

Amazon Labor Union hosts Stalinist Communist Party of Greece

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The Amazon Labor Union (ALU) hosted top officials of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) on their visit to New York City in late April.

In a short video that Christian Smalls, the ALU's founder and president, reposted on X, he and Dimitris Koutsoumpas, the KKE's general secretary, exchanged general remarks about the anti-genocide protesters at Columbia University and about Amazon. Neither the ALU nor the KKE has disclosed any additional information about the discussion.

The ALU has met previously with Stalinists such as Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel in recent months.

Like the ALU's previous meetings with other Stalinists, the event provided an opportunity for the ALU to cultivate a radical or even "revolutionary" image. But in reality, the summit with the KKE was part of the ALU's effort to build its own bureaucracy while ignoring the ongoing exploitation of workers at Amazon's JFK8 fulfillment center in Staten Island, New York.

In its early years, the KKE was a revolutionary workers' party. It was founded in the wake of the Russian Revolution, which established the world's first workers' state. In 1920, the KKE became a member of the Communist International, which gathered the world's communist parties under the program of international revolution. In spite of its later political degeneration under Stalin, the KKE retained credibility in the Greek working class due both to the prestige of the Russian Revolution and the party's participation in the resistance to the Nazi occupation. After the war, it led an armed struggle against the new Greek government, which was backed by American and British imperialism.

Despite these struggles, the KKE has seriously degenerated as a result of the nationalist, counterrevolutionary program of Stalinism. For decades, it disoriented and betrayed the Greek working class. By loyally enacting the policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy

that had usurped power from the Soviet working class, the KKE cleared the way for the Greek military coup in 1967. When the coup regime fell in 1974, the KKE helped restabilize capitalist rule by participating in governments led by the right-wing New Democracy and by the social democratic PASOK.

The KKE lost vital resources and political credibility after the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, it has struggled to maintain its organizational hold on sections of the working class. Its main social base today is the affluent middle class. Controlled by a corps of functionaries, the KKE uses radical phrases to cover up policies aimed at disorienting workers and enriching the top layers of society. Though the KKE has criticized the pseudo-left party Syriza, which enforced the savage austerity measures demanded by the International Monetary Fund, it ultimately has no principled differences with this party.

During its campaign before the election at JFK8, the ALU presented itself as a rank-and-file organization that was unlike the established trade unions, which are broadly distrusted and even hated among workers. But no sooner had the ALU won the election than its leaders met with Sean O'Brien, president of the Teamsters, as well as top officials of other unions. Last year, O'Brien prevented a strike of UPS workers and oversaw the ratification of a contract that has paved the way for facility closures and mass layoffs.

O'Brien himself is a furious right winger, even by the standards of the American trade union bureaucracy. While the majority of the trade union bureaucrats support "Genocide Joe" Biden and many have attempted to conceal their support for war with toothless resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, the Teamsters are openly courting Trump and have donated money both to the Republican National Committee and to Senator Josh Hawley, who played a key role in the January 6 plot to

overturn the 2020 election and establish a presidential dictatorship.

The Teamsters and other unions embraced the ALU in order to refurbish their own image, which has been tattered by decades of betrayals. The ALU, in turn, has readily accepted money, office space and other resources from O'Brien and company, who are coaching the ALU's budding bureaucrats on how to "do business" with Amazon. The established unions' money may well be supporting the ALU leaders themselves: an anonymous JFK8 worker told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the ALU officials are receiving salaries, even though Amazon workers are not paying dues.

The ALU's simultaneous association with both top US union bureaucrats and leading Stalinists may appear contradictory. After all, the AFL-CIO is steeped in anti-communist American nationalism. The unions carried out a massive purge of left-wing and socialist workers in the 1950s, even before the beginning of the infamous Senate hearings under Joseph McCarthy. During the Cold War, it played a key role in CIA plots against left-wing movements in the colonial world, especially Latin America, through fronts such as USAID.

The union bureaucracy continues the role of promoters of US imperialism today, through support for the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia and countless other examples. The Biden administration in particular sees the trade unions as a key mechanism for enforcing labor peace in the "home front" as it prepares for far wider, and increasingly unpopular, military conflicts.

But what is common to the KKE bureaucracy and the anti-communist AFL-CIO bureaucracy is a nationalist perspective; both groups systematically act to prevent workers from uniting in an international struggle.

The unions and the Stalinists also share a hostility to the working class. They have a material interest in ensuring labor peace and enforcing the mandates of the corporate and financial oligarchy. Moreover, both groups have experience in creating and maintaining a layer of functionaries while covering up their pro-corporate policies with militant rhetoric. This is the perspective to which the ALU is oriented.

Meanwhile, the workers at JFK8 have been all but forgotten. More than two years after the ALU's election victory, JFK8 workers are no closer to a contract than they were before. Working conditions have not changed. Instead of organizing protests or a strike, the ALU has encouraged workers to have faith in a court battle against

Amazon, which has led nowhere. Despite the ALU's victory in the drawn-out proceedings, Amazon continues to refuse to recognize the union.

The ALU has also encouraged workers to appeal to the Democrats for reforms, including at a recent "mass membership" meeting at JFK8 with more Democratic officeholders than Amazon workers. But President Joe Biden and his party are relying on the trade unions to prevent strikes and suppress workers' opposition to the war in Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza and preparations for war with Iran and China.

JFK8 workers supported the union because they wanted to wage a fight against Amazon, not create a new bureaucracy dedicated to protecting its own interests. The disillusionment is not limited to JFK8; the ALU has failed to win a union election at any other Amazon facility, and its efforts to expand have all but collapsed.

Workers in logistics, auto manufacturing and other industries are looking for a way to fight mass layoffs and plant closures. Students and young workers are occupying campuses and taking to the streets to oppose Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza. The American ruling class is recklessly pursuing war abroad to forestall the decline of its global economic dominance. This foreign policy necessitates an attack on domestic opposition within the working class.

The ALU offers a program of prostration before the ruling class and the trade unions that serve it. Amazon workers must reject this bankrupt perspective and establish their political independence. The way forward lies in the formation of rank-and-file committees at every workplace.

Only through these organizations can workers fight for their objective needs instead of accepting what magnates like Jeff Bezos deign to offer. In addition, these committees will be the means of coordinating workers' struggles across industries and national borders. The goal of these struggles must be the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.



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