It would be an error to regard the revolutionary upsurge of the Algerian people and the cataclysmic result of the European elections of May 26 as a simple coincidence.

Without wishing to downplay that which distinguishes the revolutionary upsurge of a whole people from what is as yet only a precursor – no matter how striking – of the mobilization of the workers and peoples which is ripening at the level of the whole of Europe, the fact remains that the two events are closely linked.

In both cases, the exhaustion of all the forces which have over these last decades ensured maintenance of the imperialist order opens up a new situation.

In the country which has since the 1960s, for all the peoples of the world, symbolized the victorious struggle against colonial domination, the apparatus of the former single ruling party, subservient to the oligarchs, has come apart under the pressure of the resistance of the masses, who refuse to be sold out to imperialism and condemned to poverty and decline.

At the other end of the chain, in the heart of the European continent, historical hearth of development of bourgeois society and imperialist expansion, the peoples confronted with an unprecedented murderous offensive by their respective governments, coordinated by the representatives of finance capital in the framework of the European Union and its institutions, have just strikingly demonstrated their rejection of the EU and its treaties.

In spite of an unprecedented campaign hammering away at the theme “EU or chaos”, “progressivism against nationalism”, half of the population of the EU’s 28 countries refused to submit to this blackmail.

They refused to vote, accelerating the disintegration of all the old political parties (of the right or left) which have taken turns in government over the last 50 years. One can fairly safely bet that the sigh of relief that practically all commentators expressed on the evening of May 26 will be short-lived.

Everyone is holding their breath, understanding full well the heavy threat weighing upon the whole situation constituted by the deafening silence of this mass, representing the half of the population of the EU’s 28 countries which refused to cast a vote.

The fragile edifice that is the EU has been shaken as never before. A new stage in its disintegration has just been reached. In the whole of Europe, according to rhythms and under forms peculiar to each country, the same question arises in the background of each of these great fights that are on the way. The question of how to wrest the fate of the peoples from the hands of finance capital, which condemns them to irremediable decadence, from the west to the east, from the north to the south of the continent.

That which closely links the fight engaged by a people dispossessed of the victory which it won against colonial domination 57 years ago, with that of the workers and peoples of the old imperialist fortresses of Europe, are the new political conditions under which the emancipatory struggle of the workers and peoples is developing on all the continents.
It is thus that one can state that the revolutionary upsurge of the Algerian people is a first and striking demonstration of a whole wave of revolutionary uprisings which are in the course of ripening at world level.

It heralds the opening of a new phase in the struggle of the workers and peoples to do away with the system of imperialist domination. It heralds a turning-point whose nature must be grasped and thus widely debated by all the militants who aim to take their place in this struggle.

The world order “reconstructed” in 1945 is in a death-agony

In order to grasp the nature of this turning-point, let us go back 75 years. In 1945, American imperialism was working, laboriously, to “reconstruct”, with the collaboration of the stalinist bureaucracy of the Kremlin, the world imperialist order shaken by the war. The conferences of Yalta and Potsdam organized in 1945 testify to the complete collaboration assured by Stalin, alongside Roosevelt and Churchill, in this reconstruction.

This fragile political edifice was of course shaken on several occasions. The general strike of May-June 1968 in France, combined with the development of the political revolution in Czechoslovakia and Poland in the 1970s and 1980s, revealed the extent of the deepening crisis within both imperialism and the stalinist bureaucracy which was subservient to it. But this counter-revolutionary panoply of collaboration, while shaken, succeeded in damping down the working class and the peoples.

Paradoxically, it was the destruction in 1989-1991 of the USSR, under pressure from imperialism (Reagan’s Star Wars), and relayed inside the workers’ State degenerated by the restorationist bureaucracy, which opened the process of destabilization of the whole system of maintenance of the world order.

While the destruction of collective ownership of the means of production inherited from the October Revolution constituted a blow against the international working class, the dislocation of the international apparatus of the Kremlin which it provoked opened up breaches in the control exercised by stalinism over determinant sectors of the world workers movement.

This profoundly destabilized and lastingly undermined the bases upon which the reconstruction of the imperialist world order had been carried out.

Thirty years after this collapse, all the vestiges of this “world order”, all the international institutions (WTO, etc), all the treaties and alliances (NATO, SEATO) have come apart, one after the other.

The coming wave of revolutionary uprisings can be compared, without fear of error, to that which swept the world in 1945-1950. But imperialism no longer disposes of the international apparatus of the Kremlin at its service. Imperialism no longer has at its disposal, as it did in the decades which followed World War II, the active collaboration which allowed it to repair the breaches and contain – at the cost of concessions which it now must eradicate – the uprising of the peoples which stood up to it.

And this is so precisely at the time when, in parallel, in its unrestrained offensive against all the political and social conquests of the working class, it (that is, imperialism – translator’s note), must, in an attempt to save its capacity for the accumulation of capital, destroy the material bases by which the reformist bureaucracies installed at the head of the main class organizations subsist through the “management” of these conquests.

Imperialism in crisis is driving head-on into a world in which all the forces which have served as guarantors of the bourgeois order (the late stalinist apparatus, the social-democratic apparatus and the various versions of reformist bureaucracy...) have either disintegrated or else are in the course of doing so.

It is thus that one can say that the fragile equilibrium of the world of 1945 has come to an end. The limits within which the class struggles at a world level have been contained since the war are thrown into question.

The revolutionary mobilization of the masses which is developing today in Algeria in order to drive out the regime which dispossessed the people of the victory it won over French imperialism in 1962 has its roots in a resistance which has never ceased.

And while this mobilization – 57 years later – is a reprise of the revolutionary uprising which liberated the country, it comes in the framework of the opening of a new period. A period in which the questions posed, and not settled, by the succession of uprisings of the workers and peoples of these last decades, surge forth anew, spurred on by the decomposition of the imperialist order in a political framework which has been totally upset at world level.

Posing the question of reappropriation of the revolution of 1962 against its gravediggers, the Algerian people pose a question which is also addressed to all the peoples which, similarly engaged upon the road of their liberation, have been constrained by their own leaderships to respect the status quo and demobilize, as has been the case in Cuba, Brazil or Azania.
“The forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny”

In his History of the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky wrote of “the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny” that the events “at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime.”

It is precisely that which the Algerian people are illustrating today, and they are not allowing themselves to be distracted from that objective, which is: “Out with the regime!” And it is this determination which explains the huge resonance that the movement is encountering among all other peoples.

Faced with this revolutionary torrent, the regime in crisis is seeking a “continuist” solution in order to safeguard the power of the spoliators. It is seeking by all possible means to associate different political forces with the salvage of the regime by “renovating” it.

We are at the heart of the questions which all veritable revolutions pose, as testified to in their brilliant contemporary relevance by the April Theses read by Lenin before the Bolshevik fraction on his arrival on April 4, 1917, in Petrograd (see his Complete Works, volume 24).

Even if the regime which emerged from the single-party system had to make non-negligible concessions to the masses in order to consolidate its power in the years which followed the victorious revolution, even if it has “resisted” at some moments against the pressures of imperialism, taking support from a controlled mobilization of these same masses in order to defend its own oligarchic interests, it cannot make them forget that it has subjected the country to the laws of the powerful imperialist interests.

It cannot make the Algerian people forget that it has, these last years, directly implemented all the demands of finance capital in crisis, throwing into question everything that remained of the gains of the revolution.

And it is this that the Algerian people have been clamouring for in the streets every Friday since February 22.

The revolt came from “down below”, outside of any of the organizations. It spread like a powder-trail to the whole country, bringing with it the whole population. In the forefront of this uprising: the working class. The workers, out of class reflex, turned towards their organizations, and notably the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA). They want – they say so themselves – to reappropriate the UGTA, historic organization of the working class, and thus to expel the national secretariat which had wholly aligned itself with the regime.

The determination reaffirmed in every demonstration to go the whole way and drive out the regime poses concretely the question of the people, gathered behind the working class, taking power. It therefore poses the question of the means by which to achieve that goal.

The watchword of the Constituent Assembly

In this context, the watchword of a sovereign Constituent Assembly which has surged forth in the demonstrations can in no way be understood as a demand for a parliamentary form destined to democratize the country; it is a transitional democratic demand which solely the taking of power by the proletariat will be able to satisfy. The fight by the broadest of masses for the convening of a sovereign Constituent Assembly prepares the ground upon which is developed and organized the struggle for the liquidation of the institutions of the regime and the construction of organs which, impelled by the working class, will have to materialize the power of a sovereign people.

Let us recall the terms with which Leon Trotsky defined transitional demands: as “stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat” (The Transitional Program).

The watchword of the Constituent Assembly is at the same time both a watchword for political democracy and a transitional watchword which consciously expresses the determination of the people to drive out the regime in order to take its destiny in its own hands.

It is a lever by which to help the masses mobilize and advance through the various stages of the revolutionary process, for – let us repeat – the question which is posed is that of the conquest of political power by the broadest of the masses, drawn along by the working class, and thus is posed the question of the upsurge of autonomous organs which will ensure the conquest of political power by the people.
The arrest of Louisa Hanoune

That is precisely the reason why, after three months of gigantic demonstrations, the debris of the State apparatus, gathered around the chief of staff of the armed forces, have decided to call a halt to the deepening of this process. In order to try to terrorize the population and the militants, the military judiciary have decided to arrest and incarcerate Louisa Hanoune without bringing any charge against her.

They have decided to arrest the general secretary of a party, the Parti des Travailleurs d’Algérie (the PT, the Workers Party of Algeria), whose line of political intervention has been to fight against a “continuist” presidential election and for the convening of a sovereign Constituent Assembly.

In this situation of revolutionary crisis in the country, they all fear the existence of a political party like the PT of Algeria, which has for decades profoundly rooted itself in national political affairs, which does not polarize the situation and which furnishes an instrument capable of serving as a point of support for the organization of people’s assemblies covering the whole country and concretely incarnating the fight for a sovereign Constituent.

The campaign under way in Algeria for the immediate release of Louisa Hanoune is a natural part of the ripening and the strengthening of the movement of distrust of all the Algerian people as regards any “Egyptian-style” solution. The workers and people remember the fate of the revolutionary movement of the Egyptian people meted out by the coup d’état of General Al Sissi and make it known every day by chanting “Out with Gaïd Salah!”

The impressive deployment of the international campaign for the release of Louisa Hanoune organized in the first instance by militants of the International Liaison Committee (ILC) testifies to the immense interest taken in the development of the situation in Algeria by thousands of militants, worker-cadres, and political and trade union officials, by leaders of democratic associations, at international level. It testifies to the immense potential regarding all joint action for the defence of democracy, indispensable for the struggle of peoples. In this is concentrated all the value of the relations established by the ILC, of which Louisa Hanoune is a coordinator.

An immense echo

The question of the upsurge of autonomous organs indispensable for the taking of power by the people goes beyond the framework of Algeria and the region. It forcibly arises in the course of revolutionary developments as the only way out of the explosive dead-end in which governments subservient to imperialism drag the peoples, whether this concerns countries under domination or the old imperialist powers in decline.

The deflagration which shook the whole of the world financial system in the crisis of 2007-2008 has rendered fragile the whole chain of political and economic relations which constitutes the world market and the international division of labour. It reveals the exhaustion and the decadence of all the governmental forms attached to the maintenance of the imperialist order. It poses as never before – let us repeat – for the workers and peoples the question of how to wrest power from the hands of finance capital, which is dragging humanity into irremediable decadence.

In this situation, the mobilization of the Algerian people must be understood as a first expression of the whole process of destabilization of the imperialist order – and not only in Africa. It is meeting with an echo among all the peoples of Latin America, of Africa, of the Middle East, but also of Europe... Most particularly in France, where one has seen in the demonstrations by the Yellow Vests placards expressing support for the revolutionary mobilization of the Algerian people.

The peoples are seeking, under multiple forms in different countries, to force a way through the already-shaken barrage constituted by the old treacherous leaderships, in order to open the way for a reorganization of society from top to bottom, which will only be possible through the expropriation of capital.

All the contradictions resurface and concentrate upon the heart of the system

In 1944, the Bretton Woods conference drew the contours of a reconstructed world monetary system – not without contradictions – around the dollar and corresponding with the new balance of forces between the powers which emerged from the Second World War. Imperialism was forced, by the revolutionary mobilization of the masses, into serious retreats, even if, with the aid of the international apparatus of the Kremlin and social democracy, it succeeded in preserving that which for it is essential: the system of private ownership of the means of production. Whether in Europe faced with the working class, in Africa faced with the struggle of the colonized peoples, or in Asia faced with the development of the Chinese revolution. But above all, imperialism did not succeed in overcoming any of the fundamental contradictions which undermine it. These have only deepened.
The dominant position of American imperialism, in conformity with the Bretton Woods accords, conferred upon it the privilege of being alone in having the power to print dollars – at the same time both the national currency and the international reserve currency. This privilege paradoxically placed the heart of the American financial system at the mercy of sharp variations in the value of the dollar, these variations being an expression of disorder of the world market.

All the contradictions of the whole world system of capitalist exploitation have not ceased to resurface and concentrate themselves in its heart, with disastrous consequences for the American productive apparatus. Consequences which nourished the political crisis which only deepened under the presidencies of Nixon, Reagan, Bush and Obama, ending up with the election of Trump and the deep rupture within American society of which it is an expression.

Adam Tooze wrote in his book _Crashed_ devoted to the crisis of 2008:

> The most obvious effect of the financial crisis of 2008 on the election of 2016 is the fact that Bernie Sanders could be a most serious candidate for the Democrat Party investiture. Sanders is not even a member of the party. He is a self-proclaimed democratic socialist. In 2008 he voted against the TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program)². He called for the big banks to be dissolved. He wanted the bankers put behind bars, he called for a return to the regulations of the New Deal.

No comment!

The power of the productive apparatus set in motion by the powerful imperialist monopolies (in particular American – the GAFA) has unceasingly come up against the limits of a capitalist market asphyxiating in the narrow framework of national borders. The power of these monopolies needs the breadth of the world market in order to deploy itself. They permanently reorganize their “chains of value” without regard for borders and provoke the cataclysmic disintegration of the productive bases of the old imperialist countries, the United States to start with. Nothing can prevent the imperialist monopolies from orienting their investments towards Asia, China, India, provoking a veritable “rupture” in American society that Trump has used in his “America First” campaign and for which his policy is incapable of providing the slightest response.

Leon Trotsky wrote in 1939 in _Marxism in our Time³_:

> The life of monopolistic capitalism in our time is a chain of crises. Each crisis is a catastrophe. The need of salvation from these partial catastrophes by means of tariff walls, inflation, increase of government spending and debts lays the ground for additional, deeper and more widespread crises. The struggle for markets, for raw material, for colonies makes military catastrophes unavoidable. All in all, they prepare revolutionary catastrophes.

All the efforts made by Trump or his competitors to escape the crisis by having recourse to protectionist policies lead into a dead-end. The same dead-end as the US-China trade war.

The United States and China are engaged in a trade war to the death, but the United States needs China and the breadth of its market. As for China, it needs to have access to the world market, to the dollar, it thus needs the United States.

The Chinese vice-prime minister Liu He, the man who led the Chinese delegation in the negotiations with the United States this month of May, concentrates in his person the complex nature of China-US relations. Economist, in charge of “economic reform”, specialist of the markets, he is familiar with the world of American business and has a master’s degree in public administration from the prestigious Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government.

The author of the book _Crashed_ explains how, behind the bellicose declaratiions of one side and the other, productive relations of collaboration are bound to come together:

> In 2008, the question was whether China would abandon its dollar assets and destabilize the United States. Eight years later, thanks to the increased financial integration of China, the question is the other way around. While Beijing is struggling to regain control of its stock market and the flight of hard currency, the question is no longer to know whether China will abandon the dollar but whether the Fed will cooperate with China’s efforts to stabilize the yuan... For Beijing, the tolerant attitude of the Fed is a relief. The Chinese appreciate the idea that the Fed recognizes their interdependence.

And yet the trade war cannot be avoided.

The “headlong rush forward regardless”!

Finance capital has, in its “headlong rush forward regardless”, had to seek through parasitism, speculation and an infinite perfection of financial techniques a way of placing the masses of capital that no longer find a way of investing in production. The switching movement from one end of the globe to the other of gigantic masses of capital unceasingly provokes monetary crises, debt crises... manifesting simultaneously on all the continents and with extreme brutality the interconnection of all the financial markets at planetary level, an interconnection which has only being reinforced since the crisis of 2008.
It was Nixon who, on August 15, 1971, struck the first blow against the Bretton Woods accords. In order to avoid a “deflation”, he decided to break the agreement for the convertibility of the dollar into gold (“the gold standard” – translator’s note). In the following years, financial deregulation was pushed to the heights. “The flows of capital were no longer subject to any restriction”, the historian Adam Tooze observed. This deregulation prepared the ground for the explosion of the crisis of 2007-2008 – the biggest financial crisis since 1929-30.

The central banks adopted the device of “quantitative easing – buying up billions of dollars’ worth of sovereign debt, taking the level of public debt to delirious levels, creating huge financial bubbles threatening to burst at any moment.

One can justifiably consider that this was an after-shock of the crisis of 1971 and a serious warning for the immediate future.

See here what Georges Ugueux, former vice-president of the New York Stock Exchange, wrote in his blog on May 8, 2018:

We know neither the day nor the hour. But we can no longer ignore the risks of a tsunami which is going to hit our economies by the end of 2020 at the latest under the blows of the indiscipline of the United States and an increase in rates. The stakes are fearsome: 63 billion dollars of sovereign debt are in circulation. A crisis of sovereign debt would thus be a real tsunami, of which we are starting to feel the first tremors. The IMF has issued a cry of alarm, accusing countries of not putting their finances in order.

The pitiless combat of capital against the tendency of the rate of profit to fall

It is in this context that one must understand the use by finance capital of what they call the “technological revolution”. The digital economy allows the imperialist monopolies to permanently restructure their “chains of value”, to delocalise suddenly, without difficulty, towards zones of unskilled labour and low wages the industrial production which hitherto demanded a technical division of labour based on recognized qualifications.

No-one is spared. One example among hundreds of others: Foxconn, the leading world sub-contractor (Chinese) producing iPhones, is delocalising its giant Chinese factories from Shenzhen to India where – according to the words of its president – wages are three times lower than in Shenzhen.

The investments in the digital economy mobilize thousands of billions of dollars, thereby, through an astronomic increase in constant capital, modifying the organic composition of capital. They phenomenally accelerate the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

Capital, in order to conserve its capacity of accumulation, is bound to join a battle to the death for the aggravation of the conditions of exploitation on all the continents. An offensive which demands that everything which had been conceded over decades in order to preserve “the world order” must be irremediably destroyed. That the labour codes, the pension systems, the health systems, the public education systems, that all the public services be privatized and turned over to capital. In short, that everything, great or small, which had been integrated into the collective value of labour power be destroyed.

While it is impossible to speak of a final crisis of the capitalist system – for, as Trotsky stressed, in Marxism in Our Time, combatting all passive attitudes, “the social order that has outlived itself never yields its place to its successor without resistance” 4 and must be slain – it is on the other hand indispensable to understand that which is specific to the crisis in which we have entered in order to be able to slay it.

The power of the productive forces concentrated in the hands of the imperialist monopolies transforms itself into forces destructive of all the productive apparatuses built on all the continents and which constituted the foundation of the nation-states.

The fundamental crisis of the system of imperialist domination – which has survived by dragging humanity into two world wars and a multitude of bloody conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, and which today poses the gravest of threats against countries such as Iran and Venezuela – has essentially reduced the differences which existed, as a product of the history of the development of the capitalist system of production, between the peoples of different continents and countries.

The close interconnection between financial markets has, as never before, profoundly and simultaneously linked the destiny of each people to the future of all the peoples engaged in the common struggle to slay the system. The degree of deliquescence reached by the system is pushing millions of workers who enter into movement for their survival to distrust any illusion in a regeneration of the system. The period which is coming to an end has discredited both the subterfuges which have served to prolong the death-agony of the system and the forces which incarnated them: the social-democratic and the stalinist parties and their satellites.

That is what the formidable upsurge of the Algerian people tells us, and which poses the question of the reappropriation of the conquests of the revolution which were torn from its hands after 1962.
The old unsettled questions resurface anew with multiplied force

The Algerian people, by mobilizing for the reappropriation of 1962, causes a question to be posed today – let us repeat it – that, under forms peculiar to each of them, is posed by the Cuban people, the Brazilian people, that of their political emancipation with respect to the castrist and lulist leaderships...

The experience of the Cuban revolution is eloquent. In 1959, under exceptional circumstances, the combined pressure of the masses and the imperialist blockade led the Movement of July 26 to go further than the terms of its program. The expropriation of whole sectors of capital imparted to the revolution the character of a proletarian revolution, even if the State that resulted took on the traits of a deformed workers’ State under the pressure of the Movement of July 26, which had subordinated itself to the international stalinist apparatus.

This contradiction has marked the international policy of castrism. Subordinated to the policy of “peaceful coexistence” impelled by the Kremlin, the castrist apparatus came to represent an obstacle to development of the revolution in Latin America.

The reform of the Cuban constitution, adopted by referendum on February 26, 2019, confirms the restorationist orientation of the leadership of the Cuban PC. Defence of the conquests of the Cuban revolution implies escaping from the grip of the castrist apparatus.

This apparatus has had an influence on the whole of the continent. It exercised its influence upon the conditions of the founding of the PT (Workers Party) of Brazil. At the end of the Brazilian dictatorship, and as a major factor in its dismemberment, the creation of the Workers Party by a broad layer of trade union officials who had broken with the official trade unions represented the highest expression of the struggle for class independence.

The question of turning the fall of the dictatorship into the opening of a revolutionary crisis was posed. But the lulist apparatus surfed upon the power of the class movement in order to keep it locked within a framework which kept it from breaking with imperialism. The balance sheet of the lulist leadership is concentrated in the last Dilma government, which placed itself directly under the control of the IMF and engaged upon the road of counter-reforms, notably a counter-reform of the social security system.

The victory of Bolsonaro in the last election is the product of this policy, which led broad sectors of the working class and the popular masses to turn their back on the PT. While the fight for the release of Lula is part and parcel of any policy of class independence, lulism as a political current at continental level has demonstrated its limits.

By refusing to go all the way in being the instrument of social emancipation, as is required for an intransigent defence of national sovereignty in the face of imperialism, it sets itself up as an obstacle on the road of the masses.

This is a question which poses itself acutely today in the whole of Latin America. It is the question which confronts the people of Venezuela, subjected to a criminal blockade by American imperialism which condemns its people to death and threatens to condemn all the people of the region to the future which it has reserved for the people of Central America.

It is, under corresponding forms, the question which traverses Azania and which arose with force in the election of May 8, 2019, in which the policies followed by the ANC since 1994 were at the centre of debate.

The crisis which is threatening to drag the whole of humanity into chaos everywhere poses the question of liberation from the obstacles which, inside their own movement, have prevented the masses from going all the way to the taking of power and the expropriation of capital.

But this question poses itself, under forms peculiar to each country, in the whole of Europe.

In central and eastern Europe, 30 years after the fall of the stalinist bureaucracy, 16 years after their integration into the EU, the immense hope of the peoples for the restoration of their sovereignty, and to see the social ownership of property salvaged from the bankruptcy organized by the parasitic bureaucracy, has been trampled underfoot.

The EU, instrument of finance capital, has, in the name of “transition” towards a market economy, broken their industries into pieces and submitted their working class to extreme exploitation at the service of the imperialist monopolies – particularly the German ones.

The question poses itself in the old imperialist countries. It imposes itself in France, where the offensive against all the social conquests wrested by the revolutionary waves of 1936 and 1945 puts on the agenda the question of their reconquest, and thus of the means by which to implement this reconquest, reviving the memory of the revolutionary waves of 1936 and 1945.

In Spain, where the need to do away with the “compromise” of 1975-1978 which preserved the heart of the Francoist State by restoring the monarchy, it is posed every day more sharply for the working class and the peoples.

In Portugal, where the determination to reconquer the gains of the Portuguese revolution of 1975 is placed on
the agenda by the policy of counter-reforms of which the Portuguese people have not ceased to be the object.

Faced with this process of intense political maturing, imperialism – let us repeat it – no longer disposes of the decisive aid which was furnished by the international apparatus of the Kremlin, backed by the social-democratic parties, when the peoples surged up in 1945-1950 in France and in Italy, in the 1960s in Algeria and Cuba, in the 1970s in Spain and Portugal.

But while the disintegration of the traditional old workers’ parties rejected by the broad masses deprives imperialism of the principal instruments which allowed it to raise a barrier against the masses, this does not spontaneously produce the reconstruction of a system of organization which the working class and the peoples need for their emancipation.

The disintegration of the political edifice which has preserved the system since the end of the Second World War on the other hand opens, in an inevitably chaotic process, an enormous field and throws up new forces for this reconstruction.

The survival of humanity dragged into barbarity by the crisis of decomposition of the whole system requires that all the political questions which have remained unresolved over the last 75 years since the end of the Second World War, and which are surging up again with unequalled force, be resolved on the basis of all the experience accumulated by the workers and peoples in the course of these last decades.

The resistance of the peoples

While, in order to survive, capital dismembers States and nations, and installs a permanent state of war (in the Middle East, in Africa, in Latin America), while it threatens to intervene directly in countries such as Venezuela and Iran, a situation of instability has come about in which the least accident, stock market crash or a brusque change in the price of raw materials or an increase in interest rates can provoke a political and social catastrophe opening the way for a revolutionary uprising.

Nobody foresaw the Algerian revolutionary upsurge, the masses flooded into the breach opened at top State level which was paralyzed by a question of succession. No more than they did the revolutionary explosion in Sudan.

Nobody foresaw how the Yellow Vests movement would overturn the dead weight of lead constituted by the old leaderships and give voice to the anonymous people and the most exploited layers of the population. Nobody foresaw the power of the mobilization in favour of Brexit in the most worker-populated Labour Party constituencies of Great Britain, which expressed a profound rejection of the reactionary policies implemented for decades by Thatcher, Blair, Brown and May... And the wholesale condemnation of the pro-EU policies of the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party threatens to transform the situation and shake the whole of Europe.

All of these movements, translating the force-fields at work in the depths of society, spilled over the framework fixed by the old outworn leaderships of the working class. In every country and on all the continents, the sound of revolt is making itself heard against the policies of accompaniment and salvage followed by the discredited leaderships of these traditional old organizations, the social-democratic and the stalinist parties.

It is also making itself heard on another level, against the bureaucratic leaderships which control the class organizations, or, in the dominated countries, within the traditional “anti-imperialist” parties.

It is making itself heard and it is making its way...

This is a movement coming from below, that takes unexpected forms which do not exclude, here or there, the confusion related to the inevitable hesitations which mark the stages of the process of reconstruction freed from the tutelage of the old leaderships and capable of allowing the masses to deploy their forces in order to foil the offensive of which they are the object.

This movement, which most often comes from outside of the organizations, mobilizing the most exploited layers, bringing the broad masses in their train, is an indispensable segment of the struggle to create forms of organization controlled by the masses and capable of overcoming the counter-revolutionary policies of the apparatuses. It calls for unreserved support from militant revolutionaries, leaving to impotent commentators the role of regretting that reality is not conforming to their academic conception of the “workers united front” strategy and which have only one function: to try to subordinate the movement to the treacherous leadership apparatuses.

This is the very movement of the proletarian revolution. Nobody foresaw the revolution of 1905 and the soviets – which emerged from the lowest layers of Russian society. Let us recall in this relation the warning formulated by Lenin in 1916 ⁵:

Whoever expects a ‘pure’ social revolution will never live to see it. Such a person pays lip-service to revolution without understanding what revolution is.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these there were masses
The content of the “clear them all out” (dégagisme)

It is in these conditions that revolutionary militants, in the first ranks of which are the militants of the Fourth International and its sections, must strive to follow, without a priori and step-by-step, the way in which the masses furnish for themselves the original forms of organization that surge forth and take shape in order to submerge the obstacles of the old leaderships and provide themselves with the means to control their own movement. This is the required condition for one to be able to participate in these processes in order to help them develop and consciously integrate oneself in the perspective of the fight of the working class for its emancipation.

All this resistance is expressed in the rejection of all the institutional forces subordinated to demands aimed at the survival of the system of capitalist exploitation.

In Europe, this movement has taken the form in each country of an unprecedented rejection of all the parties which, for decades, have strained all their forces in the defence of the imperialist order, as has just been strikingly testified to by the European elections of May 26.

This “clear them all out” movement is progressist.

The militants of the Fourth International are engaged in a combat for the destruction, by the movement of the masses, of the stalinist and social-democratic parties and their satellites which have implemented all the demands of capital.

But this “clear them all out” movement threatens to spread to the trade union organizations which – contrary to the parties – remain the elementary framework of organization of the working class. It is the subordination of the leaderships of class organizations to capital and its governments which threatens to destroy the organization of the class. A pitiless combat is under way, between those militants who wish to reappropriate their organizations in order to be able to fight, and the apparatuses which counter with policies of “concertation”.

In France, this confrontation has taken on a spectacular aspect. On the one side, workers, militants and worker-cadres who aspire to stand together as a bloc with the Yellow Vests, and on the other, the leaderships which have disavowed such action, to the point of remaining silent when the repression has come down on them too.

But this has also occurred in Great Britain, in Italy, in Germany, in Poland, in Serbia... as recounted by delegates to the “European Encounter” of May 4.

The fight for the reconquest of the independence of class organizations is ripening in all countries, recalling the validity of the positions of principle of the Fourth International, which call clearly for organization within the class organizations of a fight to drive out the bourgeois bureaucrats who threaten their existence.

From what has been said it follows quite clearly” – Trotsky wrote in the notes for an article he was preparing when he was assassinated – that in spite of the progressive degeneration of trade unions and their growing together with the imperialist State, the work within the trade unions not only does not lose any of its importance, but remains as before and becomes in a certain sense even more important than ever, for every revolutionary party. The matter at issue is essentially the struggle for influence over the working class. Every organization, every party, every faction which permits itself an ultimatist position in relation to the trade union, i.e., in essence turns its back upon the working class, merely because of displeasure with its organizations, every such organization is destined to perish. And it must be said it deserves to perish.”

In France, the Yellow Vests movement circumnavigated the framework of the trade union confederations and was forced to do so in reaction to the attitude adopted by the leaderships. The junction between the organized workers movement and the Yellow Vests could only be organized “from below”, by the action of class struggle militants – among whom the trotskyist militants have taken their full place – who made the trade unions adopt positions of support at local or departmental level, re-establishing trade union organization in its place and role and in fraternal link to the Yellow Vests.
The contemporary relevance of the transitional method

This upset of the world order demands that one submit the strategy of all the sections of the Fourth International to a critical examination. A new situation is opening up.

We must understand what this means for us, militants of the Fourth International, who fight to construct the revolutionary party through the transitional method”, we wrote in the notes on Europe adopted in January 2019.

Without misunderstanding the inevitable political “slag” carried along by such a movement, we must be unequivocal. The Yellow Vests movement shows us what direction and around what lines of force the working class and the immense pauperized masses will seek to provide themselves with the tools allowing them to overcome the leaderships and to open the way for a political outcome in conformity with the defence of the interests of the immense majority.

We must understand that, in this movement, a search is being expressed that, within the working class and its organizations, is more generally a part of the ripening of the political conditions that will lead to the upsurge of ‘strike committees’ that were cruelly lacking in the general strike of May-June 1968.

We must understand how this movement upsets the political terrain on which the revolutionaries are building the party.

Even though it was, for example, entirely correct in France, after the general strike of May-June 1968, to focus on the elements that came out of the crisis of the old organizations and thus to elaborate forms of transition corresponding to the hopes of these working class to rebuild an authentic workers party that their parties no longer were; even though it was correct to model the forms of organization that we proposed to them on the “party” model (PT, POI); even though the fight we waged on this line for years to)fend the independence of the class organizations, is more generally a part of the ripening of the political conditions that will lead to the upsurge of ‘strike committees’ that were cruelly lacking in the general strike of May-June 1968.

We must understand the flexible “open” form with which we have experimented in the local committees of resistance and reconquest (the CLRRs), and which today provides trade union officials and Yellow Vests the framework for meeting together and establishing organized ties of solidarity in preparation for the coming fights, represents – as far as we can judge – the best crucible for constructing the party.

At the intersection of local intervention (Yellow Vests) and intervention in enterprises to build the indispensable points of support for the fight to submerge, within the class organizations, the counter-revolutionary resistance of the leaderships, the local committees for resistance and reconquest are a part of the political preparation of the “action committees” that we will have to help construct when the masses enter into movement.”

The convention of the “committees of resistance and reconquest” has taken place. It was held in Paris on March 30, 2019. It brought together more than 300 militants delegated by local committees from all over France. Three hundred political militants of diverse origin, trade union militants and officials, Yellow Vests engaged in the joint battle to structure locally the force which will help the class struggle converge “from below”. A force which has already accumulated precious experience on that level.

The European correspondence committee

“Never in Europe” – we continued in the same notes – “has the question of power been posed simultaneously in such closely present terms... Never has the need to exchange between worker-militants of the different European countries been felt with such force.”

And we asked ourselves, taking inspiration from the method which preceded the founding of the First International, while adapting it to the present situation: “Shouldn’t we launch, very broadly – on the initiative of the French militants from diverse political backgrounds that have found themselves in recent days in the framework of the CLRRs, bringing together in action trade union militants and Yellow Vests – an invitation to create this ‘correspondence committee’?”

This “European Encounter” was held on May 4. Sixteen countries were represented. Two countries prevented from being able to send delegates made it known that they subscribed to the constitution of the “Correspondence Committee”.

The success of this “Encounter” was in large part due to the fact that the invitation was addressed without exclusive to all those who, whatever their political and trade union origins, decided to show their solidarity against the campaign of lies and with the Yellow Vests, authentic expression of popular resistance, and decided to make this
a question of a line of political demarcation with respect to all the partisans of the status quo and the bureaucratic leaders.

The need to exchange information and experiences regarding all the manifestations of resistance by the people, on the eve of what all perceived, in each of their countries, as the precursor signs of uprisings in the heart of Europe, expressed itself there with force. Likewise was there expressed the need to reaffirm the unity of the struggle of the working class in the whole of Europe, re-integrating in its place — as stressed by the delegates from Serbia, Hungary and Poland — the struggle of the working class of the countries of eastern Europe which has never ceased and who are an integral part of the European working class.

After the political earthquake represented by the European elections of May 26, the first exchanges between all the members of the “Correspondence Committee” are going to respond to the intense need to re-establish the facts and the amplitude of the rejection which traverses the whole continent.

To conclude, let us quote once again the preface to the Peruvian edition of the program of the Fourth International, written by the comrade Pierre Lambert in April 1989*, which perfectly sums up our orientation concerning construction of the party.

All the experience of the class struggle attests to the fact that an independent workers party, and an International, are indispensable for the reason that the final outcome of the class struggle is not to obtain a change in bourgeois society. It is a question of the very existence of humanity being dragged into the abyss by imperialism.

And in order to accomplish the revolutionary tasks, there is no ready-made solution. Marxism is a scientific method for the organized construction of the instrument indispensable to helping the masses work for their own emancipation. But the solution does not figure in any textbook. Our point of departure is the Fourth International, we establish with the help of its program that there is no other way out of the crisis of humanity than socialism guaranteed by the abolition of the private ownership of the main means of production and workers’ democracy. Innumerable difficulties have arisen. Others will arise. We shall persevere.

And there is nothing contradictory in observing the complexity of the revolutionary process and concluding that, for revolutionaries, matters are simple.

Matters are simple: start out from that which is, and in order to understand that which is, start out with the program. The victory of the world revolution has been late in coming, and this lateness causes suffering and setbacks; but the setbacks on the road of revolution, concertedely organized by social democratic and stalinist treachery, throw into particular relief the potency of the revolutionary movement of the masses, the receptivity of the workers, the youth, toward political ideas, toward the principles defined by the Transitional Program. No-one can foresee the inevitable stages, the unexpected combinations by which the march towards revolution will continue, but marxism remains the only scientific method because, by unifying theory and practice, it furnishes the only political — and thus organizational — means of raising the vanguard up to the level of the necessities of History.

To conclude, at the risk of repeating ourselves, we say: it is on the level of organized practice that events will have to be verified, not by words but by life, that the discussions, the divergences, will be settled. It is absolutely inevitable that the greatest diversity of political opinions should develop, for the march towards world revolution drawing in millions of men, across all the continents, will bring to the surface, everywhere, in all countries, in all organizations, the “slag” produced by the decomposition of the system of imperialism and the bureaucracy, and the most advanced elements seeking progressive solutions.

It will all be tangled up together. The sorting out will take place everywhere. Faithful to marxism, to bolshevism, to the principles of the program, we will not allow ourselves to be turned away from our path.

For imperialism is condemned. For the bureaucratic usurpers are condemned. For the revolutionary crisis will continue through setbacks and advances, it will spread. And it is that which furnishes the raw materials for, in the light of the principles of the program, the elaboration of the means to construct the Fourth International. And it is indeed that for which we will not be forgiven.

Marc Gauquelin

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3. Leon Trotsky, Marxism in our Time., April 1939.
4. Leon Trotsky, Marxism in our Time, April 1939.