of plants to capture carbon) are necessary to avert catastrophe, the bourgeoisie insists that that we must consume more and more commodities so that their cycle of accumulation can continue without interruption. It is clear that capital will continue to valorize itself at the expense of the environment and human need.

Only communist revolution can lead us out of this dead-end course.

ICP Leaflet:

Venezuela: Unity of action of the workers against capitalist exploitation. For wages, pensions and retirement pensions that are enough to live on!

For the reduction of the working day!!!

For health and safety at work and medical attention and medicines!!!!

For freedom for the workers imprisoned for demonstrating for their demands!!!

Although workers in Venezuela have not yet finished multiplying and broadening their struggles, some advances have been made that should be highlighted.

A greater quantitative participation of active workers in the street protests has been observed, considering that previously they tended to dominate the protest actions of retired and pensioned workers. This is an expression, not only of the loss of fear in the face of labor and State terrorism, but also of manifestations of discontent and disillusionment with the promises of the government, politicians and businessmen about a welfare that, as a consequence of the "economic recovery" would be reflected in an increase of jobs and improvement of salaries, but benefits that have only reached a minority who are getting richer, while said "economic recovery" has only been reflected in a deterioration of the standard of living of salaried workers. This has been expressed in small signs of a break with apathy and conformism.

- Grassroots mobilization of workers to demand their demands. The main verification of this was observed in the massive protest rallies of public education and health workers, through which the government was able to get the government to pay the Vacation Bonus to educators. What was relevant in these actions was that the rank and file of the teachers' union workers mobilized outside the

control of the union federations. Only a small group of leaders and grassroots unions had been carrying out agitations and calls for workers' struggle and this facilitated the channeling of the discontent of this sector of public workers. But none of the leaderships of the trade union centrals and federations can take credit for these demonstrations which led to the partial defeat of the government. It is also worth mentioning the strikes carried out by metallurgical workers and workers of the basic enterprises of Guayana, which were decided and directed by the workers' base assemblies and not by the union leaderships; actions which later ended up being stopped by the politicians, the dubious "negotiation tables" and repression.

The workers' movement in Venezuela continues, however, to present a set of limitations that weaken it in its vindictive confrontation against the bosses and the Venezuelan bourgeois government.

There are a number of factors that limit the growth of workers' struggles.

- There is a great division in the movement of the salaried workers, mainly among the workers of the public sector, imposed by decades of bosses' actions of the trade union centrals and federations that group together the different unions. Both the new and old trade union centrals and federations of workers in Venezuela operate as allies of the bosses and only lead some struggles when dissatisfied workers break with their passivity and get out of control. The CTV, CUTV, CODESA, CGT, ASI, UNETE and CSBT and the federations that each one groups together, divide the workers, demobilize them and keep them subjected to the labor peace that allows the bosses to maintain and deepen the exploitation of wage labor. Likewise, the majority of the rank and file unions affiliated to these trade union centers operate in a bosses' way and only, as an exception, some rank and file unions break out of their control and promote agitation and the struggle for demands. Hence, if the movement of salaried workers needs to react with struggle, it has to confront a union structure that divides it, demobilizes it and betrays it,

- The centrals, federations and unions are controlled by different opportunist political currents that constantly

incorporate bourgeois and non-proletarian demands in their demands. These political currents call on the workers to defend the operational continuity and the profits of the enterprises, to defend the national economy, to defend the homeland, to defend parliamentary democracy, to offer the workers as cannon fodder in the imperialist wars.

- The workers' movement is also subjected to the confusion brought about by the struggle of the pro-government parties and the opposition parties vying for control of the government in elections of mayors, councilors, governors, deputies and president of the republic. These parties have a presence in the workers' movement to use their discontent and struggles to serve the political interests of any of the opposing sides. Any political movement that calls on the workers to vote in the different electoral processes of Venezuelan bourgeois democracy must be seen by the workers as an agent of the boss and of capitalist exploitation.

- Currently the workers' movement has limited itself to demanding compliance with the crumbs that are established in different collective bargaining agreements and does not end up aligning itself with the struggle for a salary and benefits in accordance with the demands of daily life and the impact of inflation. Even part of the movement demands the payment of certain bonuses and falls with this into the cruel game of the bourgeois government.

The government is trying to prevent the further growth of workers' mobilization and protest by combining demagogic offers (which are still miserable and which it will still not fulfill without workers' pressure), with the implementation of a national program of musical events, shows and fairs and with the application of terrorism and repression. But it is necessary that workers' agitation and mobilization be imposed and that the workers organize at the base and locally so that they break with the division and demobilization promoted by the central unions and federations.

The height of the CSBT's servility could be seen when at the end of September it announced that the government would pay Christmas bonuses and benefits in four (4) parts, arguing that the workers of the public sector payroll had to be protected from the effect of inflation. It was not the top government officials who made this cynical and ruthless announcement, but rather it was the trade unionists who showed their faces with this announcement. This is one of the many signs of the commitment of the trade union confederations to the capitalist bosses. And although some voices of the trade union movement have opposed this measure, it was put into effect; with which the exploitative viciousness reaches levels not reached by previous governments and is a clear sign that in

Venezuela there is no socialism but savage capitalism and is another sign that Chavismo and

national demonstrations, on October 22 in Bologna and November 5 in Naples.

In the following weeks, however, the leadership of the Rank and File unions partially changed their minds: on the one hand, they decided to converge on the national demonstration called by SI COBAS for December 3, and on the other hand, to organize local demonstrations on the day of the strike.

This change of directive was positive in that it eliminated the dastardly organization of two separate national demonstrations on two days, converging instead on a single demonstration, and also because it gave a mandate to organize local demonstrations.

However, on the one hand these hesitations and changes of directions negatively affected the already not easy preparation of the strike, and on the other hand the double day of mobilizations, local and national, ended up weakened one a little bit the other.

Local demonstrations on the day of the strike generally had a worse outcome than last year, with the exception of the one in Florence.

The SI COBAS - which held the largest number of preparatory assemblies at workplaces-organized pickets in front of logistics warehouses and at other companies to prevent scabs, thereby making the strike successful in logistics, and did not participate in the city processions, except with delegations and with the exception of Viterbo, where it joined the united union procession. In Rome, on the other hand, the base unions were divided into several garrisons under various ministries, without organizing a united procession.

The strike succeeded, as mentioned, in logistics and partially in transport, where local and category disputes already in place played out: well among railroaders in northern regions, gradually less so going down into central Italy and the south; successful in spots among tramway workers. In the rest of the working class it was, as in previous attempts in years past, largely in the minority.

On the whole, once again the Rank and File unions failed to break through the cloak of working-class passivity--the result of decades of orchestrated defeats by regime unionism and their daily action in the workplace--by presenting themselves as a credible instrument with which to act collectively to demonstrate

and fight the problems that workers complain about.

Determining this situation are, on the one hand, the malaise resulting from worsening living conditions that is not yet such as to trigger struggles that spontaneously break such a shroud, except sporadically; on the other hand, the shortcomings and mistakes of the Rank and File unions.

However, a good base of workers organized by confrontational unionism exists, as the national demonstration in Rome the day after the strike showed.

It was a procession with a clear class character, made up of 90 percent workers, totaling at least 8,000 people (6,000 according to the Questura), which followed the classic route of the CGIL's trade union processions, landing in the large Piazza San Giovanni, usually used by the major regime union for its final psalms, which, however, in its last demonstration on Oct. 8 chose the smaller Piazza del Popolo instead.

Among the Rank and File unions, the largely majority part of the procession was made up of the two large sections of SI COBAS, first, and then USB. In between the two was the smaller one from the SGB. Absent were the COBAS Confederation, CUB, ADL COBAS and the former GKN Factory Collective.

This good result was unfortunately damaged, in addition to the absences of the above organizations, by the conduct of the leaderships of SI COBAS and USB, who in the days leading up to the demonstration clashed no less than around who should hold the lead in the procession.

The result was that the USB section kept its distance from the first half of the procession and, more importantly, that while the SI COBAS section entered St. John's Square, the USB section stopped 500 meters before, thus two separate rallies were held, and finally the workers were even made to flow down two separate streets!

Our comrades, who attended in good numbers to spread the party's press and the leaflet calling for a "single class union front," witnessed the concrete and practical manifestation of the division of the workers' struggle carried out by opportunist union leaderships. To see thousands of workers on one side and miles on the other was painful and cause for anger.

If the entire procession had converged on St. John's Square, the result would have

stood comparison with the CGIL mobilizations of recent years. This is all the more so if the absent Rank and File unions had joined in. In this way, the leaderships of SI COBAS and USB also damaged what was their proclaimed goal of media visibility.

In any case, the free, democratic... and bourgeois press dropped complete censorship on the procession of 8,000 workers who marched through Rome behind the slogan "Let's lower the guns, let's raise the wages!"; demonstrating how democracy is the best political shell of the bourgeois regime.

A full square, however, filled not only by half the procession and, possibly, still with daylight, would have been more difficult to ignore and hide and would have had a greater effect in working to circulate the news of the mobilization's success with the tools available to the confrontational unions, which today are basically the so-called "social" ones.

The reason for this conduct of the leaderships of the two largest Rank and File unions lies in their opportunist political and trade union action: if they have no guarantee of controlling or turning out to be the majority force in a struggle action, they prefer to divide and weaken it. It is a conduct that is the child of the petty-mindedness of their conception of the development of the working class struggle movement, typical of the Movementist groups of the 1970s, from which the leading groups come, according to which the political organization--each its own--should retain the leadership of the labor movement from its earliest steps to the apogee of its strength. But in order to achieve this impossible goal, the labor movement is divided, with the result of damaging and retarding its development.

The communist conception of the development of the struggle of the working class does not navigate so blindly and with such a short-sighted strategy. We know that in the labor movement one inevitably has to fight opportunist directives, which are generally in the majority and whose defeat will be possible only by approaching the revolutionary stage of the struggle between classes.

Moreover, we work and live in the sure conviction that the stronger the economic struggle movement of the proletarian class the more favorable are the conditions

for the development of the party and for its battle to win the leadership of the labor movement, a goal proclaimed in the light of day and not pursued by petty means of an organizational nature.

Everything must therefore be subordinated to strengthening the economic, trade union, workers' struggle movement. In the face of the foreseeable attempt of an opportunist union leadership to demand the head of a trade union march, or other dastardly deeds, we, finding ourselves in the leadership of a trade union body, would have nothing to object to, being interested in the unity of the workers in the struggle, confident that this will lead tomorrow to ousting that opportunist leadership group from their position of leadership.

The confirmation of these two days of mobilization is that real, complete, united action of confrontational trade unionism is possible only by organizing the base of these unions, uniting and coordinating union militants aware of this need, forcing the leaderships into it, and it will only be realized definitively to their detriment.

ICP LEAFLET

Rome, Saturday, December 3, 2022

For a united trade union class front !

For the second consecutive year, the leadership of the rank and file unions have called a united general strike, putting aside the divisions that had prevented it in previous years. This is an important step in the direction of the unity of action of combative unionism that is one of the elements necessary for workers to regain confidence in collective action.

The problem of workers' distrust of trade union struggle is international, but while in some countries--such as England and France--strike movements have developed in recent months in defense of wages against the high cost of living, in Italy, despite the fact that there are on average lower wages than in those countries, workers are still prisoners of individualism, distrust, and resignation.

This condition is the result of decades of regime unionism (CGIL, CISL, UIL, UGL) that has produced only defeats for the working class: counter-reforms of the labor market--which have made precariousness rampant--and of the welfare system, to which

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- Portland, OR - First Saturdays at Honey Latte Cafe, 1033 SE Madison: 11 am.
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they have not opposed any real fighting action; contract renewals that are always losing.

The rank and file unions, however, have failed to channel distrust of the regime unions into strengthening class unionism. Several factors have caused this, one of which has certainly been the conduct of the leadership of rank and file unionism that has divided workers' actions: since 2008 - the year of the new decisive leap forward of capitalism's global economic crisis of overproduction - for 13 years, while the bourgeoisie and its political regime - with governments of different colors but all anti-worker - unloaded the economic crisis on the workers, the leadership of the major rank and file unions fought with each other, hindering the formation of a credible trade union alternative to fight the wage-earning masses.

The new course taken by the leadership of the rank and file unions, with the proclamation of united general strikes, is therefore an important first step in the right direction, which should be welcomed and supported. Nevertheless, it is still wholly insufficient to address the increasingly serious situation in which the working class finds itself:

- as unified as the proclamation of the general strike is, likewise its preparation must be unified! The strike must be prepared in the workplaces where each rank and file union is present, with assemblies, but also, in each city, by forming unitary territorial strike committees, open to all workers' bodies and to all workers who wish to support it; moreover, the general strike must be complemented by demonstrations of a city-wide nature, at most regional or interregional, which encourage workers' participation much better than is the case with national demonstrations;

- the mandate to set up unitary territorial strike committees in each city must also be aimed at the involvement in the general strike of the groups of combative workers still framed in the regime unions and the minority class union areas within the CGIL: unity of union action must go beyond the perimeter of rank and file unionism and extend to all combative unionism!

- unity of action cannot be limited to the proclamation of the general strike but must permeate daily trade union activity at all its levels: company, territorial, industry and inter-industry! It is necessary, for example, to define unitary contract platforms. Only on the basis of a practice inspired by these principles and protracted over time will it be possible to build that Single Class Union Front necessary to foster the return to struggle of the

proletarian masses and to organize a general movement for their immediate goals:

- good wage increases, larger for the worst paid categories and qualifications!
- generalized reduction of hours for equal wages!
- full wages for unemployed workers!
- reduction of the retirement age!
- abolition of all laws and agreements against full freedom of strike and union organization!
- full equal rights for immigrant workers!
- rejection of all repressive maneuvers against class unionism!
- renouncing of all actions supporting one side in imperialist wars!

The return to the trade union struggle of the workers is the necessary basis for the strengthening of their political party, which is the authentically communist one, therefore revolutionary and internationalist, which stands on the political line that from Marx goes to Lenin and the Italian Communist Left that founded the Communist Party of Italy, which fought against the Stalinist counterrevolution, in Italy impersonated by the Togliotti's PCI, and which kept intact the red thread of the revolution with the foundation of the International Communist Party!

In Germany, too, regime unionism underwrites wage increases below the rate of inflation

Germany's largest industrial union, IG Metall, with 3.8 million members mainly in the automotive and machine tool sectors, signed a wage agreement with industrialists on Friday, November 18. The previous one dated from 2018.

The deal initially applies only to Baden-Württemberg, the third most populous Land (state) of the sixteen that make up the Federal Republic of Germany, and whose major cities include Stuttgart, Mannheim, Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Ulm and Heilbronn; it is, however, likely to be extended nationwide.

The agreement calls for an 8.5 percent wage increase over two years; 5.2% percent next year and 3.3% in 2024; plus there is a one-off tax-free payment of €3,000.

This increase is well below the rate of inflation, which is currently 10.4% in Germany in general, but with higher rates applying to food and energy commodities that naturally affect working-class consumption the most.

Inflation is expected to drop in the next two years, but this is by no means certain. What's more, the old contract expired in September, and the first increase of 5.2% will not come until June 2023.

On September 14, IG Metall's leadership submitted a request for an 8% increase for 2023 alone in its first meeting with the employers' federation, Gesamtmetall. "Our patience is wearing thin. The industrialists must take responsibility and make a concrete offer," thundered Jörg Hofmann, secretary of IG Metall, after the failure of the fourth round of negotiations, threatening strike action.

But at the fifth meeting, held in Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart, he finally accepted a significantly lower deal.

This will not even have to be submitted to a vote of the membership, since, according to IG Metall's rules, this is only mandatory if workers have previously been called to vote on whether to proceed with a general strike action in the category, which did not happen.

The agreement followed a series of local strikes and demonstrations, which were not unified by the union into a general movement across the country.

Thousands of workers participated in a "day of action on the seaboard" in northern Germany on Wednesday, November 16.

This involved strikes in 13 northern cities. In Hamburg, some 26,000 workers went on strike from 80 companies, including Airbus, Arcelor Mittal, Philips and Jungheinrich, while 5,000 gathered for a rally at Hamburg's Fish Market. In Hanover and Osnabrück 7,000 rallied; in Bremen 2,500; in Kiel 1,500; in Rostock 800.

Warning strikes, lasting only a few hours, were called at various factories: Liebherr, Neptun Werft, Caterpillar, Otis Aufzüge, and Siemens in Rostock. Elsewhere in Germany, 1,800 BMW workers went on strike in Leipzig; in the Feuerbach industrial district of Stuttgart, about 2,000 workers struck at Robert Bosch GmbH, Coperion, Mahle, Koenig & Bauer MetalPrint, Voith, Lapp and many other factories; more than 72,000 workers from 578 companies in Germany's largest state, North Rhine-Westphalia, had been taking part in warning strikes for two weeks since the end of October. Participatory assemblies took place at factories in Arnsberg, Bielefeld, Duisburg, Mülheim, Gelsenkirchen, Essen, and Oberhausen.

The management of IG Metall only threatened 24-hour strike action but showed no real intention to unify and extend the strike movement. Many workers, however, called for the organization of an indefinite strike and the demand for a 15 percent raise, which would be heeded to

restore real wages.

The role of regime unionism was candidly described by the Italian bourgeoisie's newspaper *par excellence* – the *Corriere della Sera* in a November 27 article devoted to a comparison of the wage situation in Italy with that in Germany, with particular reference to the agreement just signed by IG Metall: "What does Germany teach us? There is three-way agreement. The unions restrain wage increases, which are kept lower than the movement in prices of more than 10 percent. Businesses secure employment and investment. The government applies fiscal leverage..." Of course, the only function guaranteed among these three is that of the regime unions vis-a-vis workers, while employers and government are more than free not to comply. "Regime unionism" in Germany dates all the way back to the Stinnes-Légien-Abkommen of November 15, 1918, designed to contain working class militancy after the First World War.

Meanwhile, the bourgeois regime in Berlin raised the minimum wage to 12 euros per hour on Oct. 12, and state civil service workers got a 10.5 percent raise in some Länder (states) with a 500-euro anti-inflation bonus.

The strength of German imperialism – among the most powerful in the world – still allows its ruling class, aided by regime unionism, to keep the working class pacified. But this situation is destined not to continue, due to the inexorable advance and deepening of global capitalism's historic economic crisis of overproduction.

The working class in Germany will also return to struggle alongside its class brothers around the world!

US: The Electoral Circus is Back in Town

November 8 was the date of the midterm election in the United States, in which American citizens were called upon to vote for their preferred representatives at the federal, state, and local levels.

And calling is exactly what the bourgeoisie has done. From every direction, the elements of bourgeois society scream at citizens to fulfill their alleged civic duty: vote! Volunteers canvass neighborhoods and register people to vote at community events. Your family, your boss, and your landlord all pressure you to cast your ballot.

Bourgeois political parties and

The FTM CGT has 60,000 members, it is the third category federation of the CGT and is one of the pillars of the line of class

collaboration of this regime union. It was one of the most timid to join and organize the inter-professional strikes of September 29, October 18 and 27.

Airbus and Aeronautics Subcontractors

On Thursday, October 6, for the first time in the company's history, workers at Sabena Technics, which works under contract to Airbus, went on strike. The company is located in the so-called Blagnac-Cornebarrieu aeronautical basin, near Toulouse, one of the main industrial districts in France.

The strike was promoted jointly by Force Ouvrière and CGT to obtain a bonus increase in line with the other aviation subcontractors in the basin. All workers, including temporary workers, took part and it lasted four days, until 10 October.

The strikers were able to count on the experience of the former workers of ATE, a company that had closed down and from which several workers had come, who had already gone on strike against their former management. This allowed, for example, to have a well-organized picket line from the first day and to distribute leaflets to the workers of this large industrial concentration.

The strike was thus an opportunity to forge links with trade union activists from other companies in the industry, such as Satys, AHG or the client Airbus.

On Wednesday 12 October, several dozen workers from Daher Logistics in Toulouse, a logistics company that subcontracts for Airbus, transporting parts for assembly, went on strike. The demands were for a 10% wage increase and a 1000 euro bonus and the strike lasted three days.

A strike began on Tuesday 18 October at the FAL A320 in Toulouse, the plant where the final assembly (Final Assembly Line) of the Airbus 320, the European manufacturer's best-selling aircraft model, is carried out.

The demand was the same as for the petrochemicals, a 10% increase. The strike was supported by the majority of the workers and supported by the factory CGT but opposed by the Force Ouvrière factory structure – the majority of

workers at the plant – by the group structure (FO Airbus) and by the trade federation FO Metallurgy Federation.

This was in apparent opposition to the confederal leadership of Force Ouvrière which had that day joined the inter-professional strike together with CGT and Solidari SUD. The strike lasted three days, interrupted by the assembly on the afternoon of Thursday, October 20.

Workers at the Atelier Industriel de l'Aéronautique, (AIA) in Clermont-Ferrand, in central France 159 km west of Lyon, which works for the French armed forces, also went on strike on 18 October.

Since Friday 21 October, Daher workers at Bordes, Tarnos, Le Haillan, St Médard en Jalles and Rosny sur Seine have been on strike, demanding 5% wage increases. While the strike at Daher Logistic in Toulouse had involved a few dozen workers but remained isolated, now the movement involved hundreds of workers on five sites, was nationwide, but lowering the wage claim from 10% to 5%.

The strike lasted for 5 days. It was particularly strong in Bordes, where the workers of Saran, where helicopters are assembled, joined in. Nearly 500 strikers gathered each day in front of the plant.

A strike began on Tuesday 25 October at the Villefranche-de-Rouergue (Aveyron) plant of Blanc Aero, a manufacturer of aeronautical fasteners, owned by Lisi Aerospace, a metalworking giant with 21 production sites in 9 countries.

After an NAO (Compulsory Annual Negotiation) meeting organised on 18 October, the CGT had set an information assembly for the workers on Monday 24. At the end of this meeting, the evening shift workers walked off the job at 10 p.m., with 95% of them on strike. The strike was then extended to the morning shift and then to the afternoon and evening shifts. Prior to the strike, the CGT had conducted a consultation to demand an increase of €220 gross. The management's proposals fell far short of the workers' expectations.

These different struggles raised the question of the unity of the workers of the entire aviation production chain, which in recent decades has been divided sol the subcontracting system. The mutual support between the strikers Daher and Safran at

Bordes was a first step in this direction.

Other strikes

From 19 October to 27 October, a strike has affected the industrial bakery giant Neuhauser, first in the two main factories of Maubeuge, on the border with Belgium, and Folschviller, in the department of Moselle on the border with Germany, then extending to four other factories, for a total of six out of eleven factories on strike.

The strike had repercussions on the distribution sector, as denounced by the director of human resources of the Lidl group in France. The workers finally got a bonus of one thousand euros.

Ten days of strikes have hit EDF, the state-owned electricity generation and distribution company. 14 out of 18 nuclear power plants, 24 out of 58 reactors were affected. Workers finally got a 200 euro raise.

On Tuesday 25 October, a week-long strike began at the private clinic of "Toutes Aures", near Bordeaux. Most of the workers are women and precarious workers, very young and they went on strike for the first time. A nurse in the night shift is alone to assist 30 patients. Because of the strike, the entire operating room schedule was cancelled, i.e. more than 300 operations.

Several RATP depots in the Ile-de-France (the Paris region), SNCF sites (the Landy technical center, the Gare de Lyon) also went on strike. Worldline, the company specializing in electronic payments that is part of the CAC40, had many sites affected by strikes. Workers at the Geodis logistics center in Gennevilliers, near Paris, have been on all-out strike since October 17.

Other strikes affected workers at Ari Liquid (industrial gases), Leroy Merlin, Ponticelli Frères (industrial piping and boilers).

Capitalist Climate Change Threatens Agricultural Profits and Supply Chains

While the United States federal government and the Class I Railroads attempt to avert a disruption to supply chains caused by an unruly labor force, another looming menace threatens to cause further havoc to the economy. The Mississippi River, the United States' great artery of commerce, is suffering from a

lack of rainfall, leaving barges stranded as it reaches its lowest levels in 40 years. Water levels in Memphis, Tennessee, a major logistics hub, were at nearly 11 feet below average, and the time it takes a barge, the preferred mode of transport for most crops, to travel from St. Louis, the central hub of commerce along the river due to its position at the mouth of the Missouri River, to New Orleans, sitting at the mouth of the river on the Gulf of Mexico, has doubled.

In addition to the increased travel times, the number of barges that a given tug can push has decreased due to limitations in the channel width created by the low water, and those barges must be laden more lightly lest they run aground. Whereas before a typical pack might consist of 40 barges, now the limit is 25, and the maximum draft anyone dares load is nine feet as compared to the previous twelve to fourteen on the lower Mississippi. To explain the significance to the flow of agricultural commodities, the following figures must be kept in mind: a typical barge can be loaded with 1,500 short tons (approximately 1,361 metric tonnes or 1,339 long tons), which is 50,000 bushels of soybeans; each reduced foot of draft reduces the amount that a barge can carry by 150-200 short tons (136-181 metric tonnes or 134-179 long tons). Each tow, therefore, has its capacity reduced by 25-30%.

To compensate for the decreased depth, and to facilitate the flow of commodities along this critical infrastructure, the US Army Corps of Engineers in October began dredging the bottom, and constructed a mud berm on the river bottom to mitigate saltwater intrusion caused by the reduced freshwater flow, which further restricted traffic; while this was going on, it was only possible to safely travel along the Mississippi by day, and traffic around the berm area is one-way only. This has resulted in over 1,000 barges being stuck while they wait for an opportunity to move. Consequently, the spot rate for barge transport at the end of October fell from a peak of \$105.85 to \$75.28, a decrease of nearly 30%. While this is still high relative to recent years, even a short-term decrease in revenues can ruin a firm.

It's important for US agricultural concerns to be able to ship their commodities to the international market while the southern hemisphere – particularly South America – is still in winter. The largest producer of soybeans in the world is Brazil, and their planting season begins in September; the beans can be ready to harvest in as few as 66 days, with the average being 116 days, or nearly 4 months. As Brazilian

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between companies and categories, but for the time being the action of the collaborationist leadership of the CGT, that of the openly collaborationist, pro-regime unions such as the CFTD (the largest confederation in the private sector), CFTC and CFE-CGC, and the repressive action of the French bourgeois state have been sufficient to stop it from converging and growing into a general movement.

The most important strike, that of the workers at Exxon Mobil and Total petrochemicals, which lasted between 22 and 35 days depending on the plant, was organized by the FNIC CGT, while the CFTD – the majority unions in both groups – sabotaged it from the beginning, along with the CFE-CGC, the confederation of managers and professionals. The FNIC CGT asked for the support of the confederated CGT by extending the strike for wage increases to other categories.

The confederated leadership of the CGT did not deny this support but deployed mobilizations that were more symbolic than real tests of strength. It proclaimed a first day of cross-category mobilization on Thursday 29 September, two more on Tuesday 18 October and Thursday 27 October, and a fourth on Thursday 10 November.

The first of these was called not only by the CGT, but also by Solidaires SUD and FSU (Fédération Syndicale Unitaire). The one of October 18 was joined by Force Ouvrière. That of 27 October was called by the CGT alone, as was that of 10 November which, despite a successful strike in transport, particularly at RATP, mobilized few workers.

CGT – Collaborationist leadership, combative sectors

The most combative sections of the CGT have denounced the lack of serious preparation by the leadership, which has focused on demonstrations instead of strikes, which places the bargaining table and not the struggle as the pivot of its action – a collaborationist approach. The more combative sectors of the CGT correctly argue that the general strike, in order to gain strength, should not be limited to one day, but should also be "renewable", that is, without a predetermined deadline.

For some time now – since the end of the control of the bogus French Communist Party (PCF) over this union, at the turn of the century – the CGT no longer has the characteristic of a centralized organization, and the territorial, company and sectoral structures have been left with a great deal of autonomy. The decisions taken by the collaborationist confederal leadership are in no

way binding. This, on the one hand, has allowed the development of combative groups and sectors within the union, but on the other hand prevents the organization of real general actions.

The collaborationist leadership of the confederation, headed since 2015 by Philippe Martinez, formerly head of the collaborationist metalworkers' federation FTM CGT, convenes general actions without organizing them, justifying itself with the claim that the impetus for their success must come from the base. With the loss of the leadership's ability to firmly control the grassroots through a sufficiently robust tradition and political organization that is falsely workers' as the PCF was, this disarticulation of the union machinery plays in its favor. That this is just a strategy to keep the union on the tracks of class collaborationism is confirmed by the affair of the CGT PSA at the Poissy factory, which we report on below.

Naturally the bosses used this to depict the striking workers as a minority of extremists undermining the "right to work" of the majority of workers and "holding the country to ransom".

But these were still substantial minorities of workers, and a sufficiently organized and robust minority of workers can conduct victorious strikes, drawing undecided fellow-workers along with them and rendering the scabs impotent. By contrast, the democratic principle that you must first build a "majority" only weakens the momentum of the struggle.

At Exxon Mobil and Total the CFTD and CFE-CGC confederations waited until the strike showed signs of weakening, at which point they concluded wage agreements that fell short of the strikers' demands, but which effectively ended the strike at most plants. After the strike ended, they took credit for the wage increases, claiming that they were the result of the negotiations and not of the strike. This is a practice similar to that observed many times in Italy, by CGIL Cisl and Uil against SI Cobas, even if with smaller scale struggles.

Below are brief descriptions of the major strikes.

Exxon and Total Petrochemicals

At Esso-Exxon Mobile the strike began on 20 September, promoted by the CGT, a minority in the group. On 27 September, the federation of workers in the chemicals sector, the FNIC CGT, extended the strike to TotalEnergie, where the strike was joined by 70% of workers at fuel depots and refineries, including the Normandy refinery, the largest in the

country. Workers from contracting companies also joined the strike. The workers have demanded a 10% increase, the unblocking of recruitment and investment in maintenance and renovation of plants now obsolete.

Over the past 30 years, two thirds of the refineries in France have closed and only seven remain. The plants have not been renovated. Companies make the maximum profit in the exploration-production process so that most of the profits are allocated – apart from paying dividends to shareholders – to investments in exploration, particularly offshore.

The strike had an impact on refinery and service station supplies and consequently on the entire national economy. Faced with the fuel shortages, the government decided on October 12 to resort to pre-call-outs at Exxon Mobil depots to unblock the departure of tanker trucks. The walkouts drew protests from CGT and FO union leaders, who denounced them as a violation of the right to strike. If the worker did not comply with the precepts, he was punishable by up to 6 months in prison and a fine of 10,000 euros.

This repressive action of the bourgeois state was accompanied by the action of the openly collaborationist trade unions who signed downward agreements with the companies.

On October 10, at Exxon Mobil, CFTD and CFE-CGC signed a wage agreement well below demands. On October 14, the assemblies decided to break the 23-day strike.

The next day, Saturday, October 15, the administrative courts validated the perceptions.

On October 13, while the strike continued in all the main plants, Total began negotiations with all the unions by giving a majority weight, in the delegations, to those not participating in the strike movement, namely CFTD and CFE-CGC. The next day these two unions signed a reduced settlement, with a 7% wage increase for 2022 and 2023.

The CGT Total delegates' coordination decided to continue the struggle, rejecting the agreement. The strike continued until 18 October – the second day of national mobilization proclaimed by the CGT, Force Ouvrière, Solidaire SUD and FSU – but was then broken off in the majority of plants, except at the Gonfreville-L'Orcher refinery in Normandy near Le Havre, the largest in the country, and at the Feyzin depot near Lyon, where it continued until 2 November!

PSA Stellantis and the Poissy CGT PSA affair

All factories of the PSA group (Pegout, Citroën, Stellantis), including the two

most important ones in Sochaux and Mulhouse – near the border with Switzerland and Germany – were hit by strikes on September 27 and 28 involving some 4,300 workers. French car factories had not seen similar strikes since 1989. The demands were again for wage increases.

While this first step was being taken towards the return to struggle of this important sector of the working class, the collaborationist leadership of the CGT's metallurgical federation, the FTM CGT, did not hesitate to sink an attack – begun in 2021 – against a combative sector of the union, represented by the CGT's factory structure at the PSA in Poissy.

This factory, located about 30 km northwest of Paris, has been in existence for 60 years. It first produced for Simca-Chrysler, then for PSA Peugeot-Citroën, and now for Stellantis and employs 3500 workers.

The factory CGT claims to have 270 members – some of whom are former workers from nearby PSA Aulnay who led a four-month strike against the plant's closure in 2013 – and has often clashed with the FTM CGT leadership.

In November 2021 the CGT PSA in Poissy convened an extraordinary congress of the factory structure: 193 union members and representatives of 12 of the 15 CGT factory sections of the PSA Stellantis group were present but the Federation leadership did not want to send its representatives. The congress confirmed confidence in the shop stewards.

A month later, the national leadership and the territorial (departmental) structure of the FTM CGT organized another congress attended by 137 members, including 56 from the CGT PSA in Poissy, which revoked the mandate of the Central Trade Union Delegate of the CGT factory Jean Pierre Mercier and, in open violation of the CGT statutes, created a new factory structure of the union.

Six months later, last June, an assembly of CGT delegates from the PSA Stellantis factories that took place at the FTM headquarters on the confederal CGT premises in Montreuil, near Paris, opposed by a large majority – 223 votes in favour and 31 against – the decision to revoke Jean Pierre Mercier's mandate.

The FTM management then decided to settle the matter by taking 16 delegates of the CGT PSA in Poissy to the administrative courts, requesting their exclusion from the union.

The court of Bobigny – near Paris – met on October 20 to address the issue. Outside the courthouse, a presidium was held in the presence of 500 delegates and members of the CGT, in support of the PSA factory section of Poissy. The decision of the court will be taken not earlier than 8 December.

regime trade unions insist that you exercise your right to vote. Schools, universities, and churches join in the chorus. In addition:

- All forms of news broadcasting – television, radio, and internet
- Paid advertisements – billboards by the interstate, posters on walls and poles, signs on the buses and the subway, TV and radio commercials, internet ads, etc.
- Newspapers, magazines, and journals
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, and so on
- Even internet search engines – Google says go vote!

Meanwhile, workers – especially those with lower wages – are much more likely not to vote than the average person. Polls prove this has little to do with disenfranchisement; non-voters simply do not believe voting will improve their everyday lives. What does it say about voting that such a large part of the ruling class advocates for it so earnestly, while the working class seems to have little interest in it?

Bourgeois political analysts and party staffers are always anxious about voter turnout. It's taken as a self-evident truth that the greater the percentage of the population that participates in the election, the better. But better for who?

Since a century and a half ago, for our movement, the existing democratic institutions have become a machine for holding down the proletariat. Workers' main problem is the misery of wage-labor: they are caught between the collapsing purchasing-power of their wages and looming unemployment. Many politicians ignore such "bread-and-butter" issues altogether; others, being demagogues, endlessly rant and debate about them, but never do anything to make an immediate, substantial change. A vote is a blank check for these leaders to continue the status quo; elections are nothing but a way of inducing the will of "the People," manufacturing consent for their own oppression and exploitation.

So to us communists, it is not at all obvious that high

turnout is good. On the contrary, we believe that the fewer workers who vote, the better. Indeed, when the working class sees through the illusion of bourgeois democracy and recognizes the necessity of revolutionary action, it will have no interest whatsoever in casting ballots.

Some argue that we should use the vote to create better conditions for revolutionary action, to elect the government we would rather struggle with.

Leaving aside the contradiction between voting for a government only to subsequently turn around and strive to overthrow it, we grant that some governments are easier to overthrow than others, although probably not for the same reasons as the advocates of voting have in mind. The bourgeoisie acts in its own interests: if it allows for apparent progress for some sections of the working class, then it must come in the form of a quid pro quo. A government that feigns friendliness to the workers – conceding certain rights and improvements in their living and working conditions, but only in exchange for dividing the working class and depriving it of its militancy and independence – is not as easy to oppose. When the velvet glove of democracy comes off, revealing the iron fist of fascism underneath, communists breathe a sigh of relief – at least then the workers see who the real enemy is, and instinctively struggle against it.

That is not to say that we buy into the alarmism of the left wing of the bourgeoisie which frames the competition between Republicans and Democrats in the US as a war between fascism and democracy: on the one hand, because right-wing populism in that country is more of a reaction of certain sections of the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat against globalization and modernization than an employers' counter-offensive; on the other, because the essential content of fascism – unification of the bourgeoisie and elimination of the working class's independence – have already been embraced by both sides.

It is not that we believe voting does nothing. Voting definitely accomplishes

certain things: it perpetuates illusions among the working class, and diverts precious, otherwise potentially dangerous energy towards relatively harmless channels, distracting workers from organizing a real struggle. This is democracy working just as intended by the bourgeoisie which keeps it alive. The modern ruling class has taken to heart an important lesson from the ruling class of antiquity: give the masses bread and circuses to stave off revolt.

Unfortunately for the bourgeoisie, bread is becoming scarce as the crisis of capital advances, and the spell they cast on the working class has already worn off, as suggested by their widespread, spontaneous abstention.

Before long, with the intervention of the proletariat's class party, the countless simple acts of individual workers not voting due to indifference turn to a positive action of the working class. Then, organized into a united class union front, workers will obtain whatever concessions are still possible under capitalism by the force of strikes that spread across the artificial divisions of nation, industry, trade, and company; fighting without illusions and without compromise.

October 15th 2022 Mobilization in Portugal

Saturday, on October 15th 2022, in Lisbon and Porto, the largest mobilization in two years in Portugal took place. The protest was organized and led by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), the old Stalinist Comintern party, as well as the trade union confederation which it controls, the CGTP, by far the biggest in Portugal, organizing around 80% or so of organized workers in Portugal.

The protest was against the almost entirely stagnant (even "frozen") wages of Portuguese workers while the prices of every single essential need, above all gas, reach ludicrous hikes, against increasing rent and speculation (Lisbon ranks as one of the most unlivable cities in the world) and the fact that while this increasing immiseration of the proletariat goes on, companies have been scoring record profits all across the board.

Thousands upon thousands of people attended, and we saw the presence of many CGTP unions, carrying their banners, of many sectors of workers. The demonstrators were overwhelmingly proletarian, poor and impoverished workers, as well as students. The age of the demonstrators included both the youth and average aged worker, as well as some pensioners and retirees. There was not much of a middle class presence.

One of the speakers, belonging to the PCP, said that "the last two years show that the Portuguese workers do not accept the degradation of wages and pensions, the attack on public services, at the same time as the economic groups and multinational corporations accumulate thousands of millions of euros in profits shares that for the most part, exit the country [!], and that just as the workers don't accept, neither does the PCP."

No anti-militarism at all, not of the petit-bourgeois hypocritical sort, the only talk of war was one of the slogans that was shouted: "No to war, yes to peace."

First, let's note this right off the bat: the fact that a PCP demonstration is the largest mobilization in the country in two years is of significance, because while it does point to the fact that class struggle is incredibly slow and weak in Portugal despite the poverty of the workers here, the famous "people of mild manners" (povo de brandos costumes) as the national saying goes, it also points out that its labor movement at the moment has some peculiarities: namely that one of the still ongoing, rotten Stalinist parties of the old Comintern can still manage such a mobilization of workers in the first place.

The PCP has a trick that it plays on the workers and that it hasn't failed them yet. It's very simple: it will support the ruling PS (Socialist Party – a Labourite type party, and the main party of the Portuguese bourgeoisie, after the fall of the fascist regime, since it's very birth) in parliamentary coalitions with the most rotten and ancient excuse of the Stalinists, the "danger from the Right".

Thus in Portugal, in the near total absence of militant unions (there exists one for dockers, historically a militant section of workers, which staged a large, real strike in 2019 and even won, against the PCP and its union—the CGTP, it should be noted), with the working class still trusting the old Communist Party to some extent, which is an entirely regime organ, fully integrated into the State machinery, and which thus will never attack the State of which it is a part of or the capitalist economy that that State serves. Class struggle finds itself in a "frozen" state, with no combative strikes at all and no revolts.

This was not a strike: it was not even pretending to be one, nor did it call itself one. It was a mobilization, purposefully marked on a weekend and lasting one day, only in two major urban centers (and indeed the PCP never organizes mobilizations other than on May 1st where they are a pure formality that lasts some 45 minutes), to pretend to compel parliament to allow those reformist programs to go through.

There was obviously no talk of revolution, and of course we wouldn't expect such a thing by any opportunistic parliamentary party like this, but there was not even talk of striking.

The workers were very receptive to this message, there was no visible discontent with the assertion that all the workers must do is show their discontent for the government to ease the burdens of the workers at the expense of some of the profits of the bourgeoisie and the entire mobilization and march was held with the usual servile obedience to parliamentary party discipline, with no assemblies for workers to discuss things, merely allowing their "representatives" to talk for them and shouting their pre-made slogans.

The fact that the PCP was compelled to organize such a mobilization, however, is itself proof of the growing discontent of the working masses, which the PCP decided to use for its own bourgeois purposes – though likely less because it could explode into something out of its control and more likely to maintain the duped workers' trust in it.

Needless to say that this demonstration will not change the attitude of the whole parliament who will no doubt turn down the incoming PCP reforms, just as they have done the last few years. How the workers will react to this is what is decisive, but with such a lack of militant trade-unionism, prospects remain rather pessimistic. We can certainly say that the Portuguese workers should learn from the example of their proletarian brothers across the border: loss of faith in democracy, and an at least substantial presence of the militant unions (as seen in the Cadiz strike of December last year).

Report from Pakistan

At the time of writing this, the present situation with the assassination attempt on the ex-prime minister Imran Khan, has given one faction of the bourgeoisie its martyr, giving an organic flavor to Khan's popular movement, as

in Sri-Lanka, the working masses have remained tied to the popular movements. The intensified crisis in the bourgeoisie has further delayed the provision of IMF funds, and developmental programs.

Pakistan's bourgeoisie, crisis-stricken and submerged in water, continues to juggle between imperialisms

Report given at the Party's September General Meeting

The Pakistani bourgeoisie has long been trying to juggle between the two great imperialisms, American and Chinese, in seeking to defend the interests of their own national capital.

Prime minister Khan's ouster is a consequence of the need of the crisis-stricken Pakistani ruling class, namely to try to rebuild its ties, lost in recent years, with the United States.

Historically, Pakistan's relations with Washington intensified shortly after independence. At the height of the Cold War, in 1954, Pakistan joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a U.S.-sponsored organization aimed at containing any so-called Communist expansion into south and central Asia.

During the Indo-Pakistani Wars of the 1960s and '70s, Washington decided to loosen relations, which were nurtured again after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, when Islamabad was fortified as a check on the Russian advance. With the fall of Russian state capitalism, the two states were once again driven apart. The new invasion of an ever-tormented Afghanistan, this time by the U.S., whom sent substantial military and financial aid, revived American imperialist interest in the region once again.

It is more recent that the advance of Chinese imperialism in the region has actually soured relations with Pakistan's allies in the American ruling class. Relations with Beijing bloomed in the last twenty years but are also longstanding. By the end of the 1950s to the early '60s, common rivalry with India pushed Islamabad closer to China. In 1963, Pakistan recognized the region of Shaksgam as Chinese, which before 1947 was formally under the control of the Maharaja of Kashmir, an area still claimed by India in the disputed territory of Kashmir.

The Sino-Pakistani military cooperation was reinforced in the early 1960s: the People's Republic, after distancing itself from post-Stalin Russia, approached Pakistan with funding for the army, beginning in 1962. In the '90s the alliance with China was crucial in developing Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. With the rise of Chinese imperialism, investments on Pakistani soil have increased. From 2008 to

2019, China loaned Pakistan \$40 million for the construction of transport infrastructure (primarily highways) and energy. The high point of economic cooperation between the two countries was in 2015. That year, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched, marking the foundations for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to connect the Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi to the Chinese province of Xinjiang.

With regards to armaments trade, relations with China have also increased. Today, Pakistan primarily buys its arms from Beijing. In the period between 2000 and 2021 (according to SIPRI data), the country buys about three times more arms from China than from US.

The relations between the two countries were consistently strong. The result is the subjugation of the Islamic republic's recent governments to Beijing's interests.

Nevertheless, a state in the grip of such a deep economic and social crisis inevitably has to try to search for other sources to get out of the quagmire in which it finds itself, and it is in this scenario that the new government's attempted rapprochement toward U.S. dollars and support for the permanent settlement of the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad should be seen.

It should also be considered that China itself is reevaluating the usefulness of part of its investments in Pakistan considering several knots that Islamabad is unable to untie: the continuous attacks by separatist (Balochi) and jihadist groups, the instability of domestic politics, the huge accumulated debt and Beijing's consequent aversion to keeping credit tabs open to such a high-risk country. All are unresolved factors that have effectively chilled relations between the two countries.

The stakes are very high for international capital and exercising control over this borderland will remain on the agenda of the major imperialist powers.

Flooding exacerbates the crisis

The year 2022 was a year of severe economic crisis that affected a large number of countries whose political and social situations, in many cases, were already precarious. Pakistan, only one such country, is now in a worse condition than in the crisis that occurred in 2008. Even before the 2019 global recession, after a small post-2008 recovery, the economy had begun experiencing sharp declines since 2017.

Today the country is facing unprecedentedly high inflation which is struggling to ease, with an external debt of about

\$130 billion. Since the end of May, fuel prices have risen 90%, with food prices rising by 37%.

The former prime minister, facing growing discontent, had arranged for fuel and energy subsidies last March, which were revoked by the new government in an effort to reduce the rising fiscal deficit and ensure the resumption of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) "bailout" program.

A major energy crisis had emerged even before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Pakistan, being heavily dependent on fuel exports, was among the first countries to complain of serious supply problems. The bourgeoisie state at various times cut off electricity to households[,] but also to various companies and industries, with adverse consequences on agricultural and industrial production. Many large cities were deprived of electricity for 12 hours a day, worse in rural areas where a power grid is present.

In late August, the IMF, to avoid default as happened in Sri Lanka, reinstated the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program to benefit Pakistan, which will receive \$1.1 billion. The approval came only after the new government of Prime Minister Sharif introduced several austerity measures, including a further increase in fuel prices. Unpopular measures that strengthened the bourgeois faction linked to former Prime Minister Khan.

The situation became dramatic when there were unprecedented floods in the summer months that inundated large areas of the country. Floods fueled by melting glaciers and continuous monsoon rains destroyed homes, transportation, and agricultural yields including cotton and rice plantations. The United Nations has labeled this scenario as "climate carnage", without going into the merits of the issue; as materialists, we know well who is the real and main culprit: capitalism, which as we described and explained in a previous article (il Partito Comunista, n. 418), is responsible for massive deforestation and uncontrolled urban planning, especially in flood-prone areas.

As we write this, the waters, which had invaded one-third of Pakistan's territory, have begun to recede, leaving behind an apocalyptic scene. More than 1,500 people are confirmed dead and thousands are still missing; nearly two million homes have been destroyed or damaged, and millions more displaced.

The worst flooding occurred along the Indus River in the provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh. In the latter region, 25% of the population is displaced, about 60% have inadequate access to drinking water, and more than 40% do not have adequate

access to food. Nearly 1 million livestock and more than 2 million acres of orchards and crops have been lost.

In addition to the deaths and destruction of infrastructure and housing, the biggest problem for the displaced people who have been living under the open sky for weeks is that of infectious diseases fostered by stagnant water: malaria, dengue, and dysentery abound. There will also be repercussions on the food supply and market.

The damage amounts to about \$30 billion, affecting field harvesting and industrial production: a capital, environmental, social and economic disaster that will also have medium-term consequences in the rest of the world, particularly in terms of the reduced supply of Pakistani agricultural products caused by the devastation of cotton and rice crops, of which the country is in fact one of the main producers and exporters. Today it is estimated that about half of the country's cotton crop has been destroyed. The floods also threaten to disrupt much of the autumn season's wheat planting, with serious yet predictable consequences for exports and far-reaching consequences for domestic needs.

Even if large landowners survive the floods, a different situation stands for small farmers, already in crisis and weighed down with debts they can no longer repay. Also remarkable is the condition of many wage earners who were already employed in super-exploitative conditions and have now lost their jobs.

The wage-earning class, at large, suffers from not only high inflation but worsening living and working conditions. The data recorded in the first quarter, certainly better than those that will be collected in the coming months, described this picture: in the service sector, where 40% of the workforce is engaged, wage growth decreased from 3.4% to 2.4%, for mechanics from 5.9% to 3.6%. Most of the labor force engaged in the informal sector earns as little as 15,000 rupees (equivalent to \$67) per month. In the public sector, the minimum wage for "first-grade" (or entry-level) employees stands at 12,000 rupees (\$50) a month.

Occasionally the state gives up crumbs, this time in the form of a "relief package," as they called it: 2,000 rupees, or \$8.70!

"Public ownership" of the Railroads Brings no Gains

Amidst the current

nationwide turmoil in the rail industry, over contract negotiations, the October meeting of the Railroad Workers United (RWU) Steering Committee adopted a resolution endorsing "public ownership" of the railroads. The RWU is an "inter-union, cross-craft solidarity 'caucus' of railroad workers, and their supporters, from all crafts, all carriers, and all unions across North America."

The RWU Steering Committee points out that "rail infrastructure the world over is held publicly" (meaning held by the State). But the conditions of workers in these state-owned rail companies is, generally speaking, no better than those in the private sector. We can see this in countries where both models – private and State ownership – exist side by side. In the United Kingdom, rail workers of Network Rail Ltd – the public body run by the UK Government's Department of Transport – are striking to improve their wages and conditions alongside rail workers of the private train operating companies (TOCS) and freight operating companies (FOCS).

We can see other examples in various sectors in Italy. Fincantieri, a world leader in the construction of cruise ships, is owned by a state financial institution (Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia), ensures its supremacy with a very high level of exploitation of workers in its shipyards, based on the chain of subcontracting, whereby the vast majority of the workforce is employed in the construction of each individual vessel. Fincantieri's direct employees enjoy somewhat better conditions but are a minority of the workers. Fincantieri is nevertheless fully responsible for the highly exploitative conditions of the workers of the contracting firms, many of whom are immigrants.

In SDA, a logistics company owned by the state-owned Italian Postal Service, porters and drivers are subjected to high levels of exploitation, as evidenced by the ongoing struggles over the years organized by grassroots unions, first SI Cobas and most recently by USB (Unione Sindacale di Base). The latter, together with other unions, organized a strike on October 5 against some of the layoffs, taking SDA drivers inside the headquarters of the Italian Postal Service in Rome, from where they were kicked out by police with batons.

The latest example is that of the former Alitalia, now ITA Airways. The privately owned airline was nationalized in October 2021. This transition, however, came with the dismissal of most of the workforce, which was reduced from 11,000 to 2,800 workers.

The RWU resolution

states that publicly owned railroads are "to be operated henceforth in the public interest". Is this the same "public interest" that the carriers and the UK Government are currently invoking (and which governments always invoke) in their efforts to prevent a national rail strike? Why does the Steering Committee refer to "the public" rather than "the railroad workers" or "the working class"?

The concept of "the public interest" is a democratic fantasy in a class-divided society, used to divide and disorientate the working class whenever it is in struggle. When false friends and opportunistic labor leaders urge workers to line up on the side of "the public", this only traps them within the confines of the body politic of the State. The truth is it makes no difference to workers whether the boot that steps on them is public or private.

In the United States, public ownership is less common, but we only have to look at the US Postal Service to illustrate that it brings no gain. Postal workers are legally prevented from using strike action and further inhibited from doing so as a result of their division into craft unions. As a result, they face increasingly brutal attacks on their living and working conditions. There are still huge staffing shortages and severe problems with recruitment and retention of employees.

Calling on workers and unions to support public ownership perpetuates the illusion that the State as such, or under certain types of (bourgeois) government, is able or willing to liberate the working class. Communists, by contrast, have always asserted that the emancipation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself. Support for public ownership also channels valuable energy away from what should be the real aim of the working class: the formation of the class union, created to fight over issues that directly affect workers like wages and working conditions.

Workers can only succeed by struggling for their own demands. This means directing their efforts to organizing a national rail strike to protect wages and benefits and reduce working hours. To succeed, railroad workers must unite with workers across the entire transport and logistics supply chain and, ultimately, across broad swathes of the working class, fighting as one for common goals. Communists contribute to this massive undertaking by making millions of workers aware of their common class identity and interests and the need to establish the material prerequisites for unitary and combative action.

Declaring in favor of public ownership is nothing

but a distraction from this world-historic mission. The only public power currently in existence – the State – is not some neutral mediator above classes, but a machine expressly designed and always used for repressing the proletariat and enforcing capitalist order. In other words, the State is a bourgeois State.

This does not mean that the issue can be resolved by "abolishing the State" (an anarchist fantasy). The State itself exists because the very foundations of the economy rest on class division, the exploitation of one class by another. This was as true in the USSR – where virtually all enterprises were either directly in public ownership or relied on the State for finance – as it is in the USA or China of today. As we write in the introduction to A Revolution Summed Up, "Wherever wage labor, capital, and an economy based on exchange exist, we are in the presence of capitalism, its economic cycles and the falling rate of profit. This is quite simply, and has always been, the authentic Marxist position."

France: New Strike Wave

Workers' struggles in France show the way forward to workers all over Europe and the world: oppose the high cost of living and the imperialist war with strikes for strong wage increases that converge in a general movement of the entire working class!

The movement has been developing since September in response to the rising cost of living. Although it has not yet reached the full force of the December 2019 struggles, the movement is impressive in terms of both its extent and its intensity.

The strikes are all for wage increases and almost always fought to the bitter end. In France they are called "renewable" (reconductible) because their continuation is decided by workplace assemblies. In many cases these strikes have forced companies to pre-empt what in France are called Compulsory Annual Negotiations (NAO). There is no doubt that the strikes provided some defense against the erosion of the purchasing power of their wages, even if final settlements fell short of the initial demands.

They were generally led by the workplace structures of the CGT – in the case of the petrochemicals the trade federation, the combative FSIC CGT – which in some cases were joined by those of Force Ouvrière and Solidaire-SUD.

There has been a tendency for the strikes to spread