A world topples

The October revolution triumphed a century ago. To celebrate the October revolution means, for the Fourth International, to consider its contemporary relevance, the lessons of the combat waged by the Bolsheviks, who were able to build a revolutionary party and anchor it within the masses in the very process of revolutionary developments, enabling the working class to take power and expropriate capital.

A century later, the capitalist system is in a crisis of unparalleled amplitude. World developments, particularly in the United States after the election of Trump, and the crisis of disintegration of the Europe of the old imperialist powers, have opened a situation of generalized instability and uncertainty, and of huge revolutionary perspectives as a result.

**October 1917 Revisited**

After October, under the worst conditions of military encirclement and civil war, the crushing of the German revolution in 1919 by the Social Democrat government and the reflux of the revolutionary wave in Europe, all isolating the USSR, the expropriation of capital achieved in October 1917 remained. These conditions allowed a bureaucracy to prevail, a corrupt, greedy, rapacious social stratum which plundered the Soviet State and undermined the social relationships and the social property attained in October 1917. And, in a country whose economy was distorted by the bureaucracy, industrial development hauled out of their backwardness millions of Soviet citizens and industrialized the country. One would no more die of hunger, there was no more famine, and people had housing.

The working class put up a permanent resistance and the bureaucracy was unable to overturn the relationships established in October. The USSR and the expropriation of capital stayed in place until the end of the Soviet Union that is until 1991.

In 1991, we convened in Barcelona the first World Conference against war and exploitation, which would give birth to the “Entente Internationale des travailleurs et des peuples” (the International Liaison Committee). It was a few days before the launch of the first Gulf War by US president Bush (senior) to crush Iraq. It was a few weeks before the explosion of the Soviet Union.

This decay of the bureaucracy and this first Gulf war opened a new period in the world situation. Of course, we remain within the framework defined by Lenin: imperialism is the era of wars and revolutions. But we were no longer in 1914-1918, when the imperialist powers were fighting to control Europe and to control the world, with on one side France and England, and on the other, Germany. The United States entered the war in 1917, a few months after the victory of the Russian revolution because the bell tolled, the Russian revolution could spread in Europe and American imperialism had to intervene militarily to crush Germany, domesticate France and Great Britain, and establish an order under its control on a global scale, against the October revolution.

We are no longer in that situation. We are in a situation marked by the disappearance of the Soviet Union, which has meant the collapse of the international Stalinist apparatus. The latter played a key role in the flight to contain the revolutionary processes. And, after 1991, the American bourgeoisie – US imperialism – was obliged to bear directly the functions of counter-revolution, including those that had been conducted by the Stalinist bureaucracy. This burden was too great for it to bear, and beyond its strength. For the last 25 years, the crisis of the American ruling class has not ceased to develop, to grow. The outcome of the presidential election in the United States, the election of Trump, did not open the crisis in the United States; it was only the revelation of it and a further stage in the crisis that has already existed for years.

**Anger and Dismay**

It is futile to try to find the signs, as all authoritative commentators are doing, of a strategic reorientation in the policies of American imperialism based upon the sum of the contradictory declarations of Trump and his team. There are none. The election of Trump, which continues to stun the whole world, provides a striking image of the dead-end into which the system of imperialist domination is sinking at world level and of its refraction at the heart of the most powerful imperialism: the United States. That election was the unexpected
of taxing this trade is catastrophic for Mexico, it would not suit the interests of American groups either, notably the automobile sector, which fears “the destruction of highly-integrated chains of production by which certain components go back and forth a dozen times between the United States and Mexico before being assembled in a chain whose final product is destined for the U.S. market”.

For a long time now productive forces have been untrammeled by national borders and so-called “national” groups would asphyxiate if they had stay within the framework of the nation-State. The crisis striking American industry has to do with neither customs tariffs nor exchange rate policies... but takes us back to the fundamental and insurmountable crisis of the system of capitalist exploitation. From this point of view, the threats of recourse to protectionist measures merely underline the impasse in which the most powerful of the imperialisms has plunged and the fact that the world has entered a zone of unpredictable dangers.

**FINANCIAL Deregulation?**

Trump presents himself as the champion of financial deregulation. When the collapse of Lehman Bros in 2008 threatened to bring down the whole American financial system like a house of cards, the American State injected hundreds of billions of dollars from public funds to stop the hemorrhage. In return, in order not to have to intervene again, it decreed a certain number of rules aimed at limiting the dangers associated with “risky” speculative practices (the Odd-Frank Act).

The American banks, which benefited from this bail-out using tax-payers’ money, together with the extension of these “prudential rules” to the whole of the world banking system in order to ensure their domination within eight years, notably of their European competitors, consider themselves hampered by these lending rules and have been demanding their relaxation. Trump has sought to appear to give them a positive response, as if financial regulation or deregulation had the power to convince investors to invest “in a world of uncertainties in which enterprises are finding their way with difficulty, as indicated by their mountains of cash and their buy-back of shares”.

**ISOLATIONISM?**

As regards foreign policy Trump is, like Obama was, hampered by the collapse of whole swathes of the world. He has said loud and clear that he will free the U.S. budget of a whole series of costs linked to old military alliances, which have
become unnecessary. He speaks of the obsolete nature of NATO, but sends his General Mathis to a meeting of NATO heads of State. He had expressed doubts regarding the security alliance linking Japan and the United States. But he then reaffirmed, on Sunday, February 12, during the Trump-Abe summit meeting, that "the United States are with Japan, our great ally, 100 percent."

He has carried out a similar exercise with China, having just recognized the principle of "one China" only (that is, not recognizing "two China", the other being Taiwan - translator's note). For all his declared isolationism, he will have to contain the strategy of tension employed by States ruined by the collapse in raw materials prices, such as Russia, whose provocative policy constitutes the sole means of avoiding the disintegration of the country.

THE MEANING OF THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT OUTBURSTS

Even in his anti-immigrant policy, Trump is continuing measures carried out by his predecessor. It is distinguished by its violent tone, by the vulgar display of racism aimed at nourishing the sources of conflict and division among the exploited layers of the population. But this is only the American expression of rhetoric common to all the defenders of the established order, in the United States, in Europe, in Africa and Asia. These millions of human beings rejected by the system, forcibly displaced and depicted as invaders on all continents, constitute the "surplus" population produced by the functioning of the capitalist system in its stage of imperialist decomposition.

Leon Trotsky wrote: "The industrial reserve army makes up an indispensable component part of the social mechanics of capitalism, as much as a supply of machines and raw materials in factory warehouses or of finished products in stores. Neither the general expansion of production nor the adaptation of capital to the periodic ebb and flow of the industrial cycle would be possible without a reserve of labor-power. From the general tendency of capitalist development - the increase of constant capital (machines and raw materials) at the expense of variable capital (labor-power) - Marx drew the conclusion: 'The greater the social wealth the greater is the industrial reserve army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus-population, the greater is official pauperism. This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.' Trotsky added: "The present army of unemployed can no longer be regarded as a "reserve army," because its basic mass can no longer have any hope of returning to employment: on the contrary, it is bound to be swelled by a constant flow of additional unemployed."

And we could in turn add: an unending "flows" of tens of millions of refugees too.

In short, in the Washington "earthquake", we see rising to the surface, through the contradictions and incoherence of Trump and his team, all the blockages of a system in total decomposition, and not the first steps of a hypothetical attempt to reorient the policies of American imperialism. Trump is adjusting as he goes along. He pushes ahead to the point where the Court of Appeal of San Francisco annuls his immigration decree. He doesn't care.

To employ the expression of the director of IFRI (French institute for research - translator's note), "a systemic unpredictability has installed itself in Washington". While this "systemic unpredictability" is spectacularly concentrated in the policies of American imperialism, it is the refraction of the "systemic unpredictability" of the whole system, preparing the opening of gaping breaches in all of the forms taken by imperialist domination on all the continents.

THE EUROPEAN UNION IS FALLING APART

The EU is already falling apart, but Trump is not the cause of that.

The EU is in the course of exploding under the pressure of contradictory forces, which have been at work practically since its inception. It has not been able to impose within a framework based on the system of private property - which is by nature marked by competition between private interests in order to dominate the market - a supra-national system of governance above that of the nation-States and their contradictory interests. The imperialist trusts which here confront each other trample upon the sovereign prerogatives of these States, exercising a disintegrating pressure upon them, while at the other end of the chain the resistance of the peoples undermines their foundations.

But above all: its market, its enterprises, and its infrastructure are no longer of a dimension capable of dealing with the economic war that is being waged in the world.

For the big imperialist trusts, the old bourgeois States constituted in the ascendant phase of capitalism carry the great disadvantage of not having been able to eradicate from their juridical and institutional framework the trace of the social conquests wrested by the proletariat. This is intolerable in the war to the death that they are waging. The destruction of all that subsists of this juridical framework in their
public institutions is the necessary condition for the crushing of labor power under conditions, which could restore the profitability of invested capital (rate of profit). The offensive of finance capital, indispensable for the restoration of margins threatened by world competition, is directed against the juridical forms inscribed in the institutional framework of these States by the conquests of the proletariat. This drives the class struggle to invest that terrain, with all the dangers that this carries with it for the bourgeois State itself.

The crisis, which is shaking Europe, is not the crisis of this or that governmental form of imperialist domination. It is the crisis of all the forms of domination by the bourgeoisie. That is what the salvo, which has just shaken four European States is an expression of:

On June 23 last, the poker game attempted in Great Britain by Cameron in order to discipline his Conservative Party and put the Labour Party in difficulty backfired on him. The victory for Brexit was the amalgam of a popular vote against the policies of the EU combined with a vote by part of the ruling circles of British imperialism who demonstrated their desire to turn away from the EU, whose economy continues to stagnate, in order to reorient the City of London toward Wall Street and Asia in order to save the City's place as leading financial center. Cameron was ejected. And the greatest uncertainty reigns regarding the Brexit conditions.

On December 4, Matteo Renzi, the Italian premier, was defeated outright in the referendum, which he himself had sought.

On December 1, François Hollande announced that he would not be seeking re-election... after which Sarkozy failed in the primary of the rightwing, Valls in the primary of the left, while Fillon, sole candidate of the classic French right, struggled as ruling circles of the bosses' organization turned away from him.

And then Sigmar Gabriel, German vice-chancellor, resigned from all his positions of responsibility in a bid to save the SPD, the main factor of order in Germany, from disaster.

**All the Cards have been Reshuffled**

For 70 years (since the end of World War II), the imperialist order has essentially reposed in Europe upon the collaboration of the leaders of the workers' movement with imperialism, under forms and in the political conditions peculiar to each country.

Seventy years which have not been spared brisk upsurges in the class struggle, contained however within the stable institutional framework which permitted imperialism to make concessions to the working class - concessions which must today be destroyed.

Today a new period is opening. In order to survive the crisis which is wrecking it, capital must seek to eradicate even the very memory of these concessions and can no longer really count upon a classic Popular Front-type "solution" with this aim, given the impotence, due to their decomposition, of the "parties of the left" which have been rejected by the masses. By concentrating its offensive on this aim of destruction, capital is undermining one of the foundations of the strength of these class organizations and their leaders, which live from their "management" on behalf of the class of the social conquests of the proletariat.

All the elements of a crisis without precedent are gathering together within these organizations. It is traversing them from top to bottom and opening breaches reaching right to the summits of these class organizations.

That which took place in France during the whole mobilization against the El Khomri Labor Law provides an image of this. The apparatuses were constrained, under the pressure of their grass roots, to go further than they wanted on the road to a break with the established order, though without breaking.

Under different forms, the same process is under way in all the European countries. Starting with Germany, Spain, Italy... Gaping breaches are opening up right in the very heart of the organizations and their apparatuses.

All the parties, which claimed to stand for the working class and democracy, have entered into an existential crisis as the price to pay for their reneging. As class organizations the trade unions have, for this reason, become the main instrument that the working class can grasp in order to unite on its own class terrain. The question of the independence of these class organizations has thus become a central political stake in the struggle waged by the two fundamental classes.

**The Call for the Open Wordl Conference and the Fight of the IV International**

The call launched by the coordination of the International Liaison Committee (ILC) of Workers and Peoples states:

"Today, in the face of this unprecedented enterprise of destruction waged on all the continents by American imperialism and its auxiliaries with the collaboration of the big international institutions such as the IMF, the
World Bank, the European Union, the anger of the peoples is seething. The fights of resistance are spreading. Veritable uprisings are in the offing, and are already undermining the foundations of all States, which have been placed in charge precisely of guaranteeing the imperialist order. The declarations of the most powerful State leaders, each more inconsistent and contradictory than the other, are unable to hide the reality: the world imperialist order, victim of its own insurmountable contradictions, is being shaken from North to South, from East to West. Never for the working class of the imperialist countries, as for those under imperialist domination, has the question of government power been posed simultaneously in such similar terms. Under different forms, certainly, on all the continents, but with a similar content. These political questions are also posed more acutely for the most vulnerable, above all the youth and women.

Never for the working class – the only class capable of gathering behind it all the exploited sectors of the population and the oppressed peoples – has the question of government power been posed with such force. (...) New political possibilities are opening up for determined political activists and cadres to help the working class and oppressed peoples to come together with all their powerful potential, to use the slightest breaches opened up by this disintegration.

"These are the matters that we, militants and workers representatives from all continents, would like to be able to debate, on an equal footing, on the basis of the concrete experience of the first mass mobilizations in response to the turning point in the world situation."

At any time, at any moment, a revolutionary explosion can take place at world level. A link in the imperialist chain can break at any time. No one could have foreseen in 2010 that the dictatorial ultra-police State supported by France and the United States, the Ben Ali government in Tunisia, was going to collapse because of the suicide of a young street-seller harassed by police and that his suicide was going to spark a youth and workers' revolt leading to the ousting of Ben Ali. And in this movement, instinctively, without knowing anything of the history of the Russian revolution, young people and workers, notably those organized in the UGTT, began to set up committees for the defense of the population. These were not soviets in the sense of soviets as "instrument of power of the working class". But before becoming the instruments of power, the move towards soviets takes many forms, ranging from strike committee to local assembly of strike committees. In this way, these committees for the defense of the population were the embryos of a representation of the masses in struggle, grouping the local population around the working class. This was not a movement that had been thought out, but a movement that marked a stage as an element of defense. And it is this, the question of soviets. The soviets surge up from within the working-class as the organized form of the united class front that the majority of the exploited population will seek to organize. And it is this movement, which comes from below, which is a deep movement and which rises up. No one knows where and when this upsurge will occur.

It is on this perspective that the IV International is aligned. In the preparation of the World Conference at the call of the ILC, which aims to bring together militants and sectors of the labor movement without making its own positions a prerequisite or a condition, the IV International considers that the only way to end war and exploitation is the fight of the working class on the terrain of the class struggle with the aim of expropriating capital. That is what makes October 1917 relevant today.

The editorial committee of LaVérité/The Truth