These are the political bases for building the Fourth International. The Fourth International is in continuity with the fight to provide the working class with the organisation indispensable for its emancipation, the principles of which were defined by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto: “every class struggle is a political struggle”, because, for the founders of the First International, the class struggle must lead to the proletariat taking power.

The publication of the Communist Manifesto in February 1848 coincided with the uprising of the peoples in Europe that shook all the monarchies and feudal institutions that came out of the past: this was what is called the “Springtime of the Peoples”.

It was in France that this revolutionary movement would go the farthest. At first, in February 1848, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat fought together to bring down the monarchy. Once the Republic was put into place, for the first time in the history of capitalism, in June 1848, the working class stood up as such for its class demands against the bourgeoisie that had just come to power.

The “democratic” bourgeoisie would drown this revolutionary uprising of the proletariat in blood. But this historic “first”, seeing the working class stand up as a class, would be a determining element in the organisation of the nascent proletariat, separating itself from the “democratic” bourgeoisie and fighting against it, through the forming of the International Workingmen’s Association, the First International.

Going over these developments of the class struggle in 1848 in France, Marx would write:

> Well burrowed, old mole!

“...the strategic task of the Fourth International lies not in reforming capitalism but in its overthrow. Its political aim is the conquest of power by the proletariat for the purpose of expropriating the bourgeoisie.” (chapter The Minimum Program and the Transitional Program, in the founding program of the Fourth International)

Because, precisely, the process of the proletarian revolution is not a long tranquil river. It is made up of explosions, of defeats, of partial victories and of setbacks, through a long subterranean process that sees the anger of the masses build up, who, at a given moment and sometimes on an apparently secondary subject, will rise up to bring down the old regime.

This revolutionary movement has expressed itself at the international level at the end of this year, 2019. In Ecuador, against the increase of fuel prices; in Chile, against the increase in the price of a metro ticket; in Lebanon, against a tax on WhatsApp; in Iraq, against the brutal repression of a demonstration; and, on another level, in France, the Yellow Vest movement broke out against the increase in fuel prices.

In Algeria, the starting point was the refusal of an improbable fifth term for President Bouteflika. But there, due to decades of the regime crushing the people, the mobilisation immediately led to the demand for the departure of the regime.

In all these developments in Latin America, in the Middle East, in Europe and in Africa, these movements immediately went beyond the demands that made up the starting point of the mobilisations to stand up against the regimes at the disposal of finance capital. This is perfectly illustrated by the slogan of the Chilean people in the streets: “It isn’t 30 pesos (the increase in the metro ticket price), but thirty years”. Indeed, in the thirty years since the fall of Pinochet, the governments of right and “left” alike have kept the dictatorship’s Constitution and all its...
anti-worker measures. Read below the article on page 15 on South America.

**A social regime that has had its day**

This revolutionary movement on the world scale is materialised by the revolt of the peoples against the barbarity engendered by the maintaining of the system of private property. The crisis of capital has reached a stage where, at any moment, a new financial crisis, incomparable to that of 2008-2009, could break out and explode the world market, already on the path of dislocation.

This new, foreseeable crisis will magnify that of 2008-2009, which had already put the world financial system into profound upheaval. Since that crisis, finance capital, seeking to survive, has multiplied financial parasitism and speculation to an unprecedented extent, in a situation where the mass of accumulated capitals no longer finds a way to be invested in production.

This crisis of capital is not an “economic” crisis; it is, first and foremost, the product of the crisis of the death agony of a social regime that has had its day. The fundamental crisis of imperialist domination, which has outlived itself by provoking two world wars, and since, by multiplying conflicts on a planetary scale, is powerfully expressed in the current upheaval of the world market on the path of dislocation.

The collapse of the USSR, provoked by the bureaucracy under pressure from imperialism and that of the resistance of the working class, did not bring with it the strengthening of the capitalist system: on the contrary, it aggravated its crisis. On one hand, by directly integrating the mafia economy of the former USSR into the world market, thus strengthening all the mafia and speculative traits of world finance. On the other hand, the fall of the Stalinist bureaucracy deprived imperialism of a considerable support against the revolution and focused all the tasks of maintaining the world order on the American imperialism, which is beyond its abilities.

The affirmation by several French and American capitalist representatives, according to which “the world of 1945 is over”, is a reality. Imperialism and bureaucracy, faced with the revolutionary wave that broke out after WWII, had to concede a certain number of conquests to the workers and peoples. All this must be called into question for capital to survive.

This is a “new” world that is being established, further plunging humanity into crisis, barbarity and wars. This is a “world order” without supervision, without control, unstable, which is chaotically being installed in place of that of 1945.

Already, in 1971, American imperialism, by deciding to break with the convertibility of the dollar into gold, erected the dollar as the reference currency on the world scale to the detriment of its allies, but also by further focusing on itself all the contradictions of the world market: in so doing, the “remedy” aggravated the crisis.

The threat is further aggravated considerably by the fact that the arms sector of the economy is fed by the bourgeois states that finance it through the inflation of credit and currency, through financial manipulations of all sorts that lead to creating a growing mass of fictitious capital deficits, an ever smaller fraction of which manages to be invested in production.

It is there and only there that the cause of the crisis of international monetary system rests (...). The disequilibrium of the American and European balances of trade and payments that are at the centre of this formation of enormous fictitious capitals translates the impasse of an economy founded on private ownership of the means of production (Declaration by the OCI, August 1971)³.

These lines, written nearly fifty years ago, describe a process that is now coming to term. It is in these conditions that, at any moment, on any continent and in any country, there can burst forth - as is shown by current development – a revolutionary explosion, but also the counter revolution (wars, coup d’états…).

**Trusts and protectionism**

Over the years, this concentration accentuating the dominant role of the United States has not ceased to have disastrous consequences for the American economy. The domination of American capital over the world market has been done to the detriment of industrial production in the United States itself. Trump’s election is an indication of the deep fracture that exists within American society. The devasted industrial zones voted massively for Trump, who, with his slogan “America First”, proposed to repatriate businesses to the United States. But Trump’s discourses on protectionism lead to an impasse, since nothing can prevent the monopolies and trusts from directing their investments outside the borders of United States, notably to China and Asia. But the deep crisis and the fracturing of American society – materialised, on one hand, by the crisis of the American dominant class (read the article about the United States beginning page 29) and, on the other, by a new wave of development of the class struggle in the United States (a strike of 40,000 General Motors workers, the multiplication of teachers’ strikes) – put Trump in a situation where he is caught in a chokehold, while he finds himself unable to fulfil the role of the world’s policeman.

Trump’s often chaotic announcements are a part of this perspective. The United States has to get out of all the alliances that suffocate and limit the most powerful imperialism in the world market.

The announcements of trade war, including with his European allies, the decision to re-establish the embargo against Iran and the threat of sanctions against European businesses that do not obey the American decision, the withdrawal from the nuclear pact with Russia, the with-
drawal from the climate pact, the pressure on Europeans to increase their financing of NATO, the embargo against Venezuela, stopping financing certain UN structures, the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the threats to withdraw from the WTO: all these measures translate this American readjustment.

Trump attacks the alliances and institutions that make up the international order created, supported and guaranteed by the United States since 1945 in the “free” (non-Soviet) world and whose extension to the whole planet became, at the end of the cold war, the objective of the foreign policies of Bush Sr., the Clinton, then Bush Jr. (…). Mr Trump considers that it has benefited competitors, adversaries or allies, more than the United States itself (La Tribune, July 2018).

In this situation of the disintegration of the world market, of a generalised “every man for himself”, Trump does not intend to re-establish a world framework, even under American control; he does not have the means (and, furthermore, within this system of private ownership of the means of production in death agony, no one is able to do so). For Trump, it is a matter of only basing himself on American interests and treating the questions case by case, brutally imposing his decisions on his allies or adversaries. At the same time, this policy feeds the march to world disorders. For Trump, he must act quickly; large American productive sectors are threatened. At the same time, the protectionism stirred up by Trump is an illusion, since the interweaving of capital on the world scale is strong.

This is why he finally had to pass a provisional agreement with China to end the trade war.

For its part, the Chinese bureaucracy is also caught by the throat. It tries to defend its place by entering the world market. On one hand, under the pressure of the demands of capital, particularly the trusts, the Chinese bureaucracy has announced it wants to further open the Chinese economy by lightening the protectionist norms currently in force. It is thus subjected to this enormous pressure while, on the other hand, the multiplication of local strikes for better wages or working conditions panic this very bureaucracy, which is haunted by the idea of seeing the Chinese working class rise up in a revolutionary explosion.

Such is the significance of the mobilisation in Hong Kong, which is an alarm bell for the Chinese bureaucracy.

Resistance to the march to barbarity

Marx, then Lenin, put forth this essential fact that capitalism was suffocating within national borders. This situation, today, is brought to its paroxysm. Capitalist concentration has also reached new heights. The announcement of the merger of the French automobile group PSA with the Italo-American Fiat-Chrysler is a new indication, after many other concentrations-mergers, of the fact that the monopolies and trusts are freeing themselves from the national frameworks from which they came. The trusts and monopolies, by freeing themselves from the national frameworks, trample the national states, which appear to them as so many constraints, but which they use for their true function, that is, an organ for repressing the workers and peoples.

(…) (T)he deepest economic foundation of imperialism is monopoly. This is capitalist monopoly, i.e., monopoly which has grown out of capitalism and which exists in the general environment of capitalism, commodity production and competition, in permanent and insoluble contradiction to this general environment. Nevertheless, like all monopoly, it inevitably engenders a tendency of stagnation and decay. Since monopoly prices are established, even temporarily, the motive cause of technical and, consequently, of all other progress disappears to a certain extent and, further, the economic possibility arises of deliberately retarding technical progress. (…) But the tendency to stagnation and decay, which is characteristic of monopoly, continues to operate (…) 4.

As Lenin explained, capitalist concentration, the creation of trusts and cartels push to monopoly and call into question free competition, the basis of capitalist development. But this does not mean competition is abolished. It is exercised by force, by hostile takeovers of competitors, by war and the conquest of markets, by speculation. This war waged by the trusts and monopolies to pillage energy, mineral and other wealth provokes pretended “interethnic” conflicts and uses terrorist groups to control regions rich in resources. It is in this framework that the military interventions supposedly to “fight against terrorism” have taken place, but which, in reality, guarantee this pillaging and dislocate the national frameworks. This is notably the case in the Sahel region, where the French military intervention is provoking a major crisis in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, marked by violence, and which is leading to the march to the dislocation of these states. This is what has happened in Libya, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

Capital is war and barbarity.

This policy of concentration of monopolies and trusts rests, on one hand, on pillage and, on the other, on the need to guarantee the profit rate by brutally attacking, on the world scale, what they call “labour costs”, that is, to raise the rate of the exploitation of the workers.

They must get rid of all that had been gained by the workers, notably since 1945, in Europe, in Latin America, in Asia and, since the 1960’s in the framework of independence, in Africa. First and foremost: social protection, which must be handed over to finance capital, as Pinochet did in Chile, through private pension funds.

It is the offensive against retirement, like in France, as well as in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Great Britain and elsewhere. It is the calling into question of the Labour Codes, notably in India and France. The forms are hardly national, since capital’s demands are so focused, in all countries, on the same thing. This is the fundamental confrontation between capital and labour.

(T)he development of capitalism has arrived at a stage when, although commodity production still “reigns” and
continues to be regarded as the basis of economic life, it has in reality been undermined and the bulk of the profits go to the “geniuses” of financial manipulation. At the basis of these manipulations and swindles lies socialised production; but the immense progress of mankind, which achieved this socialisation, goes to benefit . . . the speculators. (…) Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads directly to the most comprehensive socialisation of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order, a transitional one from complete free competition to complete socialisation.

Production becomes social, but appropriation remains private. The social means of production remain the private property of a few. The general framework of formally recognised free competition remains, and the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times heavier, more burdensome and intolerable ⁶.

At the imperialist stage, the development of production pushes, according to Lenin, to socialisation, but the production relationships hinder this movement. Imperialism is the stage of the death agony of capitalism. The power of the productive forces, concentrated in the hands of the imperialist monopolies, transforms into a destructive force: “Mankind’s productive forces stagnate” (Transitional Program). This is the epoch of wars and revolts.

Such is the foundation of the revolt of the workers and peoples that has happened this year, 2019. As Leon Trotsky wrote:

Marx foretold that out of the economic collapse in which the development of capitalism must inevitably culminate – and this collapse is before our very eyes – there can be no other way out except socialisation of the means of production. The productive forces need a new organiser and a new master, and, since existence determines consciousness, Marx had no doubt that the working class, at the cost of errors and defeats, will come to understand the actual situation and, sooner or later, will draw the imperative practical conclusions. ⁶.

### The revolt of the peoples

By standing up to defend themselves, the peoples call into question the old regimes submissive to finance capital. They want to “kick them out” (“les dégager”, from a French way of saying “get out” or “get lost!”), also giving the neologism “déagisment” which we have Anglicised to “degagism” – translator’s note). This is, whatever consciousness they might have, the movement that poses the problem of power: who, the workers or capitalists, should lead the country?

The revolution in Algeria is one of the most advanced expressions of the world revolutionary process.

Very quickly, the mobilisation of the Algerian people focused on the demand: “Regime, get out!”, posing the question of power. One slogan sums up the current Algerian revolution: “In 1962, we freed the land; in 2019, we will free the people.” Indeed, in 1962, after a long war of national liberation and the death of 1.5 million Algerians, the Algerian people defeated the French colonialism. They kicked out the colonists that possessed the lands, the businesses and all the wealth of the country. This Algerian revolutionary movement against French colonialism, to ensure its full independence and sovereignty, implied taking control of the wealth by the working class and the people and breaking all ties of subordination with the imperialism. But the small ruling stratum confiscated this revolution, establishing the single-party regime and taking advantage of this political domination to pillage the country’s wealth to its own profit.

To do so, it subjected the country to the laws of the world market, dominated by capital. And it constantly sought to crush any hint of revolt of the people, all while being obliged, in certain circumstances, to concede a few crumbs to avoid a revolutionary explosion.

The current movement of the Algerian people unites as never before the democratic, social and national demands. The people stand up to kick out the regime and put democracy into place, that is, the power of the people. And, precisely because it poses the problem of power to the people, it stands up against the law of the privatisation of hydrocarbons and against the 2020 budget which foresees, among other things, the elimination of the 51/49 rule (a measure of economic protection that makes it that a foreign investment cannot exceed 49%, while Algerian investment cannot be less than 51%).

This movement, which poses the problem of power and which refuses the privatisation of the country’s wealth, it is the movement for national sovereignty, which can only be guaranteed by the sovereignty of the people, exercised by their control over the economy.

In this revolution in Algeria, the question of power is clearly posed: “Out with the regime! Power to the people!”

It is in this sense that the Constituent Assembly takes on its full meaning, as a lever to help the mobilisation of the people to take their destiny and the future of the country in hand.

But as Lenin explained:

It is not enough to call an assembly “constituent”, it is not enough to convene representatives of the people, even though they be chosen by universal and equal suffrage, direct elections and secret ballot, even though freedom of elections be really guaranteed. In addition to all these conditions, it is necessary that the constituent assembly have the authority and the force to constitute a new order. (…) ⁷

And Lenin insists:

To ‘constitute’ a new political order ‘to be approved’ by the head of the old government—what does this mean but legalising two governments, two equal (on paper) supreme authorities—the authority of the people risen in revolt and the authority of the old autocracy. It is obvious that equality between them is a sheer semblance (…) The constituent assembly slogan is turned into an empty phrase (…)
This is the very movement of the revolution

This is the same demand for democracy that is materialised in Chile, where the mass of the people has largely gone beyond the initial watchword against the increase of the metro ticket price to call into question the “continuism” of the regime for thirty years, keeping the Constitution of the dictator Pinochet. But the movement of the Chilean people has a social content: it is the struggle against the system of private pension funds for retired persons, put into place by Pinochet, and which the governments, right and “left” alike, have kept after him.

The forming of Unidad Social, grouping 200 associations, unions, etc., translates, despite the policies of a certain number of member organisations, the search by the workers and youth for a structuration. It is in this framework that the participation of the NO + AFP platform (the AFP are the private pension funds) must be underlined. This platform has led, for several years, a campaign for a return to a public retirement system and, in the same movement, gives a central place to the demand to get rid of the “continuist” regime and to satisfy the workers’ demands.

In the same way, the movements in the Middle East, notably in Lebanon and Iraq, have also largely gone beyond the frameworks of their initial demands. In a region marked by wars, military interventions, massacres and communitarian divisions, the mobilisations in Lebanon and Iraq have similar characteristics. They call into question the communitarian divisions between Shiites, Sunnis, Christians… to affirm: “we are one people.” And this people is standing up around the demand: “Out with the regime!”

The source of this mobilisation is the brutal degradation of the living and working conditions of these populations, thrown into precarity and extreme poverty by the policies of governments subservient to imperialism and capital. In a country like Iraq, an oil producer, it is significant that, in the leading oil producing region, Bassora, the youth and population have sought to block the refineries. They directly call into question the pillaging of their country by the international trusts, while they themselves are condemned the worst of extreme poverty.

The denunciation of corruption by the masses, in Lebanon and Iraq, does not have the goal of “cleaning up” the regime, but of getting rid of it, because corruption is but the by-product of international finance capital’s pillage and domination. This is the movement of the proletarian revolution, with its particular forms.

In the preface to his The History of the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky wrote, concerning “the forcible entrance of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny”, that the “masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old régime”.

In all possible forms, in the different countries, the peoples seek to overcome the obstacles set up by the old leaderships, to open a breach through which they can flood in their fight against the old system and to thus open the way to a reorganisation, from bottom to top, of society that will only be made possible by the expropriation of capital.

But capital is ready and willing to do anything to preserve itself, as we have seen in the counter-revolutionary interventions in Venezuela, as well as in Brazil and Bolivia. The old official leaderships of the labour movement seek to obstruct this revolutionary movement, such as, for example, the Socialist Party in Chile, which negotiates with the government for a “good reform”, or the leadership of the Algerian confederation UGTA, which supports the regime.

It is Europe’s turn

The same process, in circumstances particular to Europe – the historical home of the development of bourgeois society and imperialism –, sees the people stand up, in the most diverse of forms, against the laws of capital implemented by the imperialist governments of the European Union (see the article on Europe, page 33).

At the very moment when the dislocation of the European Union is underway, when all the European governments are in crisis, the Brexit will further sharpen this crisis. Above all, it expresses the impasse in which finance capital finds itself and its desperate search for the means to survive.

In this situation, the European leaders are seized by panic before the powerful development of the class struggle in one of the principal countries of the European Union, France. The decision, by Macron and his government, to call into question the retirement system established during the revolutionary wave of 1945 in order to substitute a system based on the mechanisms of pensions funds has provoked an upsurge, from below, of the working class.

No one knows, at the moment the lines are being written, what will become of this massive mobilisation of the workers in France, but there is a lesson that we can already draw from it: spontaneously and from “the base”, the workers of the Paris metro and the rail workers massively went on strike against this plan. This outbreak has been a rough draft for the workers of this country.

The principal union confederations have thus been forced, due to the spread of the mobilisation to other sectors such as teaching and energy, to declare themselves for the withdrawal of the project, not without procrastination and diverse and varied manoeuvres. Manoeuvres which continue, notably with the calls from the tops of the unions for action days, christened “high points”, the next of which is planned for 9 January, that is, three weeks away from the time this is being written, while the metro workers are on a renewable strike. They understand that it is a move to isolate them and to cause the strike to de-
cay. In many sectors (metro, railways, education), general assemblies have been held every day to vote to renew the strike. In a certain number of cases, strike committees, integrating the unions, have been formed; brigades are being organised to go into other enterprises. The expression of the anger of the mass upsets the whole situation in the country and accentuates the major political crisis of the regime. Whatever the outcome of the movement underway, the Macron government is already mortally wounded.

Already, a year ago, beginning with a refusal of the increase in fuel prices, a spontaneous movement, escaping the union organisations, had developed in the country: the Yellow Vests. Poor workers – as they say –, thrown into extreme poverty, revolted. They mistrusted the unions, not without reason, due to the policies of those at the top for decades. This movement is contradictory, carrying with it all sorts of diverse positions.

The political intervention of the revolutionaries

But as Lenin rightly explained:

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 imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest slid most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. But objectively, the mass movement was breaking the hack of tsarism and paving the way for democracy; for this reason the class-conscious workers led it.

The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably, sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will participate in it — without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible—and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses slid errors. But objectively they will attack capital, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objective truth of a variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragment-ed, mass struggle, will be able to unite and direct it, capture power (…) 10.

This is why the revolutionaries initially participated in this mobilisation of the Yellow Vests, with this objective.

The bitter struggle led by thousands and thousands of union activists for union bodies to join in the movement of the Yellow Vests and take their full place in it has contributed to the fact that the most reactionary elements have distanced themselves from it or are marginalised, while the Yellow Vest movement has increasingly given the demands held in common with the workers a more central place. It is significant that the “Assembly of the Assemblies of the Yellow Vests” (national meeting of delegates of the movement) voted, by a very large majority, for the participation of the Yellow Vests in the demonstration of 5 December 2019, called by the unions against the retirement reform.

This was only possible because the intense battle within the union organisations, against the policies of the leaderships, has led many union bodies, despite the attitude of the leaderships, to participate in the Yellow Vest movement. These mobilisations, which express the underground movement that has been going on for years, have spilled over the framework fixed by the leaderships of the labour movement.

For the revolutionaries, in this new situation, adapted forms had to be found to organise the broad layer of workers that are on the front lines of the fight. It is in this framework that the intervention by the revolutionaries in the Yellow Vest movement has allowed to have a significant fraction of them participate in the “National Committee of Resistance and Reconquest” (CNRR) and in the local committees, alongside political activists of diverse origins, union members, etc.

Founded in 2017, the CNRR is neither a substitute for the unions nor a party, but a political grouping of activists from diverse origins who find themselves in the field of the defence of the gains of the class struggle. In this new situation (marked by “degagism” and the will of the workers to control the character of the mobilisations “from below”), the revolutionaries must find the forms and the means to broadly group this layer together in order to take a step forward on the path of the organisation indispensable for the emancipation of the workers.

Already in December 2018, the 52nd Congress of the French section indicated:

On the one hand, a terror at the top in the face of the threat of an upsurge of “uncontrolled” movements; on the other, an expression of the capacity for an already significant layer of worker-militants and cadres to provide themselves at national level with a form of organization which allows them to emerge from the paralysis in which the party and trade union leaders are trying to contain the working class and to nourish, by their political action, a ripening of the spontaneous movement which, manifestly, is seeking to open a way for itself. Everything is in this dynamic relationship. There is, in their rejection of forms of action contained by the leaderships, the preparation of a “spontaneous” upsurge of the masses. It is in this sense that the multiplication of “local committees for resistance and reconquest” is taking place within the framework of the preparation of the political conditions for the constitution of “committees of action” for the moment when the masses enter into movement and give shape to them. “Committees of action” whose task, Trotsky tells us, will be to “unite in a defensive struggle the toiling masses of France and thus imbue these masses with the consciousness of their own power for the coming offensive”. And he adds, “once created, these action committees could become a magnificent springboard for a revolutionary party” (Letter to Jean Rous, November 1935).
A movement that comes from afar

The Yellow Vest mobilisation prepared the explosion of the class struggle against the “reform” of retirement. But this movement comes from afar. It comes from the general strike of 1968 that ousted the Bonaparte De Gaulle and shook the Fifth Republic but was stopped from bringing down the regime. It comes from this deep movement of the working class that was expressed in 1995 by a massive strike and mobilisation, forcing the government of the time to back down, also on its “reform” of retirement. It also draws on the massive mobilisations of 2003, 2010 and 2016 that, due to the policies of the leaderships, were unable to succeed. This is a long course, deep, underground; this is the old mole Marx spoke of, which gathers its forces and which, at a given moment, brutally rises onto the political scene without forgetting – on the contrary! – the past renunciations and treasons, thus strengthening the will of the fighting masses to control their own movement.

This resistance expresses a rejection of all the institutional forces attached to the domination of capital. In Europe, this movement takes the form of an unprecedented rejection of all the parties that pretended to speak in the name of the workers.

From the electoral point of view, in France, this rejection has led to the collapse of the Communist and Socialist Parties... And, at the same time, in Germany, the collapse of the SPD in the last elections due to its refusal to break with the Merkel’s Great Coalition; in Great Britain, the collapse of the Labour Party, tied to its leadership’s refusal to respond the aspirations of the party’s working-class electoral base, to finally realise the Brexit. During the referendum, the big working-class regions, Labour bastions, had voted for breaking with the European Union. The content of this vote was the will to put to rest all the anti-worker measures taken by the British governments, right and “left” alike, in the name of the rules of the European Union. Corbyn’s decision to lead a campaign for a new referendum appeared to Labour’s working-class base as a knife in the back.

All these developments constitute what is called “de-gagism”. For the militants of the Fourth International, engaged in helping the mobilisation of the masses, this movement for the liquidation of the old parties through the class struggle is progressive.

The place of the union movement

The union movement, however, is a different question. The policy of subordination of the official leaderships of the labour movement to the interests of capital, in Europe, threatens these organisations. However, a union organisation is not a political party. It is a framework that organises the workers, whatever their political, philosophical or religious opinions. It is the organisation that brings together the producers, overcoming their competition, against the exploiters. It is therefore an organisation reserved solely for the workers to defend their exclusive interests against the employers.

Concerning this, Leon Trotsky emphasised:

In the course of many decades, the workers have built up within the bourgeois democracy, by utilizing it, by fighting against it, their own strongholds and bases of proletarian democracy (...). The proletariat cannot attain power within the formal limits of bourgeois democracy, but can do so only by taking the road of revolution (...). And these bulwarks of workers’ democracy within the bourgeois state are absolutely essential for taking the revolutionary road.

The union is thus a “bulwark of workers’ democracy within the bourgeois state”. By its simple existence, and whatever the policies of its leadership, it materialises the fact that society is divided into classes with contradictory interests.

In the mobilisation underway against the “reform” of retirement in France, the union activists and workers want to take back their organisations, contrary to the policies of those on top, in order for them to fully participate in the mobilisation, controlled by the workers, and that in no case those on high start again with their policy of “concertation” and “dialog” with a government that seeks to integrate the union organisations in accompanying its policies. The government has already invited the union federations to encounters in January. Furthermore, a certain number of union leaders called for a truce for the Christmas holiday, provoking the anger of the rail and metro workers, who declared: “No truce without the withdrawal of the project!” In this situation, a series of obstacles have been set up to block the path to the class action underway.

This movement of resistance is obviously expressed in different ways according to the continent and country. In Africa, subjected to pillage by the trusts, to wars and to the dislocation of the states, and in absence of parties defending national sovereignty, the union federations have a particular place, because the defence of the workers and their demands is inseparable, in these countries oppressed by imperialism, from the question of national sovereignty and the refusal of imperialist interference.

In India, where the union organisations lead the fight against the government’s “reform” of the Labour Code, they are also obliged to adopt a position on the “citizenship” law that imposes the loss of nationality on two million Muslims. They perfectly understand that this operation has but one goal: to divide the workers and turn the attention of the masses away from the governmental plans.

In the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, countries oppressed by imperialism and capital, the labour movement’s struggle for its demands is inseparable from the fight for the sovereign nation, to break the ties of submission to imperialism. This is what is shown, once again, by the mobilisation in Chile and, on another level,
the resistance of the workers against the United States’ policy of interference to dislocate Venezuela.

In Europe, as we have seen, in particular forms, forces are emerging from the labour movement to free themselves from the policies of the old leaderships and open the way to an independent policy, which poses the question of power and of socialism.

The ways of internationalism

These forces, which emerge on the international scale, seek the way of collaboration on the world scale. The unity of the offensive by capitalism on all continents and in all countries necessarily pushed the activists and leaders to coordinate themselves, to lead the resistance fight together. It is illustrative that, in response to the call by union leaders from three countries of the Sahel (Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso) against the French military intervention, embracing the formula of the great German revolutionary Karl Liebknecht: “the enemy in in our own country”, the congress of the Independent Workers’ Party (POI, within which the members of the French section of the Fourth International militate) adopted a resolution to organise a campaign in France for the immediate withdrawal of French troops. This is internationalism in practice.

The very broad international campaign for the liberation of Louisa Hanoune, on the initiative of the International Liaison Committee of workers and peoples (ILC), has been led in over 100 countries. It expresses the interest for the developments in the situation in Algeria by labour, political and union activists on the world scale. This echo bears witness to the immense readiness concerning any common action in defence of the democracy indispensable for the fight of the peoples. This is the focus of all the relationships established by the ILC, of which Louisa Hanoune is coordinator. It was Louisa Hanoune, at the conclusion of the 9th Open World Conference in Algiers, in December 2017, who had proposed, with the goal of opening a very broad framework, to create the International Committee of Liaison and Exchanges (ICLE).

At the second meeting of the International Committee of Liaison and Exchanges in November 2019, activists and leaders from 55 countries and four continents, of different political origins, exchanged and debated for three days and adopted a declaration confirming the importance of this grouping. The declaration concludes with a call “to bring together the forces engaged in each of our countries in the organisation of an ‘International Day Against War and Repression’ and which will address themselves to American labour activists to ask them to support the delegation that will go to the UN headquarters in New York to hold the institution accountable for being the tool of those who make imperialist war.”

The activists and leaders present often had stories different from each other, different political origins and different political positions on many subjects, but they found themselves together on the need for the class struggle, against capital, for the independence of the labour movement, for the struggle against war and repression and for the sovereignty of the nations and peoples.

The ICLE is thus a framework of confluence, of convergence, of activists and currents that intend to act together as equals to help the working class emancipate itself, by itself.

The Fourth International is respectful of this framework because it considers that, in the new world situation, it is a matter of bringing together, faced with the collapse of the official labour movement, all the forces that act and fight in defence of labour rights and national sovereignty.

A new world situation has opened which upsets all the relations and relationships existing until now. Opposing dogma to reality is contrary to the policy of Lenin, who esteemed that “Marxism is a guide for action”.

In 1962, Pierre Lambert wrote:

It is certain that revolutionary labour tendencies with other origins and other experiences than our own, and even, for some of them, non-Marxist, will be called to participate in the construction of the new revolutionary International, of which they will be an integral part. The help them in this evolution, organisational methods must be elaborated. The programmatic basis of the revolutionary International is of course intangible, which does not mean that the presence in the ranks of the International of revolutionary labour tendencies that have more or less extensive disagreements with this program should be excluded, quite the contrary. The criteria for judging these tendencies are above all their ties with the working class and their behaviour in the great class battles in which they have participated.

Obviously, the conditions are no longer the same as in 1962. The Socialist and Communist parties have collapsed. The demise of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin Wall brought about considerable world upheavals (see the article of the fall of the Berlin Wall on page 57). But the need to find the forms adapted to the new situation for the construction of the revolutionary party of the Fourth International remain. Obviously, we cannot reproduce the schemas of the past. The rejection by the masses of the old leaderships that pretend to speak in the name of the workers and the emergence from below of class-struggle movements pose the question of the construction of the party in different conditions. But the party, nonetheless, remains an absolute necessity in order to build, in the very course of the class struggle, an organisation with the goal of helping the masses to overcome the obstacles set up by the apparatuses through their own class movement and their own control over this class movement. This is the way by which the workers give themselves their own organs, leading to the taking of power, the necessary condition for the expropriation of capital. It is according to this orientation that the Fourth International fights, as summarised in the formula: “The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves”.
“It will all get tangled together. 
The sorting will take place everywhere”


The whole of the experience of the class struggle attests that an independent workers party and an international are indispensable because the final result of the class struggle is not to obtain a change in bourgeois society. It is a question of the very existence of humanity, dragged into the abyss by imperialism.

And to accomplish the revolutionary tasks, there is no ready-made solution. Marxism is the scientific method of organised construction of the tool indispensable for helping the masses to work for their emancipation themselves. But the solution is not to be found in any book. We begin with the Fourth International, we establish, with the help of the program, that there is no other solution to the crisis of humanity than the socialism guaranteed by the abolition of private ownership of the major means of production and worker democracy. Countless difficulties have come up. We will persevere.

And there is nothing contradictory in observing the complexity of the revolutionary processes and to conclude that, for the revolutionary things, things are simple.

Things are simple: begin with what is, and to understand what is, begin with the program. The victory of the world revolution has been delayed, delays bring with them suffering and failures; but the failures on the road of revolution, jointly organised by the social-democratic and Stalinist treasons, particularly highlight the power of the revolutionary movements of the masses, the receptivity of the workers and the youth to the political ideas and principles set forth in the Transitional Program. No one can foresee the inevitable stages, the unforeseen combinations by which the march to the revolution will continue, but Marxism remains the only scientific method, because, by unifying theory and practice, it provides the only political means – thus of organisation – to raise the fight of the vanguard to be equal to the needs of history.

To conclude, at the risk of repeating ourselves, we say: it is through organised practice that the events must be confirmed; it is not by words, but by life, that the discussions and divergences will be settled. It is absolutely inevitable that the largest diversity of political opinions develop, since the march to the world revolution embracing hundreds of millions of people, across all the continents, will bring to the surface, everywhere, in all countries, in all the organisations, the slag produced by the decomposition of the system of imperialism and bureaucracy, and the advanced elements to the search for progressive solutions. It will all be tangled together. The sorting will take place everywhere. Faithful to Marxism, to Bolshevism, to the principles of the program, we will not let ourselves be turned away from our path.

Because imperialism is doomed. Because the bureaucratic usurpers are doomed. Because the revolutionary crisis will continue through failures and advances, it will extend.

And this is what will provide the material, in light of the principles of the program, to elaborate the means to build the Fourth International. And it is indeed this that they do not pardon us.

As Pierre Lambert said, “It will all get tangled together. The sorting will take place everywhere”.

Lucien Gauthier
December 20, 2019


Marx here paraphrases Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 5: “Well said, old mole!”, indicating that history acts as much in an underground as a visible way…

4. V. I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Ch. VIII “Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism”, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch08.htm
5. V. I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Ch. I “Concentration of Production and Monopolies”, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch01.htm
8. On the AFP, see the article Revolution and Counter Revolution in South America in this issue of La Vérité–The Truth, page 22 (note 3).
12. A resolution adopted by the French section of the Fourth International. This text was published in the presentation of texts by Pierre Lambert on The fight for the construction of the party (and the strategy of transition), found in La Vérité, n° 60-61, page 108.
13. This preface by Pierre Lambert to the Peruvian edition of the Transitional Program (April 1989) can be found (in French) in L’Agonie du capitalisme et les tâches de la IVe Internationale, Programme de transition, éditions Sélio, April 2013, pages 7-23. The excerpt cited here is on pages 22-23.