

Rete Dei Comunisti Newsletter – June 2020

Sommario

Understanding the context and tackling the contradictions - Rete dei Comunisti	1
International solidarity by Cuban Henry Reeves brigade	4
Function and perspectives of a class-based union within and beyond the pandemic emergency - USB	5
Lombardy must be put under special measures - Contropiano	7
Youth struggles during the Pandemic - Noi Restiamo	10

.....

Interview on the current situation with Mauro Casadio, militant of Rete dei Comunisti.
(<http://lnx.retedaicomunisti.net/2020/05/08/comprendere-il-contesto-ed-afferrare-le-contraddizioni/>)

Understanding the context and tackling the contradictions - Rete dei Comunisti

“Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation” **Karl Marx**

This quote from the Moor of Trier - which is well suited to the unprecedented global situation that we are experiencing on a global level - gives us the starting point for a chat with Mauro Casadio of the *Rete dei Comunisti* about the connections between the economic and social crisis and the obfuscation of the dominant capitalism model.

The tendency to interpret this complicated context with an attitude of "long gaze" is, for the communists, the style of work to be interpreted subjectively to preserve and better re-qualify their action in society.

Question: *The so-called Phase 2 of the Pandemic crisis has started a few days ago. Old and new problems insist and screech with more force on the living conditions of the popular classes in a society that shows features of open authoritarianism, of acceleration of all antisocial dynamics, clearly highlighting the crisis of the dominant social model. Do you think that the bloodbath deriving from the Pandemic marks a before and after in the periodization of the capitalist contemporaneity that outlines the limits of this economic and social formation?*

Answer: forecasting is a dangerous activity and the communists know this very well. We can approximate the future scenarios of a general nature relating to the Capitalist Mode of Production. We know that for some time there has been a profound systemic crisis that manifested itself violently in 2007 especially in the USA, we also know that there has been a strong worldwide competition between the various economic and financial poles that has produced in the last year

the Trump-promoted trade war, and there is always a latent monetary war. We also know that the possibility of an economic growth of the kind produced by the collapse of the USSR and opening of the Chinese market today cannot be reproduced. This is the context in which the Covid-19 affair precipitates, which emphasizes the limits of the system hitherto contained essentially with expansive policies such as the "Quantitative Easing" promoted by all central banks.

Q: *it is now common to say that 'nothing will be as before'. We are witnessing - in fact - an accentuation of all the factors of interimperialist competition and the clash between powers which does not allude to a pacified world and to epochs of possible generalized development of progress for humanity. What scenario will emerge in the intertwining between the recovery of global international competition and the persistence of the systemic crisis aggravated by the consequences of the Pandemic?*

A: briefly, we have a market restriction that allows no other room for expansion and this will accentuate the politicization of the international confrontation with unpredictable effects, but which already manifest themselves in some way as the conflict that has materialized in Iran between that country and the USA or now with China on the alleged Chinese responsibility for the Pandemic. There is still, basically, a stalemate in the relationship of forces between the great powers but if this will be maintained it is difficult to predict.

Q: *In recent months, the inanity and unreliability of the ruling classes, which are clearly responsible for the enormous human losses and for a general process of economic and social impoverishment, have been manifested. What theoretical and - above all - political / practical function can communists assume in this conjuncture to perform a dynamic and not simply agitative and propagandistic task?*

A: The depth of the crisis as it has emerged since 2007 had to have consequences on the superstructure and in particular on the ruling classes, which is not confined to the capitalists and the political class but includes journalists, intellectuals and all those who can be called the "ideological apparatus ". The regressive nature of the crisis with its social effects has directly spilled over to the hegemonic capacity of the capitalist system and its ruling classes producing the "monsters", from Renzi to Salvini to Trump, which we see every day fidgeting on the screens, on the network and in print newspapers. For the communists this means that attending only to the social conflict - very important anyway - is no longer sufficient if you do not challenge yourself to come up with a general idea of alternative society starting from the cultural and social conditions, that is, of the class, that capital has produced in the last thirty years.

Q: *In recent years, the Rete dei Comunisti has proposed moments of collective discussion between independent communist and intellectual forces about the need for a modernization of the theme of Socialism. The meetings within the forum "Il bambino e l'acqua sporca" [the baby and the bathwater, from the Italian saying "do not throw away the baby away with the bathwater"] dealt with theoretical issues relating to the historical balance of the Communist Movement, the debate on the forms of Planning inherent in the Transition processes and the unprecedented experiments of Socialism of the 21st Century. In the light of the upheavals of these months, how can a new quality of what could be called a resumption of the Communist theoretical offensive in this period be imagined?*

A: coherently with what I stated in the previous answer, a "theoretical offensive" is fundamental for understanding the objective conditions in which we act, but above all for "working" on the quality of organized communist subjectivity. It is not an easy task and since the 1990s we have started to work on the mutation of objective conditions. A complicated task which is nonetheless proving very useful today in reading the general dynamics. The current situation obliges us to take a step forward to understand that the current systemic crisis leads us to reason both on the characteristics of organized subjectivity and on those of the possible revolution that over time could re-present itself as a "forced choice" for the people and the exploited. As *Rete dei Comunisti* in 2016 we "reviewed" our elaborations with the Forum "The old dies but the new cannot be born" - quote taken from the Gramsci of the 1930s - which today finds an incredible strength in a global context that does not see perspectives, a dead end of which Covid-19 is simply the most obvious manifestation.

International solidarity by Cuban Henry Reeves brigade

As Italian communists we express our heartfelt thanks for the internationalist solidarity expressed by the Cuban people, which manifested itself in the sending of the Henry Reeves medical brigade to the regions most affected by the coronavirus epidemic.

Noi Restiamo, la Rete dei Comunisti and the student organization OSA have produced a mural in various Italian cities to thank the Cuban people, and to ask for an immediate stop to the bloque that has been strangling the island of Cuba for decades.

TeleSur report on the mural for the Henry Reeves brigade in Turin

<https://youtu.be/0Ypmtrri4dM>

Letter of thanks to the Unione Sindacale di Base received from the CTC, Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, affiliated to the FSM-WFTU

<https://www.usb.it/leggi-notizia/ctc-cuba-ringrazia-usb-per-il-sostegno-alla-brigata-medica-henry-reeve-intervenuta-in-lombardia-contro-il-coronaviru-1542.html>





Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) is an independent and class union organization
(<https://www.usb.it/>)

Function and perspectives of a class-based union within and beyond the pandemic emergency - USB

Cinzia della Porta

In an unprecedented and complicated phase such as the one caused by the pandemic, the sectoral federations and the local structures of USB were immediately activated to defend the fundamental rights of workers, starting from their health in the workplace.

We denounced - in the midst of a campaign from the employers and the government aimed at using the emergency to embed the society in a climate of terror and 'national unity' - any attempt to force the world of work into a condition of danger, weakness and greater exploitation.

We fought to put forward scientific assessments on the pandemic, against clichés used artfully to keep open productive activities and divide the class, while denouncing past and current responsibilities on the state of public healthcare system, downsized significantly by massive privatizations, by the reduction of staff and beds, in a logic of total submission to the parameters imposed by the European Union through the principle of balanced budget and its treaties.

We denounced the manifest uselessness and speculative parasitism of private healthcare providers in emergency situations, but also the regionalization of health skills, which has greatly weakened the National Healthcare System. All contents and demands which, as a class-based union, we have placed at the centre of our mobilizations in recent years and which the effects of the pandemic have blatantly confirmed.

Despite the lockdown and the objective difficulties connected to it, USB did not limit itself to the complaint. While unable to carry out its union action through mass mobilizations in support of its reasons, we have built a path of specific and general struggles, breaking that "bubble" of impotence which the government and the objective danger of the situation have determined.

In the critical points of the system of essential services (food and retail, urban cleaning, logistics, health, large factories), we have broken the rhetoric of the national unity by demanding guarantees and protections not only in terms of health but also in terms of wages and safety on the workplace.

We immediately proclaimed sectoral strikes, in the retail sector, in the logistics sector, in the manufacturing industry and in social cooperatives, wherever safety conditions were not guaranteed. Of all the non-essential services, we asked for immediate closure, contrasting the right to health and life with profit.

Faced with the government's choice to keep non-essential activities open, the spread of contagion especially in those areas of the country where the production sites are larger and where, not surprisingly, the highest rates of contagion and victims were recorded, on March 25 USB proclaimed a national general strike, on the slogan "Close the factories and offices, there is nothing more important than health".

A necessary strike, requested by many workers who were unable to continue working and against those who took on the serious responsibility of accepting the "Cura Italia" Prime Ministerial Decree of 14 March, between the Government, Confindustria and CGIL, CISL and UIL.

We will not forget those who, by not stopping the production in those days, decided to sacrifice the lives of thousands of people on the altar of profit, causing a real massacre of the elderly, chronically ill, doctors, nurses, workers.

The strike of 25th of March also involved health personnel, albeit in the symbolic form of a few minutes, to underline how the sacrifice of many of them (today there are over 200 deaths among doctors, nurses and auxiliary staff) continued in the absence of the most important decision that only the government can take, namely the freezing of activities.

This abstention from work, although symbolic in essential services, has suffered a heavy attack by a special government anti-strike commission. With a 10-page resolution, the commission opened an infringement procedure against the USB Confederation for daring to proclaim a general strike to protect the health of workers and citizens, even if limited to a single symbolic minute in essential services such as health, assistance to the population, firefighters, city police, urban cleaning and assistance cooperatives.

Similar attacks have been carried out against other mobilizations organised by USB and by workers in many peripheral workplaces.

Another noteworthy initiative was that of the internationalist May Day, during which we promoted a telematic procession of more than 8 hours, which saw the support and presence of the unions affiliated to the World Trade Union Federation, of which USB is an essential component.

An important day, able to represent all the sectors covered by our Confederation, which is growing both quantitatively and qualitatively, in a phase of systemic crisis of capitalism that opens up the way to possible alternatives, towards what we also call " Socialism of the 21st century ".

First part of the First May on-line parade: "Pazienza Zero"

<https://youtu.be/6s3rNNCTVOU>

Second part of the First May on-line parade: "Pazienza Zero"

<https://youtu.be/25N13hilqe4>



Contropiano.org
giornale comunista online

Contropiano is a well-known online communist newspaper (<https://contropiano.org/>)

Lombardy must be put under special measures - Contropiano

Sergio Cararo

Too much the damage and too many the responsibilities piled up in less than fifty days by the authorities in Lombardy, (the Italian region worst affected by coronavirus), to avoid the necessary outcome: the "control room" of the region where the Covid 19 pandemic outbreak took place must be put under special measures by the central government.

Alas the j'accuse of the Lombardy doctors was the ultimate document, together with the dossier drawn up by the USB (Unione Sindacale di Base is an independent trade union) on the massacre in the RSAs (The acronym stands for *Residenze Sanitarie Assistenziali*), the nursing homes where the elderly have been literally left to die like flies.

We have witnessed a crescendo of deliberations taken autonomously by the northern Lombardy region, often - too often - in light of a mediatic competition with the central government, which has led to the situation we all know. A reality that even the "cautious optimism" spread in TV every night, first by the Civil Protection and then by the news, can no longer hide.

It is not possible to silently tolerate the fact that, in Lombardy, choices have been made according to an inversely proportional order between business and health: hence favoring the first at the expense of the second.

In order to safeguard this (perverse) logic, the Lombardy regional council used all the possibilities in its hands offered by the notorious constitutional law introduced in 2001, which granted Italian regions broad powers; a misguided choice that the political circles (Lega and Confindustria of the North) would have wanted to extend enormously with the "differentiated autonomy" (*Autonomia differenziata*, a program of reforms to decentralize the political power to the regions).

The transformation of the *imperative* "red zone", into an "orange zone" extended to the whole region, when the first and ascertained outbreaks took place in Lombardy, *nullified the attempt to rapidly circumscribe the epidemic.*

Reached that point, rather than imposing restrictive measures in a confined area, the conditions to delay the shutdown of non-essential production activities and to limit their number as much as possible were created *everywhere.*

The arrows shot by *Assolombarda* and *Confindustria* (regional and national entrepreneur's associations) against the shutdown of activities found the institutional strength they needed, confirmed in the negotiations with the government, which in the end culpably capitulated out of "respect" for the Confindustria summits.

The government yielded on the list of activities to be stopped, reducing it, in fact, to 36% of total businesses.

It was a shameful capitulation of the executive power to the diktats of the Italian entrepreneurs, or better, "takers" (Italian word play between "entrepreneurs", *imprenditori*, and "takers", *prenditori*) who are now ready and eager to confiscate money from the public funds made available by the government or by the banks, but with the aid of public financial backing on the loans that will be granted. Their racist motto "Italians first" changed to "Entrepreneurs first" and it did so without any control or whatsoever ("without bureaucracy", they say).

Thus workers and laborers in Lombardy, but not only, amidst the pandemic, continued to move back and forth, using public or private transport, whilst the emergency professed that it *had to be avoided*.

But there is another black hole that revealed the perverse intertwining of private interests, Lombardy institutions, and health structures.

We are referring to the regional resolution - number XI/2906 dated the 8th of March 2020 - that "requested" *the displacement of coronavirus patients in the Rsas*, leaning on the fact that a possible denial would have called into question the regional funding to those *private* institutions. *Indeed Rsas in Lombardy are a huge private business factor.*

Facts point out that instead of containing the virus, the conditions for a boom in mortality and contamination have been created.

Finally, come to surface the actions of another institution pertaining to the same infamous Lombardy private healthcare— the Humanitas - the main healthcare facility in Bergamo has the same owners of the steel mill Tenaris of Dalmine, in the same province.

The property - the Rocca family - was among the most intransigent in insisting to keep the production going even at the center of the pandemic (the Bergamo area).

As if that were not enough, they claimed a surcharge to the region Lombardy, in order to make the hospital structure available and subjecting all the healthcare staff to incredible stress.

Last but not least, we highlight the attempted operation concerning the emergency hospital at the *Fiera di Milano*. Conceived as an example of the efficiency of Lombardy private initiatives (big donors such as Berlusconi and Caprotti junior) and, with the appointment of a Bertolaso quickly knocked out, in open competition with the National Civil Protection. The results are under everyone's eyes (25 million euro for 13 patients) .

In short, Lombardy authorities have been blatantly *irresponsible* in the face of the pandemic, but perfectly "responsible" to safeguard the private interests of their *clientes*, be they industrialists or private healthcare providers.

And they have done so also at the expense of public health. If we were a normal country, they would have to be immediately expropriated of their institutional powers, put under a special measures by the central government, and placed in custody pending trial.

The Italian penal code comprises a specific crime. Article 438: "*Whoever causes an epidemic by spreading pathogenic germs is punished with life imprisonment*". The second paragraph, which concerns states of exception (*such as the current one!*) provides instead "*death penalty*".

Let's say that being put under receivership for the Lombardy region authorities would be the "minimum wage". We aren't even demanding that they go to jail. We would be satisfied with locking them inside the "Baggina" (Popular and Milanese name for the *Pio Albergo Trivulzio*, an ancient retirement home and hospital in Milan, one of the Rsas indicted for the number of deaths.)...



Noi Restiamo is a collective of students and young workers present in numerous Italian cities (<http://noirestiamo.org/>)

Youth struggles during the Pandemic - Noi Restiamo

We have defined the Covid-19 virus as a “black swan”, an unexpected event which upsets our reality bringing heavy consequences. Since the beginning it has been like that, it has triggered political actions which seemed absolute taboos up to few weeks before its arrival, just as an energetic intervention of the State in the economy, or the passing of budgetary constraints.

The pandemics spread in a particularly fragile context, highlighting the distortions of a system which is grounded on exasperated individualism and the obsessive pursuit of profit: the State, after years of sanitarian privatisation and cuts to its social expenses, had no or very few instruments to face the emergency, while the patronal organisation, Confindustria, pressed it to postpone the lockdown and preserve its rate of profit.

The EU itself revealed its nature in a flagrant way: an institutional apparatus which is functional just to big companies, based on the axiom of rapacious competition to be granted at any cost, and absolutely incapable to operate for the good of the working classes even in front of crises of this magnitude.

In general, the whole western capitalist system shows fragilities and weaknesses, not simply from the economic point of view, but as a general model of development for a human society, highlighting a substantial incapability to face events of this scale, to improve the living conditions of its people and even to preserve the standards reached in the second half of the XX century.

This is something that the young generations, in particular in Southern Europe, perfectly knew long before the virus. They have, in fact, been the main focus of any attack against the labour rights that the working classes have endured in these last decades: most of us have faced skyrocketing unemployment, precariousness, very low salaries, the consequences of the attacks to the right to education and forced migration.

As young and precarious men and women, as students we have understood, since the beginning, to be the great excluded, together with other popular sectors of the country, from the attentions of government’s social actions against the emergency, almost entirely focused to support the

enterprises and their productivity. We have launched, together with the tenants' Union ASIA USB, a campaign to ask for the suspension of rents and utilities: being such payments a very serious issue for many of us, who have lost since the arrival of the pandemics, those mini-jobs which granted, before the lockdown, low and intermittent salaries to pay for a living.

In order to press regions and government and ask for immediate support we have encouraged and managed the development of several regional and local permanent assemblies of students and young workers. We have always recognised the importance of measures and practises introduced in order to contain the virus - and we denounced the pressures of Confindustria to keep companies running as a criminal attitude. Despite that we have been forced by the precariousness of our conditions to break the prohibitions and to take to the streets - with all the necessary attention to health prevention - to be listened to. On the 30th of April we stand in large numbers together with the USB Union in front of the Parliament to ask for support measures for the young and popular classes: income, rent suspension, and granted right to education.

Within our assemblies it has emerged, in fact, that many students could not afford to pay rents and University very high taxes in this moment in Italy. We have elaborated a shared platform to take on all the main problems that our University system highlighted - contradictions emerged even more clearly in this moments - and we physically reached the rectorates of our main universities on the 5th of May, in order to demand for concrete actions to prevent that poor and socially weak students abandon their studies. We are keeping moving with a national campaign that in this last week of May has reached as many universities as it was possible in order to let them hear our voices: we want the abolition of the third instalment of this year taxes, together with the abolition of next year ones.

We need to continue to organise and fight together, as we did in these last weeks, because organisation is our most powerful instrument, the most powerful instrument we have to raise our voices against a life in misery and to claim for a radical change of system.

We are not, and we will never be, all in the same boat.

With this awareness, we have been organising since now, in order to avoid that this crisis turns out in another wave of social massacre. We need to act so as to put forward our material claims, and to defend our previous social conquests, which are necessary but not sufficient steps, in a moment in which social conflict appears to be more than ever sterile, if it is practised without a general project for a radical change of the system we live in.