On the Tasks of Building the Fourth International and Its Sections In the World Situation

The international secretariat of the Fourth International met 5 and 6 September. It took the decision to convene, in December 2018, a general council bringing together all the sections, in order to proceed to a discussion on the tasks of building the Fourth International and its sections in the current world situation (on this point, see the article in La Vérité–The Truth, n° 98, “Turning point in the world situation”, p. 5-9)

Marc Gauquelin, at a gathering organised by the French section of the Fourth International, 1 September, for the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International, insisted on the conditions of its fight, past and present.

When, in the years 1938-1940, Leon Trotsky fought to bring together and organise the militants and labour officials that had not capitulated to social-democracy and Stalinism, he knew that the war was coming, he was convinced that the coming war would end in gigantic revolutionary waves.

He fought to create the organised framework within which the revolutionary vanguard could debate and act on the basis of the principles of revolutionary Marxism and the Bolshevik tradition.

He fought to arm them with all the generalised experience from the terrible defeats of the German proletariat and the Spanish proletariat; he fought to arm them with a programme.

Trotsky knew – as he wrote in the article he published the day of the foundation of the Fourth International – that “The working class, especially in Europe, is still in retreat, or at best, in a state of expectancy. Defeats are still too fresh, and their number far from exhausted. They have assumed their sharpest form in Spain. Such are conditions in which the Fourth International is developing. Is it any wonder that its growth proceeds more slowly than we should like?”

He added: “We do not need any self-deceptions. The discrepancy between our forces today and the tasks on the morrow is much more clearly perceived by us than by our critics. But the harsh and tragic dialectic of our epoch is working in our favor. Brought to the extreme pitch of exasperation and indignation the masses will find no other leadership than that offered them by the Fourth International.” (1)

The revolutionary wave swept across the world, and, in particular, across Europe…

The sections of the Fourth International were too weak, too inexperienced to help the working class to clear the way to victory, to the proletariat taking power by expropriating capital. The wave of uprisings against the bourgeois states that had collaborated with Nazism was held back, then subsided.

Nonetheless, imperialism, to save its system of domination, had to concede social and political conquests to the working class, conquests that proved ultimately incompatible with the system of private ownership of the means of production.

This set of working-class political and social conquests, which organise the class as a distinct class within and antagonistic to bourgeois society, is today crashing headlong into the mortal demands of financial capital.

Nothing of what had been won anywhere can remain. The rate of exploitation must reach levels never imagined. The crisis that is suffocating the whole of the system of production of the capitalist system demands these measures.

This set of social and political conquest stands as the living trace of a revolutionary process that was prevented from running its course.

The crisis of imperialism’s accelerated decomposition is such that all that in one way or another pertains to the collective guarantees, to the rules of solidarity peculiar to the worker conquests, must be destroyed. But it also threatens societies with catastrophe.
The accident at Genoa is only a spectacular image of what the sabotage of the infrastructures, the privatisation underway and the fact of offering to capital the whole of these elements are dragging society into barbarity. (…)

The fight for resistance and reconquest contains, in an embryonic state, the sketch of a total reorganisation of society. It is in this sense that it finds itself at the very heart of the method of the Transitional Program, which seeks to bridge the immediate demands and the program of the revolution, leading to a single conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

The whole of the political order on which imperialism’s domination was rebuilt in Europe, particularly after WWII, is today in upheaval. Financial capital’s offensive itself simultaneously shakes all the governments in place throughout Europe, all the forms of imperialist domination in each country, and is today at the heart of the mobilisation of the workers to be rid of them.

It is the terror before the wave that is gathering its forces that is leading the representatives of financial capital to completely orchestrate, to instrumentalise the refugee question, to accuse the resistance of the peoples of Europe of “populism”. These very representatives of financial capital that organise these waves of migration, that organise the desertification and destruction of entire countries and continents and who support the mafia organisations that organise these displacements… these very representatives who organise this battle accuse, in the name of European civilisation, Macron of “humanism”, the resistance of the peoples of Europe of nationalism, xenophobia and populism.

It is within this framework that the international secretariat discussed and adopted a declaration on the question of the refugees and migrants in Europe, which we publish here below.


Declaration From the International Secretariat
On the Question of the Refugees and Migrants in Europe

It is impossible to not react to the images of these “wretched of the earth” crammed onto the decks of the boats that just saved them from drowning and, at the same time to not feel a deep anger in front of the shameful political manipulation completely fabricated by all the heads of state and government of the European Union.

Not a day goes by that these hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, chased from their lands by war and the looting of the natural resources of their counties by the imperialist powers, are not insidiously presented by the official media as a potential factor of destabilisation for the whole European continent, thus spreading the poison of racism and xenophobia.

And it is these heads of state and government that, on the initiative of the French government, have engaged their armies in Africa and the Middle East, provoking forced displacements of populations. Heads of state who, in parallel, endeavour to destroy the labour legislation in their countries to prepare the humanitarian “welcome” of slave labour… and who dare accuse the peoples of Europe of racism and xenophobia.

And it is these same heads of state and government who, in the name of this “humanitarian welcome”, summon the countries of North Africa to organise “disembarkation platforms”, which can only be “regroupment camps”.

In the name of enlarging the European Union and its “humanist values”, in the 1990s, they descended like buzzards on the industry and infrastructures of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to privatise and dismantle them.

They threw hundreds of thousands of qualified workers out of work; they forced the youth of these countries to emigrate. They trampled on the legitimate aspiration of the workers of these countries to gain the rights and living standards of their Western brothers after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

And it is these gentlemen who dare accuse the workers and people of Eastern Europe of racism and xenophobia.

To guarantee to financial capital the payment of state debts, they applied an austerity program in Greece that has no peacetime equivalent. They have submitted Portugal and Spain to real “adjustment plans”. Today, they directly threaten Italy. And it is they who accuse the Greek and Italian peoples… of xenophobia.

It is they, and they alone, who are responsible for the accession to power of Orban, Salvini and company!

They act as if the crisis that cuts across Europe had the arrival of a few hundred thousand refugees as its cause. With
one single goal: to make the true causes of the dislocation of the European continent disappear.

Ten years have passed since the financial crisis of 2008 broke out, and Trichet, the former president of the ECB, is in a panic. He has just declared that the situation has become more dangerous than ten years ago.

All perceive the signs of a growing rejection by all the peoples of the policies dictated by financial capital on the whole continent. They fear above all an uprising of these peoples against the murderous policies dictated by financial capital and executed by the different governments pretending to be “forced” to implement these plans by the institution of the European Union.

They seek to preventatively break this uprising apart. They seek to break it apart before it can take form. This is the cause of the shameful spectacle we watch under the theme of “Look out! Populism!”, and which is to serve as an axis for the campaign for the European elections.

There are, supposedly, on one side, the partisans of an “open” world attached to saving the institutions of the European Union, a tool of financial capital, assembled behind Macron-Merkel, and, on the other, the world of the “nationalist and xenophobic withdrawal”.

This false alternative has the goal of turning the working class and peoples of Europe away from the fight to push back and defeat the offensive underway, to direct their blows against the foundations of the system of capitalist exploitation and put an end to the policies of military intervention of the great imperialist powers.

The outcome is neither situated in the “humanist” support of imperialism’s policy of displacing populations nor in the impasse of pulling back behind one’s own borders.

The industry and agriculture of the European nations are existentially threatened by being carved up by the monopolies that dominate the world market. European industry and agriculture do not have the size needed to confront these imperialist monopolies.

We bring all these elements up for discussion. They are at the heart of the method of the Fourth International: to discuss the facts and characteristics of the world situation, in relation to our own construction. This issue of our theoretical and political review, by the diversity of its content, hopes to contribute to this.

To conclude – in this month of the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International –, let us give the floor to Pierre Lambert, who thus concluded a preface to the Transitional Program (3):

“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 movement 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 IV International. And it is indeed this that they do not pardon us.”

The editorial staff of La Vérité-The Truth

2. Leon Trotsky: Marxism in Our Time (April 1939)