

the use of extreme violence, despite calls from the West to reduce tensions without the use of force.

Not surprisingly, this led to a catastrophe, with five uninterrupted days of hand-to-hand combat between Kosovo Albanian special police and KFOR international "peacekeeping" forces on one side and armed Serb civilians on the other. The Serbs involved in the conflict are mostly local, but the involvement of a group of organized provocateurs is almost certain. It is not certain that they were sent by the Serbian government, but the hats they were wearing are associated with a criminal organization whose contact persons in the ruling CHC Party (ruling Serbian Progressive Party), have recently switched to the opposition. It is very likely, therefore, that they were sent by that part of the opposition that is supported by the West.

In response to the violence, the Quintet made up of the U.S., UK, Germany, France and Italy but led by the U.S. initially issued a joint condemnation of the "violence by the authorities in Priština" (a huge rhetorical

precedent), drafted by the U.S. State Department. This was quickly followed by symbolic sanctions imposed by the U.S. on Kosovo:

the cancellation of the planned "Defender 23" military exercise and Kosovo's expulsion from the initiative, a diplomatic boycott of any kind of official contact between U.S. and Kosovo representatives, and a demand to immediately block Kosovo's membership in international institutions and to block any new international recognition.

It seems clear that the United States has decided to betray its allies in Kosovo in exchange for greater bargaining power with Serbia on the issue of sanctions on Russia. A strong possibility is that this will be achieved through regime change in Serbia.

The diverse, extremely broad-based but mostly liberal opposition has been much warmer toward the possibility of sanctions, but it has also largely adopted nationalist rhetoric toward the ruling party, particularly in relation to its policy toward Kosovo, which is seen as overly concessionary. In addition, the progressive party currently in power

has had a very large number of defections, and many adherents joined the ranks of the opposition last week—a clique that had been discredited over the Krušik arms factory affair, ties to organized crime, and high-profile corruption scandals, and had been quietly ousted from any meaningful position of power.

Partly because of its private interests, this clique is the most pro-Western faction in the government. The opposition has naturally decided to welcome it into its ranks with full honors.

It is therefore likely that in the coming weeks the United States will favor its efforts to undermine the current government, overthrow it and assume power. The U.S. will give carte blanche to the new government to "protect the Serb minority" against a possible repetition of an event like the ethnic pogrom of March 2004, and it will probably even result in a change of the current borders. This will provide good support for the new government, which in return will have to adhere to sanctions against Russia. Of course, the current government, and

also Moscow, are aware of this danger and therefore the situation is absolutely critical and, for the first time in 15 years, after the constant "crying wolf" by the international media, there is now a real risk of significant escalation and even possible armed conflict (although this time the international media is surprisingly silent).

In all this dirty game between opposing imperialisms, the proletariat of Serbia and Kosovo is crushed and voiceless. Its living and working conditions are continually worsening while the bourgeois parties blame all evils on the "enemy" at the gates to hide the fact that the enemy is at home: The enemy is the bosses, their parties, their newspapers and television, who use all means, including organized crime to increase their profits and will not stop even at the prospect of unleashing a general war in order to maintain their power.

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# The Communist Party

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## Banking crisis, failure of capital regime, besieges all sanctuaries of finance

### Introduction

The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) is the latest episode of the broader capitalist crisis developing in the United States following the Covid-19 pandemic. Increased consumer spending, caused by the \$4 trillion of Covid-19 stimulus, has driven inflation since 2021. In 2022, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it got even worse as the price of oil and other commodities skyrocketed. In the war between the classes, the solution for the capitalists was to raise interest rates: the Silicon Valley Bank was the expected and accepted victim for the maintenance of the labor-capital ratio, necessary to feed its insatiable thirst for accumulating more and more profits.

### Labor and inflation

In the booming economy of 2021, after years of rising labor demand, as businesses reopened after the Covid-19 lockdown, capitalists could not find a sufficient reserve army to meet the increased demand for labour. Conversely, years of intensified expulsions of immigrant workers and hundreds of thousands of proletarians who died from Covid-19, resulted in a massive labor shortage: everywhere on the external windows of the companies "workers wanted" signs were read while the bourgeois complained that "nobody wanted to work anymore".

Throughout the following year, capitalists' anxiety about increasing the bargaining power of workers in the face of these conditions grew. The bourgeois press became concerned about the "great resignations" when workers began to flee in large numbers from jobs with indecent wages or working conditions. At the same

time, in 2022, new unionization campaigns at Amazon and Starbucks have raised fears of a resurgence of the union movement.

To get jobs back on track and prevent hyperinflation, which could have had dire consequences for the economy as a whole, the Federal Reserve launched a maneuver similar to the one it used in the 1970 OPEC crisis to attack the bargaining power of workers and at the same time contain inflation. By raising interest rates, thus making it harder for businesses to borrow, the Fed hoped to slow economic growth. As businesses downsized or closed, resulting in mass layoffs, the reserve army of labor would grow larger, thus driving down wages by putting more workers in competition for fewer jobs, thus reducing their power in the sale of their work. The plan is aimed at preserving profits while deflating the economy enough to avoid a hyperinflationary spiral.

### Tech Industry

The tech industry hit an all-time high in 2021 with revenues from Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft and Facebook reaching \$1.2 trillion as a boom in tech "start-ups" broke all records. But the Fed's announcement of interest rate hikes in the spring of 2022 led to a sharp decline, and the industry lost billions of dollars on the stock exchange in a matter of days. Today what the bourgeois press calls the "white-collar crisis" is in full swing. The technology sector is hardest hit, with more than 120,000 layoffs last year and 148,000 in recent months. Similarly across the industry there has been a return to more oppressive management styles, aimed at getting the maximum profit out of each worker, under a

return to a 'revenue per employee' model. Capital injection into innovative companies in the last three months of this year is about a third of that of last year in the same period, falling from \$151 billion to just \$56.3 billion: even for start-up capitalists, praised as "founders" by the press, it is increasingly difficult to find funding.

### SVB collapse

These factors played a role in the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, the financial center for the tech industry and its economy. The SVB had benefited from growth in the tech sector in 2021, holding \$189.2 billion in deposits, \$89 billion more than a year earlier, and tripling its share price since 2018. When the Federal Reserve announced plans to raise rates last spring, trouble began for Silicon Valley Bank. As interest rates soared, startups began pulling more money out of their accounts to meet rising expenses as venture capital investments stalled. The bank, taking advantage of low interest rates, had invested 75% of its assets in long-dated government bonds, which are more profitable in times of low interest rates, whereas banks of its size usually invest only 6%. As the withdrawals continued throughout the year, the bank was forced to devise a plan to obtain enough liquidity to cover the withdrawals. When the bank admitted that it needed to raise fresh capital to cover the drawdowns, which would have required the sale of most of its bonds at a \$1.8 billion loss, it triggered the crisis of confidence that led to the massive bank run, with withdrawals of over 42 billion in a single day, which led to the failure of the bank.

### On a global scale

With central banks raising interest rates since the start of 2021, everyone was expecting a recession. How did it go? In industrial production in recent months we have seen not only a sharp slowdown in the United States, Poland and elsewhere, but above all a recession in the United Kingdom, Korea, Japan, Germany, Italy, Belgium and France. Not to mention China, which is hit hard in real estate and car manufacturing. The recession hits Asian countries and the UK more than continental Europe. This recession corresponds to a general slowdown in consumption linked to high inflation in the prices of raw materials, energy and agricultural products. However, the large international groups are doing very well. Energy producers and distributors have made unprecedented profits over the past two years. But large industrial groups, especially in the automotive sector, have also made huge excess profits by raising prices, especially by refocusing on luxury or high-end products. And with them, some big banks, such as BNP for example. For large industrial groups, raising interest rates is not so harmful at the moment, as high inflation causes real interest rates to be negative or very low.

The situation is different for small businesses, and in particular for start-ups; it is becoming more difficult for them to obtain loans and a number of them find themselves in difficulty or even bankrupt. The risk that arises with the increase in interest rates is therefore the multiplication of unpaid debts, which in turn, if their mass increases too much, can only lead to bank failures. Initially, the increase in interest rates is favorable to the banks: not only

### 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**

# War in Kosovo?

can they lend at higher rates, but it also increases the remuneration of deposits in central banks.

However, as we see, this increase in interest rates is double-edged: on the one hand, it leads to a devaluation of previously purchased bonds, now with a much lower yield, to the point that today a gigantic mass of bonds worth several trillions, which are part of the monetary reserves of banks and financial organizations, such as insurance companies, pension funds, etc., depreciate between 20 and 30%! As long as the financial institution does not need to sell these bonds to obtain liquidity, the loss in value remains purely virtual, because these bonds will be repaid at their purchase value at maturity. However, the situation is very different if the financial institution, needing liquidity, is forced to sell part of it; the sale therefore takes place at market value, with heavy losses. This is what happened to SVB, Credit Suisse and several US regional banks. And now Deutsche Bank itself is under threat. Furthermore, rising delinquencies are forcing banks to raise cash. In response to this danger, the FED, together with the central banks of Great Britain, Japan, Canada and the ECB, has decided to provide dollars to commercial banks, which in turn will be able to lend them to large companies. In times of crisis, the dollar remains the safe haven currency and its demand explodes. On the foreign exchange market, the demand for dollars is around 450 billion, but at the height of the crisis in 2020 the demand suddenly rose to 5,000 billion. In financial terms we are dealing with a house of cards, or more precisely with a gigantic "Pyramid of Ponzi". Everything holds up as long as capital continues to accumulate in production. But if the recession comes, if the sale of products stops, if unpaid debts explode, the whole pyramid ends up collapsing if the crisis explodes. Everything will depend on the strength of the recession in China, the United States and Europe in the coming years.

## GERMANY'S REGIME UNIONS STRUGGLE TO CONTAIN MILITANCY

Germany has the largest, and one of the strongest, economies in Europe and strikes have been rare throughout most of the post-war period thanks to longstanding agreements between the government, employers' federations and trade unions. In recent months, however, workers have been impacted by the fall in real wages as the cost of essentials has skyrocketed and wage levels, negotiated by the unions in binding agreements, have failed to keep pace. The year 2022 saw many strikes, but for the most part these have been so-called "Warnstreiks", or warning strikes – one-day strike actions restricted to certain sectors and often limited by state or region.

The Railway and Transport Workers' Union (EVG) called on Deutsche Bahn (DB) employees to go on a day-long warning strike from midnight on 26/27 March. The railway declared that, as a result, long-distance traffic would be completely suspended. There would also be no trains in regional and suburban rail services. Freight traffic was largely held back on Monday to allow trains to start running quickly after the strike, the railways announced.

Together with the simultaneous strike by Verdi in the public sector, this so-called mega-strike brought large parts of air, rail and local transport to a halt throughout the country. Airports, municipal public transport companies, municipal ports, motorway companies and water and shipping management are at a standstill.

With this latest strike, the EVG reacted to an initial offer made by the railway company on 14 March. At the first round of negotiations at the end of February, the company, represented by the personnel director Martin Seiler, had initially refused to meet the demands of the EVG.

The EVG demanded wage increases of 12% for the 180,000 workers it represents, but at the least an increase of 650€ per month, for a period of twelve months. It is also demanded some

minor structural changes in collective agreements. DB described these demands as the equivalent of an increase of 25%, which is nonsense.

The "offer" from DB is far worse and amounts to a huge cut in living standards. The wages of railway employees are, according to the offer, to be raised in two steps by a total of 5%: from 1 December 2023 by 3% and from 1 August 2024 by 2%. In addition, there would be a so-called inflation compensation premium subsidized by the federal government. This is a one-off, so it will not permanently improve the wage level with rising inflation, and would amount to only 2500€.

The EVG called the strike for one reason only and that is the mood of its membership. There is a widespread willingness among workers to fight. In the face of skyrocketing prices, they are refusing to accept further real wage cuts.

DB is 100 percent state-owned, which means the railway workers are directly confronted by the federal government, currently a so-called "traffic light" coalition of SPD, FDP and Greens.

However, as a member of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), the EVG is a regime union "par excellence" with close links to the government. In October 2020, it signed an early collective agreement with a zero increase in the current year. In Germany, such agreements are intended to make strike action illegal. Train drivers and conductors organized in the Gewerkschaft Deutscher Lokomotivführer (GDL) were similarly subjected to agreements that lowered real wages and prevented strike action for 32 months, up until autumn 2023. The GDL is not affiliated with the DGB but is no less in the pocket of the employers.

Today, the regime unions find it more difficult to keep a lid on things. First, because there have been strikes in other sectors such as the postal service; second, because German workers in general are feeling the pressure of falling living standards; and third, because workers are engaged in struggle internationally. This makes it difficult for the bosses to divide and rule with the usual rhetoric about "staying competitive".

Moreover, the bosses' argument that increased wages means less investment in the railways has also been exposed as false. Successive coalition

governments have been dismantling the railway network for decades, irrespective of wages, to make it more attractive to private investors, i.e., removing the parts deemed insufficiently profitable. Anyone who relies on the railways can see this. Cancellations and delays have become the norm.

This is not only true of the railways. Other public services, including healthcare and education, are also underfunded as the rate of profit falls and federal resources are diverted to military rearmament. Meanwhile, the salaries and "bonuses" of those at the top of large enterprises continue to rise, as is the case in all major economies.

In Germany, the supervisory boards of large companies include representatives of the regime unions. The deputy chairman of the DB supervisory board is Martin Burkert, who is President of the EVG. He sat in the Bundestag for the "red" SPD from 2005 to 2020. Cosima Ingenschay, who is federal executive director of the EVG, also sits on the supervisory board, as do the works council chairpersons of DB subsidiaries.

In effect, this means that members of the trade union bureaucracy base their remuneration on that of senior management, not that of rank and file members. They also identify with the class interests of the bosses rather than those of the working class. At the same time, they must serve as a valve on the pressure cooker of working class anger. Hence the need to call the occasional "Warnstreik" when the situation gets critical – even the so-called "mega-strike" of 27 March.

As the strike wave generalizes, the pressure will become increasingly difficult for the regime unions to contain. For German workers to succeed they must break from the cozy boardroom deals and organize independently, across various industrial sectors and form class unions. And in a Europe that is increasingly integrated (for example, the main rail networks cross international borders) it is more important than ever to coordinate with workers in the nine countries bordering Germany – and beyond.

The geopolitics of the Balkans has been drastically affected by the last phase of the "cold war" between Russia and the West. The protracted war in Ukraine is spreading its fetid effluvia in this region in very serious economic and social crisis. In recent weeks there have been important and somewhat surprising developments in Kosovo, which have degenerated into a serious crisis.

Serbia apparently remains neutral and opposes joining the economic sanctions against Russia, which allows Russian financial capital to use Serbia as the main bridge to Europe to circumvent the sanctions. Despite constant pressure from the West, the Serbian government, led by the Serbian Progressive Party (SPP) refuses to introduce sanctions, largely due to the interests of a part of the ruling clique in Russian capital (especially Gazprom).

In March 2023, the EU pressured Serbia to align its foreign policy with that of the EU, under the

threat of freezing the accession process. The conditions were the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia or acceptance of a Franco-German proposal for an agreement with Kosovo, which would lead to its effective recognition.

Serbia accepted the latter.

Implementation of the agreement stalled on the issue of the Association of Serb Municipalities: an association of Serb-majority municipalities with executive and financial autonomy, which had been agreed as part of the 2013 Brussels Agreement. Present-day Kosovo is governed by the hard-line, nationalist Vetevendosje! (Self-Determination!) party, which comes from a leftist and post-Maoist background. Despite the politics of the West, Vetevendosje! pursues a more nationalist and anti-Western policy than the other Kosovo Albanian parties seeking a union with Albania. The prime minister of Kosovo, Kurti opposes the activities of the Association of Serb Municipalities and anything that stands in

the way of the full unity of the state and considers the 2013 agreement null and void, which has complicated the normalization of relations envisaged by the new agreement. It has also led to a souring of relations between Kosovo, on the one hand, and the EU and the United States, on the other.

On April 23, 2023, Kosovo held local elections in the region's four Serb-populated northern municipalities. Local Serbs (97 percent of the population) decided to boycott the elections until the process of implementing the Association of Serb Municipalities was completed.

The elections were held anyway, with 2-3% of local Albanians voting by electing Albanian nationalists as mayors. The Serbs, in response, barricaded the town halls, preventing the new mayors from taking office. For a month the situation remained a stalemate.

Meanwhile, a school shooting occurred in Belgrade, Serbia, on May

3, which immediately triggered another mass shooting and several other violent incidents, resulting in a total of 20 deaths within a single day. The outrage and grief soon turned into "mass protests against violence," which called for more censorship in the media. The wave of protest was immediately exploited by the opposition, which gave the demonstrations an anti-government character by mobilizing between 50,000 and 60,000 people. President Vučić responded by trying to organize even larger protests, encouraging supporters from all over Serbia, as well as from the Serb-inhabited northern provinces of Kosovo.

On May 26, a large pro-government counter-demonstration was held in Belgrade, bringing many Vučić supporters from Kosovo, leaving the barricades erected in front of city halls half-empty. This gave Kosovar special police forces the opportunity to storm the four municipalities and suppress the protest with

military action, which wipes out all its debts. Arms production for war and war itself are the only way left for the bourgeoisie to get out of the crisis of overproduction that strangles its economic system.

That is why the various states and their ruling parties spread nationalism, to try to bind the workers to the suicidal fate of the bourgeois class, forced, in defense of its mode of production, to plunge the world into the abyss of war, terror, and starvation.

But it is the international proletariat, it is the billions of workers of the world who possess the tool to liberate humanity from the fate sealed by the capitalists: THE CLASS WAR!

Recently there have been extensive strike movements in some countries of Europe, in France, Britain, Germany, Greece. In the United States, too, we are witnessing extensive strikes involving different categories. These struggles are the example to follow.

Since capitalism is an economic system based on the exploitation of wage labor, struggles of the working class in defense of their living and working conditions can counter the capitalist regime and begin to prepare to avert World War III. Every struggle against the exploitation of labor, every rejection of calls for sacrifice in the name of the national economy, is a struggle against capitalism and its war. The struggle in defense of the working class harms capital and is the precondition for weakening the infamous bourgeois political regime.

It is necessary to unite the struggles of the working class. To this end, it is essential to reconstitute class unions in every country, to strengthen them where they already exist, to oppose regime unionism that collaborates with the state and the bosses. Only real trade unions will be able to fight for the unity of action of the proletariat, nationally and internationally.

Only in this way will it be possible to put on the agenda of struggles the demands that unite the entire working class:

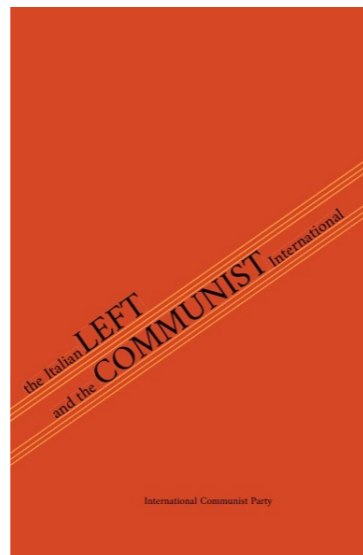
- the defense and increase of wages, with greater increases for the least paid;
- the reduction of rhythms, hours and working life
- full wages to the unemployed.

Only on these goals can workers' strikes and demonstrations converge, in time and space.

This is the indispensable premise so that the proletariat can once again return to struggle, under the leadership of its party, the International Communist Party, for the overthrow of the regime of wage labor, for the communist revolution!

The party is the repository of humanity's need for communism, of the conscience of class solidarity, of the science of revolutionary Marxism and the experiences of two centuries of glorious workers' struggles.

**Down with war!  
Down with the regime of Capital!  
Long live Communism!**



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## LIFE OF THE PARTY

It's been a 3 month (March - May) break in our publication cycle. We will return to an every other month schedule with issue number 53 – August 1st. Hopefully with a bigger format soon.

The I.C.P. held its 146th General Meeting at the last weekend of May attended by participants from 16 nations. Reports were presented on a wide range of subjects and will be presented in Communist Left 53 later this year.

May Day 2023: The I.C.P. published its annual May Day call in 20 languages. We distributed party materials at workers marches in Belgrade, Chicago, Denver, Milan, Rome, Zagreb.

In Portland, Oregon we participated in the first public meeting of the Class Struggle Action Network - a coordination of militant workers in that region.

A full report by an I.C.P. involved in the major Rutgers University strike will be published in the next issue.

On Sunday, April 30, The I.C.P. held a public meeting at the COBAS hall in Turin, Italy on the subject of the strikes waves in France, Britain, Germany And Greece and calling for workers in Italy to join the international strike wave.

### USA Informal Party Meetings:

email [ICParty@interncommparty.org](mailto:ICParty@interncommparty.org) to arrange meeting or let us know you will be attending.

Chicago, IL - First Saturdays; Bourgeois Pig Cafe, 738 W Fullerton Ave: 2pm  
Portland, OR - First Saturdays; Honey Latte Cafe, 1033 SE Main St, Noon  
Yakima, WA - Saturdays at Northtown Coffeeshouse (32 N Front St): 3 pm (PST)

Meetings can also be arranged in: Albuquerque, Akron/Cleveland, Bethlehem, Chapel Hill, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Raleigh.

## Anti-strike legislation fails to stop workers struggles in the UK

On February 1st, teachers, train drivers, civil servants, university lecturers, bus drivers and security guards from seven unions walked out and mounted a massive demonstration in London. It was the biggest day of industrial action for more than a decade in the UK. But as well as being a protest against low pay it was also a protest against the government's proposed new anti-strike legislation which has been passed in the House of Commons, and is now due to go to the House of Lords before becoming law.

It is estimated that roughly half a million workers took part in the strike and the demonstration, consisting of roughly 100,000 Public and Commercial Services Union (representing striking civil servants), 300,000 teachers from the National Education Union, and 70,000 lecturers from the University and College Union, along with ASLEF union train drivers and London bus drivers.

The strike left almost no trains running in England and thousands of schools were shut. Museums and galleries were closed and Border Force checkpoints were manned by army personnel.

The PCS chief, Mark Serwotka, anticipates many more such strike days as it “makes sense” for different unions to work together to get results. He added that there were more than a million workers who fell under live strike mandates.

In the health sector what is underway is the biggest wave of strikes in the history of the National Health Service. The nurses had already gone out on strike on the 10th, 18th and 19th of January, the ambulance staff on the 11th and 23rd of January, and on the 26th physiotherapists and support staff from thirty NHS services – one in seven – staged a 24 hour walk out. On 6 February ambulance workers and nurses struck together for the first time, breaking with the traditional professional divisions that have characterised so many strikes. The nurses were called out by the

Royal College of Nursing union. An important fact was that the ambulance workers didn't give in to the government's request to let the hospital managers know if and when they were striking, meaning that the army had to be called in at very short notice to cover them.

On 6 January it was announced that junior doctors would go on strike for 72 hours in March if their forthcoming ballot produced a majority for industrial action, with the doctors' union, the British Medical Association (BMA) declaring that junior doctors had suffered a “staggering and unjustifiable” 26.1% cut in their incomes since 2008. On 9 January the union started balloting more than 45,000 junior doctors on taking industrial action and this could eventually lead to an escalation of the mounting wave of walkouts by NHS staff over their salaries.

On 25 January 300 workers employed by Amazon to work in their Coventry warehouse staged their first ever UK strike in a protest over pay and conditions, walking out over a “derisory” offer of a 5% pay rise to £10.50 an hour, whereas as far as the workers are concerned, an acceptable figure, that goes some way to covering the rising cost of living, is no less than £15 an hour.

The Trade Union Act of 2016 In response to the wave of strikes, which is unlikely to let up any time soon, the UK government recently announced their plan to introduce a new anti-strike law: the Strikes, (Minimum Service Levels) Bill 2022-23. The new law is designed to allow the bosses of key public services (health, fire, ambulance service, rail and nuclear commissioning) to sue unions and sack employees if minimum service levels are not met. The Guardian reported that “the new law will also back employers bringing an injunction to prevent strikes or seeking damages afterwards if they go ahead”.

Pat Cullen, General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing (the main nurses' union) pointed out that “safe staffing levels, that are set in law, are what we want to see year-round, not just in these extreme circumstances. Sara Gorton (The Unison unions' head of health) reiterated this point, stating: “the public and health staff would welcome minimum staffing levels in the NHS every day of the week. That way people wouldn't be lying in agony on A & E (Emergency Room) floors or dying in the backs of ambulances.

But limiting legal staffing levels to strike days and threatening to sack or fire health workers when there are record vacancies in the NHS show proper healthcare isn't what ministers want. The government is picking ill-advised fights with NHS employees and their unions to mask years of dismal failure to tackle pay and staffing.”

Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party, was quick to say that it would repeal the new legislation if elected back into power; somewhat at odds with his prohibition of a member of his shadow cabinet appearing on picket lines back in the Autumn, and with his recent description of the Labour Party as “the party of business”.

Indeed his predecessor at the head of the Labour Party had similarly pledged to repeal the previous batch of anti-strike legislation that was introduced a few years ago (the Trade Union Act 2016), something Keir Starmer has been curiously silent about until now!

When the 2016 Act was first introduced, it was thought by its supporters that it would severely hinder the ability of the unions to mount effective actions, but the sheer determination of the striking sectors to fight back has meant that this has not been the case.

As the current strikes are largely circumscribed by this legislation, it is worth taking a look at some of its key provisions:

1) as opposed to what happens in Italy, strike action has to be previously approved by a vote among the members of the trade union promoting it. The 2016 law raised the threshold of how many members need to approve a strike for it to go ahead: at least 50% of those with the right to do so would now have to vote in order for their results to be legally valid, and of those voting in a ballot on strike action at least 40% would have to support it.

The International Communist Party advises workers that they shouldn't subordinate their struggles to democratic formalities and shouldn't make a fetish of it. The strike is not a manifestation of opinions but an action that takes place within an ongoing social war, a fire which, once lit, can either spread further or be extinguished. A strike, even if it is a minority that sparks it off, can, in given circumstances, grow and achieve victory.

Class trade unionism does not submit to the absolute principle of vote counting, which is to defer to

individual calculations and orientations. The final outcome of the war between classes will be determined by force, not by forms of representation.

2) The vote to approve strike actions happens at the moment by means of a postal ballot, and not in assemblies in which workers are physically present. This practice, too, is opposed to class trade unionism. Votes to decide on whether or not to undertake, continue or interrupt an action are certainly necessary and serve to enhance the morale and confidence of the workers themselves, and to indicate to the union leaders what the best decisions might be. But such voting, when possible, should be by means of assemblies, in workers' meetings and with a clear vote for or against. This means that those who attend the assemblies and who are prepared to openly take a position in front of their work colleagues will be selected. On the other hand, in secret, or postal, ballots, the vote of a blackleg has the same value as a worker prepared to sacrifice himself for the collective interest. Certainly the French practice of “renewable” (reconductible) strikes is preferable, in which workers meet in assemblies and make decisions by a show of hands.

And in a stroke of irony, it is to be noted how difficult it is to vote by postal ballot during a postal strike!

3) Another key point in the 2016 law is the two weeks notice which the unions must give to employers before taking strike action. This rule is analogous to the one introduced in Italy with Law 146 of 1990, which over the years has gradually been made more stringent, in some cases resulting in even longer notice periods. For the ruling class it is an excellent means of dampening workers' combativity and making struggles less effective. What's more, it allows companies to make adjustments in their production schedule, hire blacklegs, and prepare media campaigns and other actions against the workers' struggle. Class trade unionism combats such restrictions: the workers go out on strike without warning, their intention being to hit the employer and his business.

4) The Trade Union Act of 2016 also wants there to be “supervision of the trade unions on the picket line”, and it provides a series of rules whose lack of clarity offers further opportunities to declare the pickets illegal due to

simple bureaucratic errors.

5) And finally, there is the “opting in” or “opting out” issue: a keystone of the traditional opportunism in the British labour movement. The issue concerns whether a contribution is made to a union’s political fund by a union member automatically or not. The 2016 Act decreed that union members now need to “opt in” to the fund, rather than, as before, paying into it being the default position. And since the body which stands to gain most from the various political funds is the Labour Party, it’s no wonder then that Starmer recently announced he would abolish this legislation if the Labour Party got in at the next election.

Or was it just this clause he was thinking about? It is not difficult to predict that the collaborationist leaderships of the unions that are hand in glove with the regime will do their utmost to present as a big gain what are in fact just minor changes to the law, precisely such as making paying into the political fund once again the default position.

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The present wave of strikes in Great Britain confirms that, despite these restrictions, the class struggle cannot be suppressed, and that it is not a thing of the past, as the scribbling of the many hacks sold out to the regime would have us believe. The bourgeoisie has an interest in such lies being reinforced, but it knows very well what rubbish it all is. Indeed it is very conscious of the inevitable return of the struggle of the proletarian class, in order to fight for its immediate economic needs. And it is because of this that the bourgeoisie certainly doesn’t just rely on ideological arguments but adopts legal instruments as well. But it is walking a narrow path: on the one hand it limits as far as possible the right to strike, forcibly holding back the general movement of the working class. On the other hand, it fears that if such measures are too excessive, they could have the opposite effect to that desired, that is, restrictions that are too restrictive could push the defensive movement onto the terrain of illegality, which could favour its radicalisation and its passage onto the terrain of political class struggle.

The level at which its suits the ruling class to set the bar of illegality varies according to the historical period and the balance of class forces. In certain contexts, the bourgeoisie may see itself constrained to abolish the liberty

to strike and also the trade union organisations. This generally happens in wartime, but also when the workers’ struggle assumes greater breadth and strength.

The ruling class will do anything to preserve its political domination. It prefers to use the democratic lie, but it will never hold back, when that is not enough, from throwing itself into the arms of fascism in order to resist the communist revolution, and in order to defend capitalism to the very end.

## The Growing Wave of Strikes Against Amazon in the UK

### Introduction

In 2023 worker strikes at Amazon facilities in the United Kingdom gained significant momentum, as employees rallied for improved wages and better working conditions.

Heavily fueled by concerns over the cost of living crisis and inhumane treatment, these strikes have seen widespread participation.

### The Coventry Warehouse Strikes

The first strike against Amazon in the UK took place on January 25, 2023, at the Coventry warehouse, marking a pivotal moment. Approximately 300 workers took part, rejecting an offer of a derisory 5% wage increase, which would have raised their pay to £10.50 per hour. Led by the GMB union, the workers demanded a more substantial raise, advocating for a minimum wage of £15 per hour. Despite initial resistance, the strike gained traction, inspiring further Amazon workers across the country.

### March Strikes and Union Recognition

On March 2, further strikes occurred at the Coventry Amazon warehouse. This was followed by a five-day strike from March 13 to 17, effectively disrupting operations and amplifying their

demands for better wages and improved working conditions. With the support of the GMB union, over 600 new members joined from the Coventry warehouse alone, showcasing a growing sense of unity among workers. This surge in union membership paved the way for the pursuit of statutory recognition, a critical milestone in the workers' campaign for collective bargaining rights.

### Expansion of Strikes at Rugeley and Mansfield

Inspired by the successes in Coventry, workers from additional Amazon facilities joined the strike movement. The GMB union conducted ballots at five new sites, including Mansfield in Nottinghamshire, Coalville and Kegworth in Leicestershire, and Rugeley and Rugby in Staffordshire and Warwickshire. These ballots allowed workers to express their willingness to strike against Amazon's proposed 50p pay rise. The strike actions escalated, culminating in a total of 14 strike days across multiple Amazon locations by the end of April.

At the Rugeley fulfillment centre in the Towers Business Park, an overwhelming 98% of union members voted in favor of escalating the strike, while at Amazon Mansfield, 100% of members backed strike action. These resounding results highlighted the deep dissatisfaction among workers and their unwavering determination to fight for higher wages and recognition. This was followed by workers in Rugeley and Mansfield preparing for a binding vote on further strike action.

## Amazon's Response

In response to the escalating strikes, Amazon issued a statement emphasising its commitment to periodically reviewing pay rates to ensure competitiveness. They cited recent pay increases, stating that the minimum starting pay would range between £11 and £12 per hour, depending on the location. Amazon further highlighted the benefits, positive work environment, and career growth opportunities it offers, presenting itself as an appealing employer.

However, the GMB union argued that these increases fell short of the necessary measures and called for Amazon to recognize the union and engage in negotiations. The union recently lodged a complaint with the UK's employment watchdog, the Advisory, Conciliation, and

Arbitration Service (ACAS), alleging that Amazon unlawfully threatened workers participating in strike action with dismissals. The GMB union sought an injunction as a result.

### Developments and Union Recognition Efforts

On April 16 to 18, despite Amazon claiming only a few workers were involved, more than 560 workers at Coventry warehouse, up from 300 in January, down tools. Latest figures are that almost 700 Amazon Coventry workers are now GMB members, a number the union believes is more than half of workers at the site – the usual threshold for mandatory union recognition in a workplace. This was followed by further strikes on April 21 to 23 which brought the total number of strike days to 14.

The strikes received significant attention from the media, amplifying the workers' message and increasing public awareness of their struggle against Amazon.

On April 27 the GMB union announced it had started the process for union recognition at the Coventry centre. Amazon bosses have 10 days to respond and agree to voluntary recognition.

If there is no agreement, GMB Union will start the statutory process through the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC).

The union argued that recognition would provide a platform for workers to negotiate collectively for fairer wages, improved working conditions, and a stronger voice in decision-making processes. They highlighted the importance of addressing power imbalances within the workplace and ensuring that workers' concerns are taken into account.

In May Amazon threatened to flood the Coventry warehouse with 1000 new staff in order to dodge recognising the union.

On May 11 the GMB union officially submitted a bid for formal recognition at Amazon Coventry to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC), if successful, this would be the first-time workers at a UK Amazon site have won recognition of a trade union for collective bargaining over pay, terms and conditions.

This has been followed by further strikes at the Coventry warehouse from the 24 to 26 of May bringing the total strike days to 16.

Amazon has since offered school term-time only working to employees, to which the GMB has already responded by reiterating that a decent wage settlement is the workers' main priority.

### Critiques of the GMB and Pseudo-Left Groups

The worker strikes at Amazon's Coventry warehouse, which later expanded to Rugeley and Mansfield, have not been without their fair share of internal criticism and debate. One target of criticism has been the GMB union, which has faced accusations of collaboration with Amazon and a reluctance to support more militant actions that could potentially ignite a broader, politicised strike movement throughout the country. Skepticism has arisen from the GMB's track record of prioritizing sustainable business success and its willingness to compromise with employers, as demonstrated in previous agreements with companies like Deliveroo. These circumstances have raised doubts about the union's true commitment to genuine class struggle and its willingness to push for radical change on behalf of workers.

Moreover, pseudo-left groups have come under scrutiny for overlooking and obscuring the role of the union bureaucracy. These groups tend to uncritically praise the role of unions, including the GMB, while neglecting their complicity in suppressing broader class struggle movements. By overlooking the potential for more militant actions and acquiescing to the status quo, these groups are diminishing the existing problems, failing to challenge the underlying issues faced by workers and promoting an illusory perception of the supposed neutrality when it comes to regime unions.

### The future of labor relations in Amazon and its significance

Despite the critiques and internal debates surrounding the GMB and pseudo-left groups, the worker strikes at Amazon's Coventry warehouse, Rugeley, and Mansfield stand as a testament to the growing determination among workers to demand fairer wages and improved treatment in the face of mass worker control and union busting engaged in by modern corporate behemoths such as Amazon.

The overwhelming majority of workers voting in favor of strike action demonstrates the substantial support these strikes have garnered.

The ongoing efforts of the GMB union to secure union recognition through the statutory process, coupled with the negotiations with Amazon, carry immense significance for how workplace' legislation is sculpted and recognised within Amazon's operations in the United Kingdom. The outcomes of these strikes will

shape the landscape of labor relations and play a vital role in the fight for higher wages and improved working conditions not only within Amazon but also within the broader UK labor market and Amazon internationally.

If successful, union recognition could pave the way for collective negotiations on wages, working hours, health and safety measures and other crucial aspects of employment.

In parallel with the strikes, a burgeoning movement of pro-worker sentiment has emerged on social media platforms, particularly on Twitter. Pro-union and worker action accounts have utilised these digital platforms to disseminate information about the strikes, raise awareness of the challenges faced by Amazon workers, and rally support for the unionisation effort.

The strikes at Amazon UK are not isolated events but rather part of a broader trend of worker militancy occurring in the UK and around the world. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in strikes and labor unrest as workers demand better pay, improved conditions and more control over their work.

The strikes at Amazon UK represent a significant development within this trend and their impact is likely to reverberate across other industries and alter the public perception of class militancy within the corporate workplace.

While the ultimate outcome of the strikes at Amazon UK remains uncertain, their effects on the company and the labor movement in the UK have already been profound. By raising awareness of the issues faced by Amazon workers and demonstrating the willingness of workers to take collective action, these strikes have highlighted an ignited sense of urgency for improved treatment among large employers.

They have also prompted further discussions on the nature of labor relations within workplaces such as Amazon’s which exert a huge amount of technological and ideological control over their workforce.

The consequences of these strikes will be closely monitored by workers and employers alike as they are an important factor in the future of class struggle in the UK but also within Amazon's expansive theater of operations across Europe and beyond.

# MAY DAY 2023

## NO TO BOURGEOIS MILITARISM

## FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL DEFENSE OF THE WORKING CLASS

### The Imperialist blocs are re-arming in preparation for world war.

### The international working class can only respond by using its only weapon, the class struggle!

Annual military spending in the world has now surpassed \$2.2 trillion, the nuclear arms treaties between Russia and the U.S. are crumbling, and powers like Germany and Japan are rearming for the first time since World War II, the war in Ukraine threatens to engulf the whole of Europe, and the South China Sea is becoming a huge militarized zone, a premonition of the U.S.–China war that will most likely involve all of humanity.

The international bourgeoisie raises its worn-out nationalist banners and calls workers to slaughter each other by waving the deceptive boogeymen of totalitarianism, fascism, pseudo "communism", as those of differences between races and religions.

Against this vile bourgeois propaganda, communists reply – this new proletarian massacre being readied has only one cause: it is in defense of ruling class interests and the profits of capital! A generalized war will be imperialist on all fronts!

Despite the mounting economic crisis and the growing indebtedness of states and enterprises, and while governments around the world are increasing military spending, in the last three years the capitalist economy has been beset by disturbances of all kinds, on the one hand overproduction of goods, on the other their shortage in the markets due to the impossibility of continuing capitalist production caused by the tendency of the rate of profit to

fall, the decreasing profitability of investment, and the growing gap between production, which is social, and consumption, which is only of the few.

Global capitalism, plagued by economic crisis, is approaching collapse. It is plunging into such a historic crisis that the old antithesis between socialism or capitalism is being transformed into that between socialism or the annihilation of humanity.

The last great economic crisis of capital, the one that originated in the United States in 1929, could only be resolved by the destruction and massacres of World War II. That global imperialist massacre led to the annihilation of more than 70 million people, mostly proletarians, and the almost complete destruction of productive capacity across the entire planet.

The three decades following the war were a "golden age" for capitalism. As the two imperialist blocs of the Soviet Union and the United States shared the spoils of war and kept the proletariat in their respective zones of influence in check, the process of accumulation benefited from the momentum of rebuilding the infrastructure and cities destroyed by the war.

There was also a series of bourgeois revolutions against the rotten colonial and feudal regimes, with capitalism taking hold in all corners of the earth, especially in East and South Asia, India and China. This planetary expansion of the capitalist system of production, while it has allowed the accumulation of huge profits, has not brought prosperity to the working class, it has only extended misery and exploitation to the entire world. Indeed, the majority of the world’s 3.3 billion wage earners still work for starvation wages, without any economic security, in unworthy living conditions.

However, the continuous technical development of the means of production collapses the profitability of capital in production, pushing it toward ephemeral and sterile investments in financial speculation.

But every measure by states to contain the crisis through public debt finally gives no effect, and the bourgeoisie, in order not to go bankrupt, pushes the world into