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Mutiny

Labor Day 2025: Three Attacks on the Working Class, One Way Forward

The time since last year's Labor Day has shown that capitalism continues down its death march. This year, Klasbatalo and the Internationalist Workers Group reflect on three attacks launched by the bosses in the last 12 months and prospects for workers in Canada and the US. None of these attacks have emerged out of the ether - they are the convulsions of a dying system. Although the situation may seem dire, anti-deportation protests, refusals, and the inevitability of more strikes to come emphasize the need to keep fighting, and for a concrete political orientation to guide the class forward.

The Capitalist State vs. The Workers

The first attack is the unprecedented legal machinery developed by capital in the past year. In Canada, we have seen strikes, led by unions and ultimately dead-ended, which included port workers on both sides of the continent, in addition to rail and postal workers. These rattled beleaguered supply chains, and therefore drew the ire of the bosses in the headlines as being particularly 'selfish'. Unlike most strikes which tend to result in meager settlements, forms of 'negotiating down' through union arbitration, the Labour Minister was set in to force arbitration. What makes this unusual is that the bosses are historically content to let unions have their slice of the pie in exchange for pacifying workers. These attacks on the Canadian working class form a blueprint for capitalists across the world, not least in the United States. For instance, the Trump administration has unleashed a salvo of attacks at workers in the same vein. Although less socially liberal than Prime Minister Carney, Trump's actions are signs of converging interests by the capitalists to increase attacks on workers. There are the famous cuts headed by his (former) cheerleader, Musk, resulting in thousands of federal layoffs. In addition, Trump has reconstituted the National Labor Relations Board leadership in a long-term bid to make striking more perilous and to give the bosses more power. Even though the primary targets are unions, the knock-on effects include greater scrutiny against any form of labour action, including banning the use of work emails for labour organizing. This is in addition to various cuts against hazard pay, a promise to freeze the minimum wage through executive order, as well as the degradation of at-home careworker minimum pay. Combined with the Big Beautiful Bill, which hacks at welfare like a butcher's knife, the message is clear; American workers pay tribute to their masters, while unions incompetently fight to defend their own turf in protracted legal battles 'for workers'. The effect is the impoverishment and disorientation of the whole class, with reindustrialization being the sweet promise of more gruelling work. In the US, as in Canada, Carney and Trump agree to crack the whip.From this, we highlight two important lessons. The first is the reality that unions are part of the capitalist state and will fold under pressure. This lesson alone is something that has been known for over a century since the unions agreed to 'no strike' clauses in the service of nationalism. The second is that the capitalist state is escalating their policing of the class as part of a general crackdown in preparation for war. This is the real push behind Bill 89 in Quebec, which enables the provincial government to leverage the 'public good 'in ruling a strike illegal. So long as such attacks stay on the terrain of union legal battles, the working class will sustain



loss after loss. Insofar as further strikes continue popping up, workers need to be ready for this 'new normal', and must fight against the preparation for war and the legal means enabling it. In doing so, workers need a concrete political orientation beyond immediate defences and economic disputes. This is why the historical objective remains the abolition of capital, spearheaded by an internationalist party of the working class. It is the pursuit of this goal that alone can lead to real leverage from the workers against capitalists. This can never be achieved if workers on the picket hold onto the illusion that unions and the capitalist state can substitute for real class struggle.

Immigration and the Working Class fightback

The second major attack is on immigrant workers. In Canada, the US, and around the world, brutal attacks against migrant workers have multiplied. Carney's Liberal government has continued Trudeau's policies to reduce immigration after inviting millions during Covid to resuscitate declining capitalist profits. It is little wonder that the United Nations have since condemned migrant workers' treatment in Canada as being analogous to slavery. In the US, ICE and the DHS' raids have continuously been used to strike fear in migrant workers who already have no protections. In addition, we have seen an unprecedented crackdown on international students. In the US, these attacks preceded Trump's administration, such as in the targeting of Chinese students and condemning them as national security threats, setting the precedent for revoking student visas for participating in Gaza protests. Not confined to the Trump administration, Canada has also reduced the amount of international students by 48%, under particular pressure in some provinces such as Quebec, who see them as visa "freeloaders." These attacks have been bipartisan and are dressed up as defending national interest and democracy. Bosses everywhere have become more bold in their attacks, with growing xenophobia accompanying the war narrative. Imperialist capitalism threatens the entire world to ride off the rails, as mass slaughter becomes the only remaining solution for a weary capitalist class. Growing repression against migrant workers and students has to be opposed by the working class as a whole, for the working class. An attack on a foreigner is an attack on a native; it all serves to discipline an already heavily-exploited working class for war. It is therefore encouraging that workers in the US showed great courage and a burgeoning sense of class consciousness by organizing neighborhood and workplace group chats to warn and mobilize against attempted deportations and to set up demonstrations. In addition, workers in the heavily-targeted hospitality industry had strikes which put forward political demands to stop the brutal raids. However, lacking a concrete political orientation, this self-defence can only go so far. Like the attacks on recent strikes, the surge of action by the class remains disorientated and fragmented, showing a need to grow the flame into real proletarian power. This state of shakiness is how workers' actions are being crushed with the full brutality of the much hated Los Angeles police department and county sheriffs, stifling their combativity. The real defense is an organisational offensive.

When trade wars turn to generalized wars

The third attack is the ongoing march towards generalized war. Trump's administration has led to a total upheaval of the liberal order, and has consequently sharpened tensions between allies and rivals alike. At the NATO summit in Kananaskis, fault lines within the imperialist bloc comprising the two North American member states ruptured further. On the one side, the American bourgeoisie is reconsidering their efforts to underwrite the treaty. On the other, the Canadian bourgeoisie still identifies their interests in maintaining their position in this postwar order. Where Trump seeks to compel wider rearmament with the threat of withdrawal, Canada seeks to present itself as a reliable resource pool to European capital with a shared interest in mutual defense, amounting in all cases to a call to rearmament that foreshadows the slaughter of the working class. As defense budgets soar in America to absorb superfluous productive capacity in the form of armored vehicles that Pentagon officials insist they have no use for, Canadian defense contractors answer calls from Europe to join military development projects in arrangements never dreamed of in feverish pulp novels. Between Trump's blustering over the annexation of Canada and the Canadian call (alongside Europe) to recognize a Palestinian state, the U.S.-Canadian partnership is being battered. 'Anti-imperialists' of all varieties; Stalinist, Trotskyist, etc. may mistakenly see this divergence as some potential wedge in major capitalist nations to exploit in favour of their preferred nationalism'. In truth, there is no permanent peace, no 'just wars', no righteous nationalisms, because imperialism is a feature of capitalism, not of individual states. Take the war in Gaza for instance. While Hamas has bit off more than it can chew from its assault on October 7th, the famine in the Gaza strip is not the outgrowth of Israel as a uniquely illiberal nation, but an example of what capitalists are capable of. This is why the Israeli stock exchange is booming even as war fatigue sets in. The short term 'heat' is worth the long term gains from rebuilding the wasteland Netanyahu has created, while keeping his domestic and foreign adversaries busy. While 'liberal' leaders such as Carney, Starmer, and Macron may call out the worst excesses of Netanyahu's genocidal campaign, it is primarily a vehicle for leverage against a 'bad' United States administration. In addition, the Palestinian Authority is more than eager to become this new leader of a Palestinian state, an opportunity which can only be exploited under the abject conditions in the Gaza strip. Even if a ceasefire were to be hacked out overnight, the structural incentives for conflict remain, as they are rooted in competition between nation states, that is, national capitals. Meanwhile, Trump's yo-yo negotiations with Russia highlight that the war in Ukraine will continue for as long as it needs to, determined principally by the utility it has for Russian and Ukrainian capitalists, with both having irredentist demands that can never be satisfied outside of total attrition. Even the 'historic' deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan guarantees that the latter will become a US staging ground for further attacks into Iran, and that the former is to collapse to civil war under greater calls for ethnic revanchism, fuelled by Russian support to regain its Caucasian foothold. No matter the situation, capitalists all converge on one objective; wars will be waged no matter what.

The one way forward.

It is clear that the capitalist order is on a sinister path. The working class is assaulted directly and indirectly through the crushing of wages and various forms of welfare, social guarantees, etc. It signals the trajectory of the capitalist class as whole - the workers must be ready to accept sacrifices now and be made to toe the line so that when the day comes, they will march to the front. Immigrant workers are the first to be deported and detained en masse to tighten the pool of workers and to guarantee precarity for profits. However, far from falling to pessimism or delusion, the working class remains the only one poised to fight these myriad evils. The protests and riots in LA demonstrated that the class can summon inordinate combativity. That will to fight presents an opportunity unlike any other, though it must be channeled into a concrete political direction through the formation of a party. In addition, mounting refusals from workers in Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, etc. to fight for imperialist slaughter demonstrates that the more capitalists push, the more workers push back. Far from archaic, the examples of the Kiel and Petrograd sailors' mutinies show that even the greatest wars can be ground to a halt by the efforts of devoted militants. To succeed, workers cannot hold onto the illusion that unions or nations can come to their salvation. These are not weapons or contingencies, but rust upon the real sword of the working class; self-organization. Workers must organize outside of unions, across borders, and against war, wherever possible, to refuse the sacrifices demanded of them. When workers struggle on the basis of their own strength, whether through strike committees, mass assemblies, or even workers' councils, their fight becomes political. The capitalist hydra has been struck once in the past, in the example set by the Russian Revolution, but the heroic task was stifled, as in the epics, with the capitalists growing back the limbs they had once lost. It is for this reason that the future party of the working class must form and strike boldly through the heart of the beast.

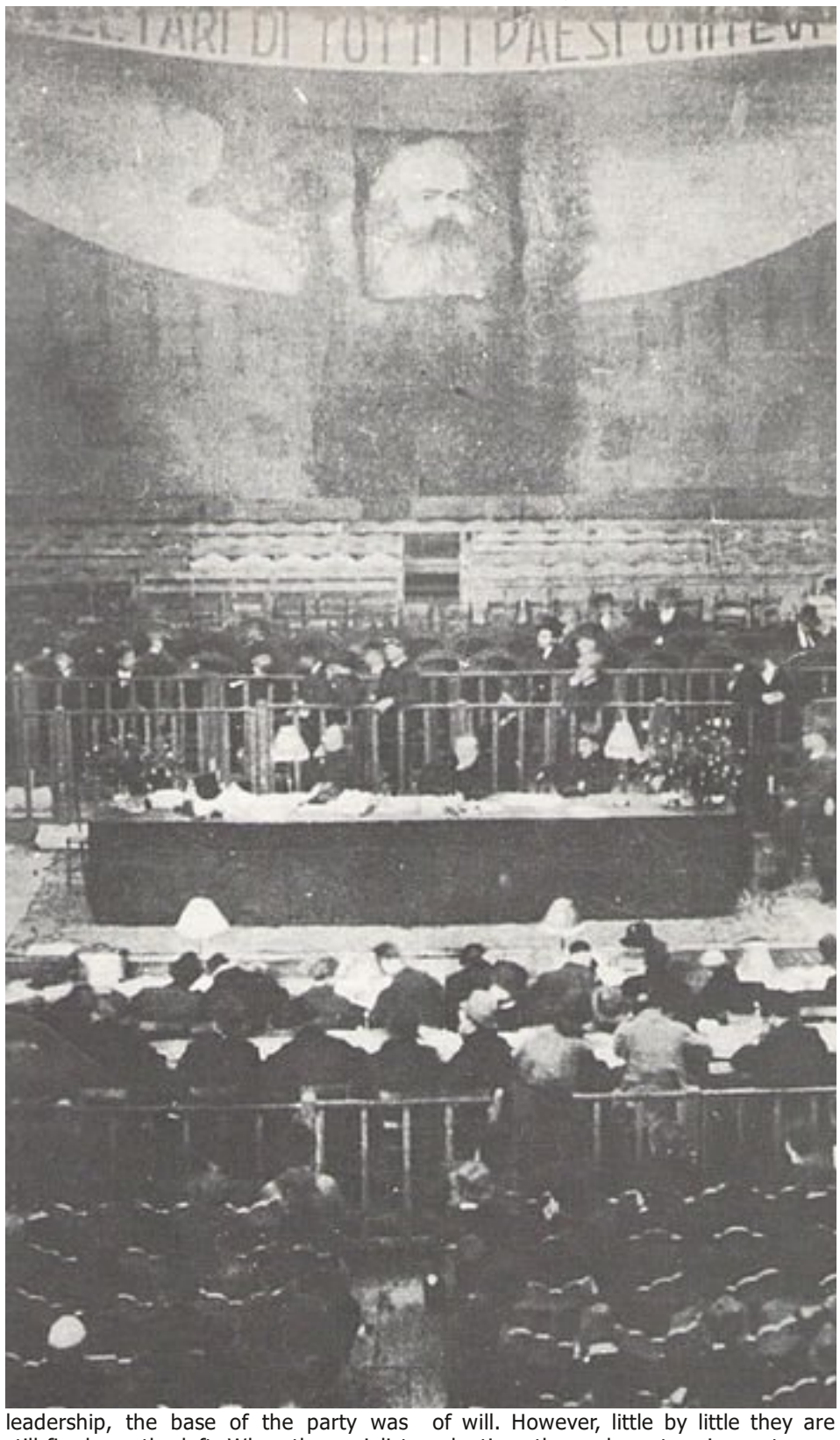
Committee of Intesa: A Century of Class Struggle

By 1925 the world revolutionary wave sparked by October 1917 in Russia was on the wane. Across the world workers' struggle was in retreat and capital was advancing its counter-offensive. The working class in Germany had suffered a series of defeats by the hand of the SPD and the rest of the capitalist state. The Hungarian Soviet Republic was strangled in its cradle, and a notable strike wave in North America in 1919 had also been put down. In Italy, the Communist Party had only been formed after the Two Red Years (1919-20) of widespread factory occupations which had had no coherent political agenda. By the time revolutionaries had organised independently of the social democrats who simply wanted to reform capitalism (January 1921) they were being pushed back, by both the "democratic" state and Mussolini's fascist gangs.

In Russia itself, the workers councils, the heart of the social revolution, had become empty shells through the course of the economic crisis and civil war, with the population of Moscow and Petrograd decreasing by 50% as workers deserted the cities in search of food or died at the front. A 'moderate' estimate of the numbers who had died by the winter of 1921-22 is 5 million. The nail in the coffin for soviet power (i.e. democratic control from below through a widespread network of workers' councils) was the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt and the subsequent banning of factions inside the Bolshevik Party. At the time, though, revolutionaries in the Bolshevik Party largely assumed it was a question of their hanging on to power until the proletarian revolution could be rescued and revived by support from a victorious working class revolution elsewhere.

Yet this policy was a two-edged sword. Hanging on by making concessions, signing treaties, with capitalist powers obviously involves the danger of conceding to and joining the network of those powers. Moreover, prioritising the survival of the Russian regime increasingly meant quashing any voices of opposition inside the newly-formed International. It was in this historical context that the policy makers of the Third International would push the "Bolshevization" of the world party, adding the final nails in the coffin of the revolutionary wave and increasingly turning the International itself into a tool to ensure the survival of the evolving state capitalist regime in Russia. It was these opportunistic twists and turns in tactics that those who formed the Committee of Intesa would struggle against. The "united front", and the slogan of "workers' government" were very real reversals from the principles which the Comintern was founded on. Lenin's original call for a new international in 1915 was based on a clear recognition that social democracy had crossed the class barricades as the majority of the Second International's parties had lined up with their own national capitals in WW1. This recognition was only reaffirmed as the social democrats participated in capital's offensive exemplified by the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by Ebert's SPD government. After all this, the leaders of the Comintern were calling for an alliance between the PCd'I and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), who they had just split from a few years earlier. The united front the leaders of the Comintern had in mind was not that of class unity irrespective of party in a strike, as had been the case leading up to the October Revolution, but a parliamentary alliance with social democracy. The workers' government they were calling for was a parliamentary coalition, and not for smashing the capitalist state or for the political supremacy of workers'councils.

The disastrous effects of "Bolshevization" in Italy can perhaps be best understood through the Matteotti crisis. With the arrest of Amadeo Bordiga in 1923 and the resignation of the party's executive committee in protest to the directive that the party merge with the PSI, the leaders of the Comintern saw an opportunity to install a leadership more favourable to their line headed by Antonio Gramsci. Though the "centre" had been put into the



leadership, the base of the party was still firmly on the left. When the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti was murdered in 1924 at the hands of fascists, Mussolini's government, which had not fully cemented its control of the Italian state, came into crisis. When the other bourgeois parties walked out of parliament in protest, horrified at the flagrant fascist offence to the norms of liberal democracy, Gramsci directed the communist deputies to follow these bourgeois parties, aiming to create an "anti-fascist" "anti-parliament". But this parliamentary charade with bourgeois parties had nothing to do with solidifying an independent working class, which at the time was suffering massive attacks through a rise in the cost of living and a revocation of the right to strike. As the scandal unfolded, the twists and turns of Gramsci and the flip-flopping of the Comintern leadership left the wider class rudderless at a time when they were ready to take to the streets, missing the opportunity for the Communist party to regain its footing and go on the offensive after four years of retreat.

"It is mistaken to think that in every situation expedients and tactical manoeuvres can widen the Party base since relations between the party and the masses depend in large part on the objective situation."

It was in this context of opportunism and floundering, that the committee of Intesa was formed by militants on the Left, notably Onorato Damen, who managed to persuade a reluctant Bordiga to support the effort. The committee stated bluntly that "the [leadership] consider the problem of conquering the "masses" as a problem of will. However, little by little they are adapting themselves to circumstances and are essentially lapsing into opportunism." Here they were absolutely correct in posing this division between the two conceptions. For the left of the party, the revolution could not be merely willed into existence, much less decreed by an utterance of the Comintern, but by relating to the working class where it objectively was and on its own terrain. The party needed to remain at the forefront of the workers' struggle against the very real economic attacks facing the class whilst staying true to the working class' final goal and not playing parliamentary games a la Gramsci. In practice this means working towards the seizure of political power itself, certainly not parliamentary maneuvers and political mergers to numerically widen the party at the expense of its programme and class standpoint. The committee were also right to say that the problem wasn't confined to Italy, declaring that "the Left firmly believes that a satisfactory solution to the question of the Italian Party is impossible without a solution to international questions". However, any serious attempt to take stock or reflect was not to be. In fact the 'problem' of the Committee of Intesa was doggedly discussed in the pages of Unita, (the party newspaper instituted by the 'bolshevised' Gramsci leadership in Italy), almost entirely in terms of the Trotsky problem: a sign of how much the individual sections of the Comintern were simply turned into a mirror of what was going on in the Russian party. Eventually, under threats of expulsion and orders to search the persons and dwellings of the "factionalists," the committee agreed to dissolve, hoping perhaps in vain that some form of debate would take place at the coming congress. What would follow would be expulsions from the party by the 'centre', arrests by Mussolini, and many other militants fleeing into exile. It has been many years since the struggle of the left of the party through the committee of Intesa but its lessons are still of value to revolutionaries today. Firstly, the Committee highlights that revolution will be international or it will fail, and that communists can never lose sight of this fact. The root of the degeneration of the Comintern was the ebbing of the revolutionary wave and the national isolation following the Russian Revolution. In this situation the leaders in Russia tried to salvage what they could by attempting to maintain power by hoping to form friendly "workers' governments" and pursuing trade deals with capitalist powers at the expense of the principles the international was founded on. In hindsight, it was impossible to maintain a revolutionary Russia isolated in a capitalist world, let alone with the waning vitality and power of the workers councils, but the opportunism they pursued ensured that no external emergent revolution would be coming to the rescue. Secondly, the Committee demonstrated that the communist party is not a party of parliamentary coalitions and political maneuvers but a party that fights for the revolutionary program inside the working class where it objectively is, ebb or flow. Neither does the party confuse the proletariat by engaging in capitalist politics for momentary success. The party doesn't will the revolution into existence but acts accordingly to the unfolding historical movement and in accordance with its revolutionary principles.

Today our class faces many challenges and has clear weaknesses. Like 100 years ago in Italy, we are once again facing a cost of living crisis. The various nations are gearing up for an imperialist confrontation whose horrors would be unimaginable. Workers' struggles which do emerge are often confined to trade unions, isolated and weak. If our class is going to overcome this dark period we will need to form a revolutionary party to fight on the front ranks of our class. International in scope, firmly entrenched in the struggles of the class and clear on its final goal of workers revolution and the communist future. This all may seem far off but it's not going to be willed into existence. Only the real work of revolutionaries today can produce the indispensable organ of the workers struggle; the future revolutionary international.

What Does Klasbatalo Fight For?

We fight for the political independence of the working class, which means we reject all cross-class alliances with the capitalist class, including its left-wing. We believe the working class must fight on its own terrain: first, to defend itself against the bosses' attacks; and, second, to achieve its ultimate task, that of establishing the world communist future which will rid the planet of exploitation, oppression, and war. It is towards this goal that we fight for the creation of the world communist party, whose purpose is to clarify the confusions among the class and to unify it towards its ultimate end; we believe this party to be the most potent weapon of our class. While we are for the party, we do not believe ourselves to be the party, nor do we believe that our organization alone will become it; rather, we see it as the product of both the wider class struggle, and of the real work of revolutionaries, of which we see ourselves as only one of many elements. We do not see this party as a government-in-waiting, for the emancipation of humanity depends on the active struggle of the whole working class, and this struggle cannot be replaced by the dictates of a minority.

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