

A COLD MORNING...

A climate unusually cold in Southern California is penetrating even to the bones. The thermometer shows 41 degrees. It's almost 7 am and "he" still hasn't come. From the car you can observe that the workers at this juice bottling factory are running to get to the entrance before the bell rings to begin the shift. From far away you can see the silhouette of a person walking hurriedly. Little by little you can recognize him as he gets closer. It's "him," with his jaw stuck to his chest, and wrapped in a kayeffa (Palestinian scarf), a cap of black wool pulled down over the ears, and his hands in the pockets of a thick nylon jacket, greeting me only by moving his head.

"You're late, Roberto, hurry up. The bell rang."

"It doesn't matter. Now I'll wait 10 minutes, because anyway they'll take 15 away from me. Yesterday they took my car, my good one, for not having a license. There was a despicable police check point, they say for sobriety, but they always ask for your license and if you don't have it, they send the car to the police impound. Now I have to pay \$1800. That includes the \$40 a day that the car is detained for a month, plus the fine for driving without a license."

The bitterness is reflected on Roberto's face as he says this. His cheerful look has disappeared; this playful character, joker, typical of some residents of Mexico City, seems to have changed. In its place a harsh face, a grey look.

He continued. "They took my car yesterday when we were going to visit my mother-in-law,

and there was a horrible chill from hell. My three kids were cold and hungry. The smallest one was crying and crying, and I got madder. I told my wife to make the little one be quiet. 'Stop bothering me!' she yelled angrily.

"Fed up, we walked to take the bus back home. Today, at 5 am, we got up to take the children to a neighbor who takes care of them. She takes the two oldest to school. My wife then left for work early with some other neighbors. I came on the bus." Roberto's frustration is evident. For a minute it seems that he wants to cry. His eyes are reddened. Maybe it's the cold.

Like his car, dozens and maybe hundreds of cars, the property of undocumented workers, are confiscated in Los Angeles County every week.

"I brought you *Red Flag*." The words came out timidly as if I didn't want to talk about this topic, at least at this moment. Would Roberto be able to hear that apart from terrorizing the workers, this is a money-making business for the bosses? Or is it better to listen to him, let him unburden?

"We illegals are always attacked more; it's hard to find a job; they pay us almost nothing; they don't want to give us drivers' licenses because we don't have papers," said Roberto wearily.

"Undocumented, Roberto, undocumented. No worker is illegal. We all have the right to work and live better. The illegals are the bosses. They created the borders and, without asking permission, they go exploit our class brothers and sisters

throughout the whole world. This is capitalism. The bosses force us to emigrate. They make us believe that we're illegals to exploit us more easily. They do the same in Europe with African and Asian workers."

Roberto's gaze avoids the factory where he works. "I don't want to work today. I don't feel like it. Only because I have a family to maintain, if not..." He raised his shoulders in a gesture of resignation.

"Look, Roberto, I know your situation isn't good now, but when has it been good for the workers? The good times have been when the working class has fought. There's always a light at the end of the tunnel. Or, to say it better, a *Red Flag*."

"Once again, with the same song, my friend. Better, tell me now, when we will start making the revolution?" he asked with a smile full of sarcasm.

"In ICWP we've already started. The only thing missing is for you to do it with us. Starting to distribute the paper is the first step. I already told you to join the study groups where we'll all learn how to get rid of this unjust system. In communism, we won't need to emigrate to work. We'll have everything in the place we live. We'll work for ourselves, for our class."

"I'm going. It's getting late and they'll fire me and it will be your fault." He composed himself, returning again to his bright smile.

"That's how I like to see Roberto, with enthusiasm, always."

"I'm going because now you're going to talk to me about communism and you have me up to my ears with this." He smiled and now it wasn't with irony.

"Take another paper so you can give it to someone."

"No, I'm good with one. Don't you see that no more will fit in my backpack?"

Right away he slowly extended his hand, as if he wanted to avoid touching hot steel, took another *Red Flag* and put it in his backpack. He said goodbye as always, joking.

"Lend me some change for my good car, no?" Smiling, as if soon in this grey morning, the sun would come into full view.



THIS MAY DAY

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY,

IN LOS ANGELES AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD, ICWP URGES WORKERS, STUDENTS, SOLDIERS AND THEIR ALLIES TO:

MOBILIZE THEIR FRIENDS TO STRIKE ON MAY DAY FOR COMMUNISM

MARCH WITH ICWP AND HELP SPREAD RED FLAG AND OUR MANIFESTO MOBILIZE THE MASSES FOR COMMUNISM TO TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS.



ICWP has published our manifesto *Mobilize the Masses for Communism*. It's available in English and Spanish. Order your copy or copies. Please send donations for the costs of printing and mailing. We also ask for your suggestions and criticisms.

Write to : PMB 362
3175 S. Hoover St.,
Los Angeles, CA 90007