

FOR THE DRASTIC REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME, TOWARDS THE ABOLITION OF WAGES SYSTEM!

With increasing frequency, various fractions of the bourgeoisie speak of reducing the working day, worried about the social bomb that can be accumulated by the displacement by automation of ever greater masses of proletarians from direct exploitation or by the cost that would entail keeping it deactivated with aid and subsidies. Despite being launched with great noise and generating great opposition and fuss in other bourgeois sectors, **the reductions proposed by the bourgeoisie are derisory or carry with them a wage reduction**, either immediate or derived.

The struggle for the 40-hour workweek was carried out and settled in the major capitalist states a hundred years ago. The reality is that with the **technological leap that has taken place in the means of production** in the last century, and even in the last decades, **the working time should be reduced to less than 20 hours per week**.

The **drastic reduction of the working time** is a fundamental slogan that connects the struggle on the immediate plane of the working class with the communist struggle for the revolutionary overcoming of capitalism: ***"Time is the room of human development. A man who has no free time to dispose of, whose whole lifetime, apart from the mere physical interruptions by sleep, meals, and so forth, is absorbed by his labor for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden. He is a mere machine for producing Foreign Wealth, broken in body and brutalized in mind."*** (Value, Price and Profit, K. Marx)

The basis of capitalism is wage labor

Capitalism distinguishes itself from previous forms of exploitation and the division of society into social classes by the commodity character of labor-power, by the fact that the working class sells its labor-power: ***"the condition for capital is wage-labor. (...) there can no longer be any wage-labor when there is no longer any capital"*** (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848).

This labor-power has an **exchange-value** (*the socially necessary labor time for its production and reproduction*) but it is consumed by the capitalist for a longer time, yielding a difference in favor of the capitalist: **surplus value**. This surplus value, **time not paid to the working class, is the only source of profit**. The **wages system** is nothing else but the most modern **system of exploitation and slavery**, which subjects the commodity labor-power (the working class) to all the **destructive swings and oscillations of the anarchy of mercantile production**.

Absolute surplus-value and relative surplus-value

The prolongation of the working day is in turn the basis of surplus value, the prolongation of unpaid labor time (Capital, Section III, **Absolute surplus-value**). But the prolongation of unpaid labor time is also imposed through the technological development of the means of production which reduces the cost of production and reproduction of the commodity labor power, **extending the unpaid part of the working day even without extending the total working day** (Capital, Section IV, **Relative surplus-value**).

The socially necessary time required to produce what the working class consumes for its production and reproduction is constantly decreasing. What a few years ago took days to produce, today is produced in hours or even minutes. But the time we work has not been reduced in the same proportions, when it

has not even increased. The consequence is that **the unpaid working time of the working class has increased and continues to increase exponentially**.

Consequences of technological development

This exponential increase in the productive capacity of labor, developed by and within capitalism, has as a consequence for the working class the **expulsion from the productive process of an ever-greater mass of proletarians** whose work is replaced by technology.

This in turn produces an **increase in the working hours and working intensity** of those who keep their jobs, in a vicious circle in which companies compete with each other to keep their rate of profit afloat. This competition is inevitable and is increased by the **reduction of the rate of profit** and the **saturation of markets** due to **overproduction**.

But it also results in the **fragmentation of working time** and, in several sectors, there has been a reduction in working hours with a reduction in wages, causing many fellow workers **to fail to achieve a full working day, even when juggling multiple jobs**.

Unemployment is inevitable under capitalism

Capitalism needs the existence of a mass of unemployed to push down wages and to cover the variable needs of labor-power for its exploitation: ***"(...) a surplus laboring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, (...) a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army (...) it creates, for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of human material always ready for exploitation."*** (Capital, Volume I, Section 7, Chapter XXV, K. Marx).

But, in its development and even though its only basis is the exploitation of wage labor, capitalism expels from the productive process ever greater masses of the proletarian population, thus reducing the mass it exploits directly and increasing the mass it has to maintain, albeit in miserable conditions, through subsidies, benefits and pensions. It is one more of the contradictions in which capitalism is entangled, foreseen since the Manifesto of 1848, and which demonstrates its historically transitory character: ***"(...) the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him."*** (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848).

For the abolition of wages system

The struggle for the reduction of the working day and, in general, for wage and working conditions is an indispensable need for the working class and is also a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the fight to overthrow the bourgeois regime and the abolition of wage exploitation.

The intimate relationship between this immediate struggle and the perspective of communist revolution has been clear for a long time now: ***"(...) is this saying that the working-class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would***

be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation. (...) **By cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.**" (Value, Price and Profit, K. Marx). It is precisely to liquidate or constrain any impulse of fight even on the immediate plane that the bourgeoisie finances and subsidizes integrated trade unionism, a true life-insurance for capital. And for this reason, communists must support and encourage the development of a **network of union struggle outside and against integrated unionism: the class union.**

But in this immediate struggle we cannot forget that as long as capitalism and wage labor exist, labor-power will remain a commodity subject to the laws that preside over the anarchy of mercantile production: "[The working class] *ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economic reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto: "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword: "ABOLITION OF THE WAGES SYSTEM!"*" (Value, Price and Profit, K. Marx).

Capitalism means waste and squandering

Capitalism prevailed over previous forms of production through the relentless application of science and the division of labor inside the factory. But this becomes a chaotic and uncontrolled racket on the outside, in a market flooded with commodities, in which all the enterprises blindly compete with each other to transform into profit the surplus value wrested from the working class.

"But every society based upon the production of commodities has this peculiarity: that the producers have lost control over their own social interrelations. Each man produces for himself with such means of production as he may happen to have, and for such exchange as he may require to satisfy his remaining wants. No one knows how much of his particular article is coming on the market, nor how much of it will be wanted. No one knows whether his individual product will meet an actual demand, whether he will be able to make good his costs of production or even to sell his commodity at all. Anarchy reigns in socialised production. But the production of commodities, like every other form of production, has its peculiar, inherent laws inseparable from it; and these laws work, despite anarchy, in and through anarchy. They reveal themselves in the only persistent form of social interrelations, i.e., in exchange, and here they affect the individual producers as compulsory laws of competition. (...). The product governs the producers." (Anti-Dühring, F. Engels).

This leads to the inevitable overproduction of what is not needed while not enough is produced to satisfy other pressing needs, leads to the same processes being carried out in duplicate and kept under commercial secrecy, leads to a multitude of unproductive jobs from a social point of view, to a multitude of other antisocial jobs (think of the bureaucratic apparatus at the service of the domination functions of the bourgeoisie), to the production of commodities destined to spoil in order to be sold again (programmed obsolescence), and, finally, to the periodic destruction of the productive forces already created through crises and wars.

Therefore, only with the communist revolution and the **abolition of the anarchy of mercantile production** will we be able to eliminate all this redundancy and waste of effort,

eliminate all useless and antisocial work, incorporate the entire population into production, thus **reducing the obligatory working time to a minimum fraction of the day**, through the **combination of the obligation to work with the distribution of this work among the entire population**, at different durations and intensities according to age and other personal circumstances.

For social revolution, for communism

At present, **we live under the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie**, no matter how much embellishment they put on it. It is a truth that we feel at every moment in the strikes, in the courts, etc. For this reason, **we will not succeed in breaking or modifying the system of capitalist relations of production, from which exploitation derives, without overthrowing the bourgeois State.** The working class will have to equip itself in turn with its own instrument **to prevent the restoration of slavery and exploitation: the dictatorship of the proletariat**, history does not allow a middle term. However, **this revolutionary State is only necessary in a transitory period and will die out** and will be gradually replaced by the collective organization of the associated free producers.

To be able to carry out this task, the working class needs a Party with a scientific understanding of history and a program that is not one of reform or conservation of the present society: **this party is the International Communist Party that must gather the most advanced and determined part of the proletariat, unifying the efforts of the proletarian masses by leading them from the struggle for contingent interests and results to the general struggle for the revolutionary emancipation of the proletariat.**

It is essential to understand that **"without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement"** (Lenin) and to study the scientific foundations of Marxism ("*Wage Labor and Capital*", "*Manifesto of the Communist Party*", "*Anti-Dühring*", "*Capital*", "*Critique of the Gotha Programme*") together with the lessons drawn by the Communist Left from the tactical-programmatic-organizational degeneration of the Communist International (degeneration of which "Trotskyism" was a co-participant), which ended up abandoning the world communist revolution in 1926.

This bourgeois world is sinking and threatens to drag us down with it, we have no patches or mends to apply it but a new society to fight and live for. And not a caricature of it with changed names but **a truly communist society**: without wage labor, without market, without anarchy of production, without private property, without State, without crisis or war... in which **"the free development of each will be the premise of the free development of all"** (Manifesto of the Communist Party, 1848).

**Alternative to the
mercantile-capitalist
system**

