

# 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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## Heart of Democracy: The Riot at the U.S. Capitol

The riot at the United States Capitol on January 6 was the convulsion of a dying social system. The deep crisis of capitalism became a political crisis in the leading power of the bourgeois world. The U.S. has not seen an emergency like this one since the outbreak of its civil war in 1861, before it rose to become the leading capitalist power. The extent of its fall – from the triumph of the Union in 1865 over the slaveholders' insurrection to the seizure of the Capitol by the MAGA mob – seemed unthinkable even a few weeks ago. But as Marx and Engels observed, under capitalism "all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind" (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*).

Let's sober up, then. What happened on January 6 has been described as an attempted coup d'état. This is certainly an exaggeration, but it is proof that democracy is now only a papier-mâché figure, ready to be trampled underfoot by anyone, and that no one is really interested in defending it.

The United States has the most sophisticated security apparatus in the world, but that didn't stop a largely unarmed mob from storming the Capitol during a joint session of Congress. How could that police state have allowed this to happen?

The answer is obvious from the videos of officers opening the gates to allow the rioters to enter and posing for photos with them. This was a very different police presence than that which has always been seen at demonstrations against racism, for example.

For the bourgeois state to defend itself it is useful to draw on the ideologies of racism, sexism, imperialism, and anti-communism. For the January 6 skit it has therefore mobilized some well-known fascist barkers, who advocate armed actions on the internet but cower in front of the police in real life.

Anti-communism was a strong influence on the rioters. One person at the vanguard of the push into the Capitol held a sign that read "Communism Is the Real Invisible Enemy." There were other banners depicting Trump beheading Karl Marx, and communists being thrown out of helicopters in Pinochet's Chile (with the slogan "Anti-Communist Action"). These statements and symbols are evidence of the contemporary U.S. far-right's lineage from the Red Scares of the 1920s and 1950s. Their real enemy has always been freedom for the working class!

But it is possible, and historically verified, that the fascism of the bourgeois state – always anti-communist and anti-proletarian – sometimes presents itself as "leftist", and even "proletarian" and "communist": Stalinism has given us numerous bleak examples of this "real socialism".

Meanwhile – just because the ghost of democracy is useful to delude the working class and the

ruined petty bourgeoisie – the representatives of the bourgeoisie feign outrage at the riot. As with any parent, the big bourgeoisie sometimes needs to discipline its unruly children. So they condemn the rioters and claim that Trump, in his final days in office, represents a threat to democratic values and bourgeois political civilization (some civilization!). The right and "left" deprecate this farce as "an attack on our democracy." The worst demagogues prostrate themselves before the wounded nationalist pride of an "untainted citadel of democracy."

All of this is an effort to depoliticize the whole affair, to reduce it to an issue of "extremism," against which the "good" state, supported by all parties of the right and left, should fight. The electoral left, the democratic socialists, is the first to appeal to the bourgeois state to crush the fascist threat, which it will never do!

Even supposed "Marxists," who recognize that the revolt arose from the founding characteristics of the United States, particularly racism, remain subservient to it, although they recognize it as reactionary.

We revolutionary communists will certainly be compared to the rioters of January 6 by our opponents, because we dare to fight back against the bourgeois state. We are not the "opposite extremism" to the fascists who rallied on January 6: all of them want to be part of this state; we will abolish it!

## India: Between Peasant Protests and Workers' Strikes

In India, the first case of Covid-19 infection was recorded on January 30. Over the months it has spread to large cities, especially in poor neighborhoods made up of shacks where 65 million people live, in precarious conditions, often without running water, without toilets, and without adequate waste collection. Since March 25, following the social distancing measures decreed by the government, millions of Indians have been left without work. Forced to return home to the more than 600,000 villages in the country, they brought with them the virus that quickly spread to rural areas, where health facilities are very poor.

Today India has the second largest number of infections in the world after the United States, over 10 million, an underestimate according to some non-governmental organizations. The official number of deaths is evidently less than the reality, but the government claims 140,000. In rural areas not all deaths are recorded; in some regions hospitals are rare and sick people die at home from "undefined causes".

The Indian government's imposition of social distancing is cynical: in the huge slum of Dharavi, not far from the center of Mumbai, in an area of 1.7 square kilometers there are between 600,000 and one million

inhabitants - 2 square meters each.

Although the measures to contain the virus imposed by the government in recent months have been gradually relaxed, the Asian giant is facing a serious economic crisis. According to unofficial data in April and May, 100 million people have lost their jobs. The bourgeois media, while promising a speedy recovery in the future, admits that production is in recession for the first time since 1947, the year of independence from the British Empire. According to the United Nations, 260 million Indians will end up in poverty by the end of the year.

The Central Statistics Office, the state statistics agency, says industrial production shrunk by a third in the spring, then by a further quarter in the summer. There was a weak recovery in the autumn, but the annual figure will remain negative. According to the Central Bank's estimates, GDP in 2020 will fall by 9.5%, while the International Monetary Fund has announced a decline in gross domestic product of 10.3%, the strongest contraction among the large "emerging" economies.

### A Strong General Strike Limited by Opportunism

In this context, which saw millions of proletarians lose their jobs and others forced into hellish conditions in order to keep it, on November 26 there was a general strike called by the ten major trade union centers: Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the trade union wing of the Indian National Congress party; All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the oldest Indian trade union federation linked to the self-proclaimed Communist Party of India (CPI); Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), founded in 1970, the trade union of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), a split from the CPI; All India United Trade Union Center (AIUTUC), which organizes workers on behalf of the Socialist Unity Center of India; Trade Union Coordination Center (TUCC), linked to the left-nationalist All India Forward Bloc; All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCCTU), trade union arm of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation; United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), which organizes workers on behalf of the Revolutionary Socialist Party; Labor Progressive Federation (LPF) linked to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party; Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), a very strong union among railway workers and dock workers, and finally the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA).

The strike, albeit contained in a single day, was certainly successful, and it could be considered the largest ever: it is estimated that over two hundred million workers took part, though not all were wage workers. In several states – Kerala, Puducherry, Odisha, Assam, Telangana, Jharkhand, and Chattisgarh – the blockade was almost total. In many others support for the strike resulted in a notable reduction of many work activities, even in the regions governed by the far-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, or by the center-right coalition called the National

Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The trade union centers have drawn up a list of demands: the reduction of annual working days, wage increases, a guaranteed minimum wage, the suspension of the privatization of the public sector (including banking) and the pension system, a contribution of 7,500 rupees (about 84 euros or 102 US dollars) for the poorest families, a monthly supply of 10 kg of food to needy households, and the expansion of assistance policies for the masses affected by the economic fallout of the pandemic.

Extensive demonstrations took place in dozens of cities. In many workplaces the strikers organized pickets to prevent scabs from entering.

But, in addition to the will of various workers' sectors to fight in an effective and lasting struggle to respond to the attacks of the bosses, the conduct of the strike dictated by the major unions proved ineffective, acting above all in defense of democracy and useful only to strengthen the electoral basin of opposition parties. It is no coincidence that it was launched on November 26, the date on which the bourgeois Indian constitution was adopted in 1949.

### New Laws on Agriculture and the Peasant Protests

The strike was joined by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, a pan-Indian confederation that unites over 250 farmers' organizations. The request for the repeal of three laws promulgated last September by the Modi government, which would worsen the already precarious conditions of the majority of peasants in the Indian countryside, was then added to the demands of the workers.

The laws in question are: a law on promotion and facilitation of trade and on the facilitation of trade in agricultural products (The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Promotion and Facilitation Act), a law on the agreement relating to price guarantees and agricultural services (The Farmers Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Far Services Act), and a law amending that of 1955 that authorized the central government to control the production, procurement, distribution, and trade of certain products (The Essential Commodities Amendment Act).

These pieces of legislation effectively eliminate the system for determining the prices of agricultural products by the government, established in the mid-1970s, dismantling the current commercial intermediation between producers, the state, and private buyers, and modifying the rules governing the sale, storage, and transport of agricultural goods.

A major concern for farmers is that the laws do not provide for the maintenance of the minimum support price (MSP) set by the government twice a year for 23 agricultural products. Today buyers purchase directly from farmers only in state markets, controlled by the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), which allow a certain protection of producers against the downward pressure on prices implemented by large retailers. Today there are about 2,500 regulated markets and almost

5,000 "sub-markets", which would be abolished or "redefined" by the new laws.

Farmers see the example of this experiment in the state of Bihar, where farmers would have sold rice last year at 1,000 rupees per quintal, about half the previous price.

The third law, the Essential Commodities Act, also stands against small producers by no longer protecting certain "essential" agricultural products, in which the government has so far invested billions of dollars. According to data from the Indian Ministry of Finance, the state would invest 32 billion dollars every year in subsidies to farmers, to keep the prices of products deemed essential to feed the population low.

As we write this, the Supreme Court of India has suspended the three laws "until further notice," so as not to exacerbate social mobilization. That highest court in India, criticizing the work of the Modi government, has suspended the laws pending a "committee of experts" to consult with government officials and farmers' associations to seek a solution.

Regardless of what will happen shortly, the Indian bourgeoisie, squeezed by the crisis, has a marked path. And even the bourgeois party of the Indian Congress, which today shows its opposition to the laws, tomorrow will confirm this policy to defend the interests of His Majesty capital.

### Indian Agriculture

The workforce in India is made up of about 500 million workers, between salaried and self-employed, divided as follows: 42% in agriculture, 26% in industry, 33% in services. Agriculture has declined rapidly: just 10 years ago, in 2010, the percentage was 52%. However, it remains the main source of income for about half of the 1.3 billion Indians.

Agriculture continues to employ a large part of the workforce, but contributes only 15% to GDP. In the vast international scenario of agricultural exports, the Asian giant remains marginal. For example, India is second in world production of wheat, but only 34th in exports; it ranks second for fruit production but slips to 23rd as an exporter; for vegetables it ranks third as a producer but ranks 14th in exports.

In the last three years there has been a significant decrease in the domestic demand for agricultural machinery. This is an alarming fact for the Indian ruling class because it reveals the crisis in land management, where millions of small farmers, many of them already in debt, can no longer invest a rupee in the modernization of agricultural techniques.

In India, more than half of the peasants are landless (in 1951 only 28% were), an indication of a slow proletarianization of the countryside, while among the farmers who own land, 86% own two hectares or less, so little that it is often not possible to sustain a family, much less increase the productivity of the land.

Since the East India Company subjugated in the subcontinent in

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the 17th century, importing the capitalist system of production there, despite the countless agricultural reforms and their immediate impact, the situation of the peasantry has only worsened.

Since independence there has also been a continuous decline in the availability of land for crops due to the occupation of land for industry and infrastructure. The diversion of rivers and streams for industrial purposes has resulted in the drying up of large agricultural areas and the abandonment of many villages. Due to the desertification process, which has various origins including global climate change, thousands of hectares of land become unproductive every year.

In middle-class India, after millennia of agriculture, more than half of the cultivated land, 140 million hectares, is still dependent on the whims of the monsoon for irrigation: both the two seasons, the humid and the arid, can compromise the harvest.

Furthermore, since 2014, a sharp rise in the price of fuel and fertilizers has aggravated the crisis.

## The Peasant Movement and Its Contradictions

On 5 November, shortly after the new agricultural laws were passed, hundreds of organizations gathered large numbers of farmers for simultaneous demonstrations across the country, particularly in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

In the days leading up to the general strike, tens of thousands of peasants from the northern states headed to New Delhi to join the "Delhi Chalo" march, meaning "Let's go to Delhi".

The protest was supposed to arrive on November 26 in the Jantar Mantar park, in the center of the metropolis. The police denied access to the city, and deployed in force to repel the farmers with water cannons and tear gas. The next day, some of the demonstrators were stopped on the main roads by roadblocks and barbed wire. The protest then moved to the suburbs, where peasants blocked the main roads and set up camps. In an attempt to block other farmers heading towards Delhi, clashes took place between demonstrators and police on the border between the states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.

The subsequent talks between the federal government and the farmers' leaders did not lead to any agreement, so on December 8 a new farmers' strike was called, proclaimed by the Bharat Kisan Union (BKM), which saw the adherence of over 400 organizations and the support of 24 political parties, mostly opposition but also pro-government.

What is taking place these days is a very extensive movement, mainly in the northern regions, in the fertile alluvial basin limited by the Himalayas and watered by the Ganges and its tributaries, where productive agriculture has been practiced there for millennia. But the movement spans the entire subcontinent.

Perhaps it might have the strength to impose some government concessions. However, it is only superficially united and coherent in its aims. If it is true that its core is made up of small farmers threatened by the new system that will bring down

prices, it is also true that some of the associations that feed it are controlled by the middle and rich peasants who, together with the large landowners, in some areas of the country dominate the countryside. These well-to-do farmers, along with traders, money lenders, and regional bureaucratic staff, are able to carve out a substantial remuneration as commercial intermediaries for the storage and transport of foodstuffs through the current controlled market circuit. They therefore fear that through these new laws large farms will be able to impose lower prices. But the big farms also introduce new relationships with the millions of laborers and semi-wage peasants, snatching them from the isolation and over-exploitation to which they are subjected in the restricted area of the village.

Moreover, while small farmers' associations put debt cancellation first, as it has been oppressing and killing them for years, the medium and large owners are against it and are asking that the government not consider this demand, except to let the government itself take on the debt.

It is in this scenario of crisis and misery for millions of proletarians and peasants that these demonstrations and strikes are taking place; their direction, however, remains in the hands of bourgeois and opportunist political and trade union organizations.

In fact, one of the most abused slogans is that of unity between wage workers and all peasants against the reactionary Modi government. This is a false and opportunistic slogan. If the proletariat includes within itself the wage-earners, and can also draw the majority of the poor and landless peasants to its side, it has nothing to do with the small and medium peasants, who are not revolutionary classes at all despite their threatened economic conditions. The trade union and political structures that direct both the workers' and peasants' movements demonstrate in this way their political opportunism, which focuses entirely on electoral dynamics.

The capitalist economy needs agriculture to produce at low cost the products necessary for the subsistence of the proletariat. To this end it is necessary for capital that modern, mechanized management, based on monoculture and large plots, prevails even in the countryside.

But small peasant property desperately resists in defense of the field cultivated for generations.

The process of concentration of landed property, which is also written in the historical evolution of the capitalist economy, therefore proceeds slowly, in some periods also hindered by the bourgeois state itself, which fears the revolt of the dispossessed small peasants and its extension to the rural and urban proletariat.

However, faced with the worsening of the economic crisis, the state does not have the resources to help small peasant ownership withstand competition with industrialized agriculture. Hence the need for New Delhi to pass these new laws, which open the path to the liberalization of prices and condemn the small farmers to extinction.

The only way out lies not in the defense of small property but in the abolition of both small and large property, and in the transition to socialized

production, freeing the small farmers from a property title that does not represent a wealth but slavery.

The poor peasants, as a class, cannot be aware of this, and try to defend their current situation, despite the fact that it is often desperate. Only when the workers' movement, freed from the influence of political and trade union opportunism, rises before them, will they recognize in this force the only path to their emancipation.

# Trans-Pacific Partnership Revived as CPTPP

The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) was a proposed trade agreement between a number of bourgeois states: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and the United States. Easing the process of trade between nations and solidifying the profitability of participation on the international market was the main intent of the deal. The deal however, was never able to be ratified.

Initially drafted in October of 2015, the TPP was an expansion of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement. The TPP was then signed and set to be ratified in February of 2016. However, new United States president Donald Trump withdrew the United States' signature from the deal, striking a temporary blow to its foundation due to the US being the central economic power involved in the deal. Trump stated that the deal would "undermine" the US economy. Trump put forth his "America first" policy and signed a memorandum withdrawing the US from the TPP. There was a confusion of opinions among the US bipartisan bourgeoisie as to whether the withdrawal from the deal was good or not. Additionally, despite an apparent goal of the deal being to reduce the signatories' dependence on Chinese trade and to bring the signatories closer to the United States, Trump still would not be satisfied unless the deal had overwhelming favorability and provisions for the US included. This shake-up led the remaining partners in the deal to renegotiate its terms under the banner of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

These changes to the deal have attracted the interest of China, who has said it would be willing to join. This has prompted pushback from the US state; which has asserted that the Chinese would be unwilling to make the necessary economic reforms; the Chinese state has said the contrary. The shouting match is a constant back and forth between competitors in the world market.

The US and China seek to be the dominant party of the CPTPP; the signatories of the agreement will benefit if either state enters the agreement, despite close allies of the US speaking out against China's inclusion. Yet the fight over entry only veils the continued military conflict that has been building up between the two imperialist powers for decades. This conflict is currently smoldering, in the form of disputes over islands in the Pacific off the coast of the Chinese mainland. This competition for entry into the CPTPP is a passive analog to the impending armed conflict that will erupt between the US, China, and their respective proxies. Ultimately the US would be

interested in re-entering the agreement if the signatories would be willing to completely renegotiate the deal along the terms the US lays out. China's willing entrance into the CPTPP is predicated on the success of the already existing Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and a long process of liberalization in the Chinese domestic economy.

This buildup of economic agreements further illustrates the friction between the interests of the US and Chinese states, between two competing capitalist nations. The economic conflict prolongs the series of narrowly missed military conflict between China and the US allies that border it.

Even with the drama over entry into the agreement, signatories will continue to benefit from the low tariffs that the deal requires for participation. CPTPP countries continue the well oiled Asian economy by changing hats like indecisive teenagers. The Australian and New Zealand states have bemoaned entry of China into the CPTPP, despite entering into the new Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) with China on the November 15, 2020. These agreements only demonstrate the strategy of convenience that the bourgeoisie of any country employs when it comes to the economic development of nations.

# 100th Anniversary of the Communist Party of Italy

On January 21, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy (Partito Comunista d'Italia) in 1921. The party was formed at the initiative of the communist left, called the *Sinistra Comunista* in Italian, who had previously made up the Abstentionist Faction of the Italian Socialist Party. Its platform, written at the founding congress at Livorno, was proudly revolutionary, proletarian, and internationalist (its press never failed to remind readers that it was a section of the Communist International).

Under the direction of the left faction, the Communist Party of Italy waged numerous struggles. First and foremost was its struggle against capitalism and the parliamentary system that is its instrument. This went hand in hand with the fight against the

false left, the so-called Maximalists, in the Italian Socialist Party, who waved red flags but were too gutless to join the world revolution. At the same time, the party struggled against the fascists, who had already shown their willingness to resort to any form of depravity to stop the proletarian revolution. In subsequent years, the communist left waged a militant struggle against the centrists, and later the Stalinists, who sought to wage a counter-revolution from within the party.

The Communist Party of Italy was banned by the fascist government in 1926. Its most prominent members were imprisoned, first on remote islands and then under house-arrest. Some managed to flee the country and continue their political activities, while others endured the long years of fascism in obscurity.

In the meantime, the Stalinist gangsters in Moscow and their Italian henchmen took advantage of the fascist repression to fight their real enemy: the left. With the leading left communists sitting in Mussolini's prisons (the left was a majority, so its representatives were more likely to be imprisoned), the Stalinists gutted the Communist Party of Italy of its Marxist platform. Upon their release from prison, the most dedicated revolutionaries of 1921 found themselves expelled from the party they had created. The Stalinists finally buried the Communist Party of Italy in 1943, replacing it with a bourgeois parliamentary formation named the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano).

In the aftermath of World War II, the fascist period, and the degeneration of the world communist movement, the *Sinistra* came together to rebuild the party of the communist left. They determined that world revolution required a world party. The result was the birth of the International Communist Party. Our party continues the work laid out at Livorno a hundred years ago.

*"Against all the resistance of the bourgeois social system, against all the tricks of the false friends of the proletariat, against all weakness and defeatism, go forward to revolutionary victory at the flank of the communists of the whole world."*

*Long live the Communist Third International!  
Long live the world communist revolution!"*

Manifesto to the Workers of Italy, *Il Soviet*, February 6, 1921



*Il Soviet* had been the newspaper of the left wing of the Italian Socialist Party. After Livorno it became a newspaper of the Communist Party of Italy. This issue from February 6, 1921 announces the foundation of the party.

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