One century ago, the October Revolution

Tribute to the struggle waged by Pierre Lambert

Tribute to the revolutionary militant Marika Kovács
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In February 2017, it will be a century since the beginning of the Russian Revolution, triumphing in October of the same year. Undoubtedly, throughout the year 2017, a truckload of calumnies, lies and counter-truths will be dumped on the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks. It isn’t our goal to commemorate an event or to celebrate an anniversary, an historical tip of the hat, as if the cycle opened by October 1917 was now closed, but to underline its current pertinence. The real content of this offensive against the Russian Revolution isn’t historical, but aims to affirm that capitalism is impassable and class struggle is an archaism.

To defend the October Revolution is to defend the fact that despite all the declarations, class struggle remains the motor of history and that a century after the October Revolution, the confrontation between capital and labor sharpens in a combination of barbarity and the resistance of workers and peoples. It is to reaffirm that, to save humanity, the class struggle opposing the proletariat to the bourgeoisie must lead to the expropriation of capital.

There are, of course, important differences between the current situation and that of 1917. We are still in the same historical period, imperialism, that Lenin characterized as “the era of wars and revolutions”. But, at the time of the first imperialist war, what was at play was the confrontation of different imperialisms for control of Europe and the world. It's precisely this situation, which produced the revolt of the workers and peasants of the tsarist empire, leading to a proletarian revolution. It's why Lenin and Trotsky said: “from the war surged the revolution.” The situation is different today. After the inter-imperialist confrontations of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, American imperialism came out as the most powerful imperialism on a worldwide scale. But this dominant imperialism is in decline and crisis, reflecting all the contradictions and the crisis of the world capitalist system. The wars which are spreading to the four corners of the planet are at the same time the expression of the decomposition of this system and of the inability of the most powerful imperialism, the United States, to control the developments.

The workers' movement is different as well. In 1914, the Menshevik Party and the revolutionary Socialist Party were mass workers’ parties. Even though, after the fall of the Tsar, they stood against the second phase of the proletarian Revolution, which opened in October 1917 on the expropriation of capital, they participated in the combat to bring down Tsarism. Formally their objective was the socialization of the means of production and, still formally, they were opposed to the Bolsheviks in the name of the necessary stage of bourgeois democracy, leading them in practice to the side of the counter-revolution. The current situation of parties who were, historically, workers' parties has nothing to do with this. The overwhelming majority of these parties, even on
the formal terrain, adhere to the capitalist system and its "adjustment".

"They dared!"
The IV International, for its part, considers, as its program of foundation states "the strategic task of the IV International doesn't consist in reforming capitalism, but in overturning it". And this is precisely the current pertinence of October 1917. "They dared!" It's in these terms that Rosa Luxemburg described the position of the Bolsheviks. "The Bolsheviks showed that they could do all that a true revolutionary party could do within the historical possibilities (...). The most important problem of socialism is precisely the burning question of the moment: not a specific question of tactical detail, but the proletariat's ability to act, the combativeness of the masses, the will to realize socialism. In this regard, Lenin and Trotsky are the only ones who can cry out with Huten (hero of the German poet Schiller) 'I dared!' (...) They took an enormous step on the path of settling the score between capital and labor throughout the world."

As Rosa Luxemburg underlines, the proletarian revolution triumphed in October 1917 because between February and October 1917 the Bolshevik Party acted to help the masses overcome obstacles, notably that constituted by the coalition government of the two principal workers' parties and a part of the bourgeoisie. They did it on a line of unified front, by implanting themselves in the working class, by fully taking their place in the working class to finally gain the majority in the soviets.

Of course, the practical forms of party construction are not the same today as those taken in 1917. Integrating into Marxist analysis the Stalinist treason and its consequences for the workers' movement, Trotsky called for the creation of the IV International. After Trotsky's assassination by Stalin and the crisis of dismemberment of the IV International in 1951-1953, the majority of the French section, directed by Pierre Lambert, constituted the pole of resistance to liquidation and, by its action, contributed with its assembled forces to proclaim once more, in 1993, the IV International. But this was only possible by the rupture with the petite-bourgeois conception which was prevalent in the summits of the IV International after the war: that the IV International had a just program, that the party already existed and that this base was sufficient to address the masses to induce them to join. Pierre Lambert and his comrades, on the contrary, sought to implant themselves in the heart of the workers' movement, to no more be "exiled within their own class".

It's the sense of the orientation set out by Pierre Lambert since 1948, which would be formalized in 1964 at the XIV Congress of the French section, defining the line of transition concerning the construction of the party (see in this issue the dossier on Pierre Lambert).

150 years ago

The crisis of capital gives birth to a barbarous market, not only through war, but also by the breaking up of nations and the liquidation of nation states, as well as by anti-worker counter-reforms. In this situation of the crisis world capitalist system, to assure its survival, it violently goes after "labor costs", in other words the very existence of the working class, its achievements and its organizations. National frameworks must be tossed aside along with norms attached to these frameworks to atomize the working class. Therefore, there is a worldwide offensive, on all continents and in every country, to call into question the existence of the union organizations which are currently the organizational framework of the working class on a world scale, faced with the decomposition of the majority of the parties which were once workers' parties.

The union organizations, whatever the policies enacted by their leaders, because they only organize salaried employees, are a materialization of the division of society into antagonistic classes: the exploiters and the exploited.

In 2017, 150 years will have passed since the publication of the first book of Marx's Capital, which lays bare the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation. This work opens with the following affirmation: "the wealth of the societies within which the capitalist mode of production reigns announces itself as an immense accumulation of merchandise."

One hundred fifty years later, in the imperialist epoch of agonizing capital (the "wealth" of which Marx speaks isn't that of the proletariat, but that of the capitalist economy), it is no longer simply a question of a fantastic accumulation of merchandise, but above all of an accumulation of capital which doesn't find a way to materialize itself, which suffocates within the framework of the world market, and which the world capitalist system implode on a regular basis, menacing the disintegration of the world market. "The limit of capital is capital itself", wrote Karl Marx.

The current menace of the bankruptcy of Deutsche Bank causes universal fear of a financial crisis of a greater magnitude than that of 2008-2009. "Germany, first in its class, could unleash a new financial crisis comparable to that of 2008. This
time, the bomb isn’t called Lehman Brothers, but Deutsche Bank. The difference being that the German bank is three times larger than Lehman Brothers. We are thus faced with an atomic bomb” (Le Journal du Dimanche, a French weekly newspaper, 2 October).

Crossing a new stage in the decomposition of the entire system of imperialist domination

The worldwide crisis is expressed at the two extreme poles of society: the rising of the growing wave of tens of millions of refugees, chased from their homes by war and poverty, on all continents, and the rising, based on the aggravation of the social crisis, of an unprecedented political crisis at the heart of the leadership of American imperialism. This gives a striking image of the impasse into which the system founded on private ownership of the means of production is dragging all humanity.

On one side, the “stock” of “surplus humans” chased from their lands and deprived of any place in society by the merciless war waged by the imperialist monopolies, through interposed militias (supported by massive bombardments by the US led coalition), to control natural resources; the rising of a wave fed by the chaos provoked by the pillage of the Middle East, of sub-Saharan Africa, of East Africa, but also the collapse of the countries of central America and entire swathes of the Asian continent (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma)... A wave, which can only grow, menacing the fragile balance of the countries it traverses in order try to find a homeland.

On the other, at the very summit of the edifice of imperialist domination, the unprecedented political crisis which has opened in the United States gives a shining example of the affirmation made by Trotsky in 1926: “The more the United States makes the whole world their dependent, the more they themselves fall into dependence on the entire world, with all its contradictions and upheavals in perspective.”

A “dependence” which demands that American imperialism, as the most powerful imperialism, must take the battle to distant outposts to save, in all its forms and on all points of the planet, the imperialist order, shaken by the chaos into which the system of private ownership of the means of production is dragging the world.

In this situation, the American dominant class would need a hard power, capable of crushing the American working class and the peoples of the whole world under its iron heel. But it only has a weak government in crisis. The American primary race only reinforces and expresses the crisis of the American dominant class.

The world situation exceeds the forces of American imperialism and constrains it not only to enroll behind it the imperialisms of second order of France England and Germany, but also to tie – depending on the circumstances – alliances with powers such as Russia and Iran, who desire above all to relieve the pressure which American imperialism places on them through the price war on oil and gas and through hard-hitting sanctions. Alliances with partners with contradictory interests, giving them an unstable character due to unceasing about-faces. The imbroglio in relations between the United States and the Gulf countries, Turkey, Kurdish forces, Russia and Iran... aggravates the sentiment of the incoherence which characterizes its foreign policy, at a moment when arms spending is crushing American public finance and condemns its infrastructure to dilapidation, causing a new step to be taken in the social crisis which invites itself to the forefront of the presidential debate.

At the end of Obama’s second term, the black question resurfaces in all its acuteness, while the rejection of the policy of the delocalization of “investors”, which is destroying the productive bases of the country and which is encouraged by the executive (the TPP project), turns violently against the two institutional parties whose crisis reflects that of the American dominant class; a crisis which will enter a new phase after the presidential election, no matter who wins.

The political crisis in the United States and the breaches it tends to open on all continents...

If the wave of revolutionary explosion which shook Tunisia and Egypt five years ago has had to roll back under the blows of repression, the explosive material of which it was composed continues to accumulated on all continents, in populations irremediably condemned by the decomposition of corrupt regimes who have made themselves the instruments of the requirements of imperialist pillage.

Faced with this menace of revolutionary explosion, the brutal initiatives taken by American imperialism to roll it back cannot escape the contradictions provoked by the crisis which is ripping it apart.

While it is pressed by the worsening of the world-wide recession, its attempts to reconquering what imperialism has had to concede, for example during the last 15 years in Latin America, are marked by the fear of opening Pandora’s box. To decide to bring down Dilma to erase the episode of the PT government and to replace him by Temer is to take an enormous risk. Especially since it is done at a moment when, before the eyes of the
vast majority of the peoples of the continent, it is
openly engaged in the organization of a putsch in
Venezuela.
The prevarication of American policy in the
conduct of its high-risk operations in Latin
America, an expression of the political crisis which
traverses it, can only push the masses to engage
themselves on the terrain where, overcoming the
limits of the PT’s regime of class collaboration (or
of Chavez-like Bonapartism), they see themselves
constrained to take the only path still open, that
which poses the question of the working class
supported by the peasants and poor urban
populations.
In this way, the crisis which shakes the heart of the
system – an expression of the impasse into which
the whole system founded on private ownership of
the means of production is plunging – integrates
itself, each day, in specific forms, as a determining
factor of the situation and of the contradictions at
work on each continent and in each country.

The crisis of the disintegration of the
European Union
It isn’t the Brexit, which menaces the explosion of
the European Union; it is only an expression of it.
The result of the referendum which led the British
government to decide to leave the European Union
is simultaneously the expression and the symptom
(a major symptom, considering the place of Great
Britain in the world) of the degree of disintegration already attained by the whole
architecture of the European Union, laboriously
put into place in the 1950’s under the guidance of
American imperialism.
A symptom among others, starting with the
menace of the bankruptcy of the Italian banking
system, which risks dragging with it (as was the
case of Greece in 2011) the entire European
banking system weakened by the ECB, combined
with the measures taken after 2008 to,
supposedly, protect the world financial system
from systemic risk and... to favor, according to the
European bankers themselves, the concurrence of
American banks.
The needs for financial capital’s survival generate
a barbarous general market, wars, the
disintegration of nations, but also, within
imperialist states, the path towards the
dismantlement of the nation-state, toward
privatization of the state and all its institutions. It’s
an unprecedented situation, which reflects
widespread decomposition. It’s also this path
which pushes and pulls working class resistance
movements throughout Europe: the mobilization,
during several months, of workers in France,
supported by the union axis CGT and FO, but also
in Belgium with the forming of a union front, in
Italy, in Germany, in Spain...
Not to forget the supposed “refugee” crisis, at the
same time as the coming “American elections,
Italian referendum, formation of the Spanish
government, Austrian re-election, Hungarian
referendum, then elections in France and Germany
(...). These perilous votes reflect the fatigue of
peoples coming from a too long crisis, but also of
the impotence of politicians to treat the problems:
inequality, integration, terrorism, etc.” (Les Echos,
29 August)
The decision taken by the British government to
leave the European Union was the product of an
unprecedented combination: the combination of
the rejection expressed by the popular masses of
the austerity policy conducted, in the name of the
European Union, by Conservatives and Labor, and
the crisis of the British bourgeoisie, a fraction of
which seized the occasion of this referendum to
turn away from a European Union “mired” in
“stagnation”.
The European Union no longer corresponds, for
important sectors of financial capital, to the needs
of the situation, which the world is going through,
even though it seeks to play its role on behalf of
financial capital. It is no longer equal to the task,
which they must achieve. It hasn’t been able to
provide a framework permitting national states to
overcome (on behalf of imperialist monopolies)
the contradictory interests – fashioned by the
history of the development of bourgeois society in
the framework of national states – which continue
to oppose them.
The European Union hasn’t been able to permit
them, in the name of the best interests of a
“harmonious Europe delivering peace and security”,
to defeat the permanent resistance of their
peoples. Its process of disintegration is irreparably
under way.
In perspective, we see that the claim (as was made
certain groups of the extreme left) that the victory
of the Brexit – coming out of a referendum where
the “yes” of the exploited was mixed with that of
a portion of their exploiters – was a “victory of the
British working class” was in fact a counter truth
and a trick: to make, on the eve of the British
referendum, the watchword “Break with the EU” a
central watchword for all Europe sets up a hoax
contributing to the disarming of militants and
workers confronted by the demands of the
European Union and, above all, by the policies of
their respective governments, engaged in an
offensive against the workers.
Such positions cover a political operation within
which the impasse represented by the demand for
the restoration of “national sovereignty” is
brandished to turn the masses away from the process in which they are engaged and which poses the question, in each country, of crushing the bourgeois government (whatever the form of their state) to take the power from the hands of the capitalist class.

“Theaellmann puts at the forefront of his conclusions the thought that ‘Germany today is a toy in the hands of the Entente’. It is therefore a question, above all, of ‘national liberation’.

However, in a certain sense, France, Italy and even England are also ‘toys’ in the hands of the United States. The Spanish dependence on America, which newly reappeared with the Hoover proposition (tomorrow this dependence will reveal itself in an even sharper and more brutal fashion), has a much more profound importance for the development of the European revolution than the dependence of Germany on the Entente.

Therefore – let us say it in passing – the watchword of the United Soviet States of Europe, and not only the isolated watchword of ‘Down with the Versailles treaty!’ is a proletarian response to the convulsions of the European continent.

But these questions are, nevertheless, only secondary questions. Our policy isn’t determined by the fact that Germany is a ‘toy’ in the hands of the Entente, but above all by the fact that the German proletariat, divided, weakened and humiliated, is a toy in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. ‘The most dangerous enemy is within our own country!’, taught Karl Liebknecht. Have you forgotten it, dear friends?”

Toward the world conference in 2017

The decision of the coordination of the International Entente of Workers (EIT) to call for an open world conference inscribes itself in the continuity of the initiatives taken since 1991 (Barcelona). We are no longer in 1991; the spreading war is an unavoidable reality of the internal politics of every country, on all continents. A simple general denunciation of war and exploitation would today take the form of an abstract denunciation oriented towards a large array of pacifist or semi-pacifist organizations.

We must say it how it is: the war against ISIS is a pretext. There is the imperialist coalition’s staging of a war against “radical Islam”, against “barbarism” … which serves to pave the way in all countries for a policy of national union, stinking of racism and xenophobia, directed against all the social and political conquests of the world working class.

There is a war of extermination of the peoples of the Middle East waged by imperialism for control of oil and gas. There is a war waged to make all traces of states disappear, as artificial as they had been since their creation; a war to return “humanity to the Stone Age” (to use the formula of Westmorland regarding Vietnam); a war charged with endlessly maintaining religious and tribal conflicts in the mosaic of peoples which make up the Middle East.

But also, a war charged with the orientation of the centers of decomposition produced by the flood of entire swathes of society towards a politico-mafia deviation, with inciting blind acts of terror, to try to succeed at imposing national union and defeat, in the name of collective security, the resistance of peoples. The struggle against the war is the struggle for the expropriation of capital, and this concerns principally the workers’ movement. It is the continuation of the Bolshevik’s combat in 1917, but in different conditions and in a different situation. The line of continuity has been preserved.

In this issue of La Vérité – The Truth, we publish a dossier in homage to comrade Marika Kovács, who recently passed away. Through her, it is the combat of the IV International for proletarian revolution, against the Stalinist bureaucracy, gravedigger of the October Revolution, it is the continuation of the Hungarian workers who, to defend socialism against Stalinist bureaucracy, formed workers’ councils in 1956, reconnecting with the combat of the Hungarian proletariat who, in 1919, at the call of the soviets of October 1917, formed their workers’ councils, crushed by the imperialist reaction.

The continuation of the combat of Pierre Lambert for the IV International

In this issue of La Vérité – The Truth, we publish an homage to our comrade Pierre Lambert, who was the decisive element in the combat for the reconstruction of the IV International and who brought a major contribution to the IV International as well as to all its sections, through the definition of the line of transition concerning the construction of the party. It’s this orientation defined by comrade Pierre Lambert, which is today put in to practice with tangible results.

In 1987, in the preface to the Peruvian edition of the Program of Transition, Pierre Lambert wrote: “And to accomplish the revolutionary tasks, there isn’t a ready-made solution. Marxism is the scientific method of the organized construction of the indispensable instrument for helping the masses themselves to work for their emancipation. But the solution doesn’t appear in any book. We begin with the IV International, we establish, with the help of the program, that there is no other solution to the crisis of humanity than socialism, guaranteed by the abolition of private ownership of large scale means of production and by workers’ democracy. Countless
difficulties have arisen. Others will arise. We will persevere. And there is nothing contradictory in observing the complexity of revolutionary processes and concluding that, for the revolutionaries, things are simple. Things are simple: start with what is, and to understand what is, start with the Program. The victory of the world revolution has been delayed, the delays bring sufferings and failures; but the failures on the path of revolution, organized by the combined treasons of social democrats and Stalinists, bring particularly to light the strength of the revolutionary movement of the masses, the receptivity of the workers, of the youth, to political ideas, to the principles put forward in the Program of Transition. Nobody could foretell the inevitable steps, the unforetold combinations, by which the march toward the revolution would pass, but Marxism remains the only scientific method, because, by unifying theory and practice, it alone provides the only political means – thus organization – to raise the combat of the avant-garde to the height of the necessities of history.

To conclude, at the risk of repeating ourselves, we say: it’s based on organized practice that the events must be verified, it isn’t by words, but by life, that discussions and divergences will be settled. It is absolutely inevitable that the greatest diversity of political opinions develops, since the path to world revolution embracing hundreds of millions of humans, across all 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 bureaucracy, and the elements put forward in the search for progressive solutions. The whole will get jumbled up. The sorting will happen everywhere. Faithful to Marxism, to Bolshevism, to the principles of the program, we won’t let ourselves turn away from our path” (April 1989, preface to the Peruvian edition of the Program of Transition, cited in La Vérité, issue 60-61). The slag has appeared. The sorting took place. The IV International will not let itself turn from its path.
TRIBUTE TO THE STRUGGLE WAGED BY PIERRE LAMBERT

Tribute to the struggle waged by Pierre Lambert

Account of a public meeting of the IV International
(Saturday, September 3, 2016)

The French section of the IV International, the Internationalist Communist Current (CCI) of the Independent Workers Party (POI), held a meeting open to the public on Saturday, September 3 in its headquarters in tribute to the struggle waged by Pierre Lambert, and particularly to his fundamental contribution to the building of a revolutionary party embedded in the working class and its organizations.

We believe it useful to publish large extracts of the speakers' interventions and messages sent on this occasion. It is not a complete account, but a selection made by ourselves, for which we bear responsibility.

Let us recall that it was in 1964, during the XIV Congress of the French section, that Pierre Lambert first formally proposed the line of transition as a means of building the party. As an annex to this account, we are publishing the chapter of a training brochure, which testifies to this struggle. Pierre Lambert's specific contribution consisted of combining political intervention in the class struggle and internationalism with an organizational rigor, which allowed the group numbering 52 militants in 1958 to recruit worker-militants and youths on the basis of the XIV Congress. It was then that there was discussion in the organization, leading on from the amendment of 1948, to formulate the line of transition as a means of building the party. The axis of orientation of the Revolutionary Workers' League was aimed at that layer of militants who, through their political development, sought to escape the grasp of the apparatuses, and at organizing them on the terrain of class independence.

The resolution of the XVII Congress of the OCI makes clear that this was in no way a renunciation of the program of the IV International, but without making the latter a pre-condition for gathering the class together in an organized framework. The developments of the class struggle, the collapse of the USSR and the disintegration of the Stalinist apparatus on an international level have modified the forms for the reorganization of the workers' movement on a new axis. But it is precisely the line originally defined by Pierre Lambert through the resolutions of the XIV, XVII and XVIII Congresses which allowed for progress on the national and international level, and which made possible the formulation of the question of building an independent workers' party today. It is this continuity that Pierre Lambert, already ill, ensured by participating actively in discussion of the prospect of founding an independent workers' party (POI), drawing on the balance sheet of the Workers Party (PT) and the new political situation. The proposal of an independent workers' party was his initiative. One can state that by his impulse, his elaboration, his commitment, he was its essential and principal architect.

This recollection allows us to fully measure the interest there is in revisiting the political contribution of Pierre Lambert. By publishing this account, we wish to make available to worker-militants some elements of reflection and analysis permitting the development of political exchange and thus to create the conditions for reinforcement of the IV International and its sections on the line of transition.

The Truth/La Vérité
PRESENTATION

(Philippe Navarro)

It is a tradition for the French section of the IV International to pay homage this morning to all the militants of the workers' movements who were the victims of Stalinism, and in particular on the tomb of Leon Sedov at the Thiais cemetery, as we have done for several decades now. At the same time as this tribute to the victims of Stalinism, we have decided to organize this meeting, whose purpose is to revisit the political struggle of Comrade Pierre Lambert, whose role in the construction of the French section of the IV International you are aware of. That is why we have decided to meet here this afternoon, in order to examine the lessons of his political fight, because we believe that in today's situation these lessons have a central and decisive place in relation to the events, which confront our class (…)

Expelled from the Young Communists for “Trotskyism” at age 14

Comrade Lambert was still very young, 14 years old, when he began his militant activity in the Young Communists, from which he was rapidly expelled, accused of Trotskyism, which was a big surprise for him because at that time he knew of neither Trotsky nor Trotskyism. This led him to decide to meet up with some Trotskyists, which he did, and to discuss with them. And all of the activity of Comrade Lambert, all his political action during his whole life, in the final analysis were concentrated in the question of resolving the following contradiction. He was confronted with the fact that the masses, the working class, sought the path to revolution, they rose up for the revolution, while the ranks of the revolutionary party, the French section of the IV International, were too sparse to provide effective aid for victory of the revolution. And it was this contradiction, that, together with others obviously, he sought to overcome in practice. From that point of view, Comrade Lambert adopted our program, the core of the Transitional Program of the IV International, that is to say that the crisis of Humanity can be summed up as the crisis of the revolutionary leadership. He had from the outset turned his back on all those who claimed, in one way or another, that if there was no victorious revolution, this was the fault of the masses, the fault of the workers who were not sufficiently this or that, but who were responsible. No, that was not Lambert's position, nor of course that of the IV International. He thus, regarding that question, sought to provide practical help in his daily life, practical, militant and political, to surmount this difficulty. Very soon, he realized, during the Second World War, that while Trotsky had correctly predicted that a revolutionary situation would arise out of the world war, the leadership of the International had concluded, somewhat dogmatically and erroneously, that it was necessary to prepare, to create, soviets. Lambert soon realized that this was not the state of mind of the working class in 1943-1944, after all the blows it had suffered, and that it was trying to reconquering a certain number of rights, and for that the indispensable instruments were its own organizations, and notably independent trade union organizations. He devoted himself to that task. But he devoted himself to that task at a time when, obviously, the French section of the IV International had not the strength to become the revolutionary party that the political situation demanded. And notably in relation to the following fact, as Trotsky said before him: he was confronted with the fact that the Trotskyists were exiles within their own class and that it was necessary to link up with a series of sectors of the class in order to overcome this situation.

Rejection of any orders from outside

That is what they did, notably with the strike at Renault in 1947, where the Trotskyists began to forge links with elements of their class, an experience which inspired Lambert to propose an amendment to the congress of the French section of 1948, an amendment to the effect that while on the evidence the Transitional Program is indeed the program of proletarian revolution, as verified by the facts, that does not mean that the form the revolutionary party will take will be strictly in the framework of the French section at that time, that is to say, the PCI. This therefore was the first concrete expression of what would become the essential struggle of his life, his decisive contribution, that is to say, the question of the transition as applied to the building of the party. From that standpoint, he constructed, together with some militants from Nantes, with his friend Alexandre Hébert, who was anarcho-syndicalist, the Liaison and Action Committee for Workers' Democracy (CLADO), in 1952. They then constituted the Workers' Alliance Committees. Notably six months before the general strike, this committee, which allied Social Security employees, Paris Metro workers and students, these liaison committees were constituted on a line of transitional forms. And from that standpoint, for Comrade Lambert it was clear that the line of transition in the construction of the party necessitated the strict reaffirmation of all the positions of the IV International, but that in no way could the positions of the IV International constitute a pre-condition for joint action. He was in the tradition of the Communist Manifesto, that is to say
that famous phrase which says “the communists have no interests distinct from those of the proletariat”. He was, like the III International, for the workers united front. That was his position and from that point of view he created a perfect incarnation of that orientation with that magnificent instrument for building the party, which is the newspaper Informations Ouvrières.

While Informations Ouvrières has always been the party organ reflecting the positions of the IV International, it has also always been a free tribune of the class struggle in which anyone who wants to progress toward the construction of the revolutionary party can have their say while not sharing all the positions of the IV International.

It was with the constitution of the MPPT, then the PT and after that the POI, that the contribution of Pierre Lambert was essential. Doggedly, step by step, through free discussion, without imposing in any way, while scrupulously respecting their equality, with militants and comrades such as Alexandre Hébert, Yannick Guillou, Roger Sandri and so many others who did not share all his views, having different backgrounds and history, he would seek out and constitute a framework for joint discussion, with joint national expression through the newspaper Informations Ouvrières.

This aim led ineluctably to what was, moreover, the tradition of the workers’ movement at the outset (neither god, nor Cesar, nor tribune, as the International song says), there being no leader, spokesman or single chief, but regularly convened bodies in charge of animating the discussion, the newspaper by stages becoming more of a free tribune of the class struggle. Our comrade Lambert watched over these aims daily.

Drawing upon all the lessons with his comrades of the “Lambert group”, who were attacked from all sides for their fidelity to October 1917, it appeared clear to him that from being a group they had to go to being an organization. From the amendment of 1947 to the constitution of the POI there is a continuity, based upon confidence in the class struggle, thus upon the capacity of the class to clear the obstacles, thus to debate upon equal terms, to shun all “prescriptions” like the plague, to “look to the rank-and-file” as he used to say, thus ruling out all pretense at being the sole possessors of the truth.

It is that fight that we are continuing today when we build, on equal terms with others who are not us, the POI in which, Lambert believed, that “ideally” so to speak, the Trotskyists should in time be in the minority, without ever hiding their positions. That argumentation, rapidly sketched out here, thus supposes the rejection of all dogma, of all ultimatums, of all orders originating from outside of the class; all those things that Lambert rejected.

Lambert stood above all for the struggle for the building of a leadership in that framework. Comrades, I will end there and ask Comrade Lybon who is our first speaker to address us.

Address of Lybon Mabasa
(Azania – South Africa)

Good afternoon comrades, what I’m going to say today here is what, if I had got any chance, I would have said to the person of comrade Pierre Lambert in 2008. I will start by saying that comrade Lambert, the man I encountered, was the very best among us, our leader, our teacher, but in the same place, our equal and our student.

My first meeting with Pierre Lambert

I will say a few things to demonstrate how he gave political leadership, how he assisted us in different countries, but also how he was willing to listen to us and act on what we were talking about.

Those who know know that I encountered comrade Lambert for the first time in 1992. I was just 40 years old. I was taken to his office, so that I would say who I was, what we were doing, and whether I was comfortable with the program of the Fourth International as it was introduced to me.

I come from the Black Consciousness movement. In the context of South Africa, and the political repression and exploitation and suppression, it came naturally for me not to trust white people. So I was saying who is this old man whom I was being taken to. And I was actually ready to resist with everything, because I did not want to be told by white people what I needed to do with my struggle in Azania. But I came across an extremely sensitive political leader who made me feel comfortable right at the very beginning.

We talked about the problems that we were facing in Africa, that imperialism wanted to divide Africa into useful and useless Africa, and he explained all this process to me, and I was extremely impressed.

When we talked about the situation, he said the ILC should immediately organize a conference in Africa in order to address these particular issues. I told him I agreed that a conference needed to be organized, but it could not be in Johannesburg at
that time, because there were a lot of bombings, lots of people dying, and it was on the eve of elections. But comrade Pierre Lambert insisted that we were not going to be afraid of those problems that the conference needed to be held in South Africa in April, just a few days before the elections. I am not sure everybody supported his view, but as a matter of fact, even on great days of greatest bombings in South Africa, the African conference actually took place in Johannesburg, under the shadow of great bombings and killings. And we came back with the analysis that it was an extremely good conference. Then in 1994, at a General council, I introduced a discussion about someone who had been on death row for 19 years, Mumia Abu Jamal. The debates about Mumia Abu Jamal were very heavy at the General council. Comrade Lambert stopped us and said: "we are sending a delegation to the United States to confront the American government about the conditions of Mumia Abu Jamal". And a delegation was sent by the Fourth International to Washington DC.

There are many revolutionaries in the world. There are those who have read each book you can think of. When you talk to them, they would tell you the page of what you are talking about and when that book was published, and they know all the information. There are also other revolutionaries, exactly like the first ones I have described, but they also have their own personal experiences about the revolutionary struggle. Comrade Lambert had all these elements, but also a very profound deep political instinct or intuition as you call it. He knew what to do, what situation that faced people.

When we started talking about Azania in particular, he clarified what he thought should be the struggle of the Black majority in Azania. He quoted for us Trotsky’s seminar papers on the Black republic and the Black majority in South Africa. He rejected the notion that freedom in South Africa can come without Black people getting their lands, without the nationalization of the commanding rights of the economy, without bringing back the wealth to the majority in Azania.

He said that the struggle of the Black majority in South Africa, and the struggle of the Black people in the United States, while they are not the same, have similarities. Therefore, he thought we needed to combine the struggle in Azania with the struggle of the Black people in the Unites States.

I remember him insisting that we should not call the Black people in the Unites States “African Americans” or whatever. He said: “no, let’s call them ‘Black people’, so that we are able to move forward with this struggle”. And comrade Alan, whose state is the United States of course, tried to clarify comrade Lambert and said: “no, they don’t like being call Black people, they’d like to be called ‘African Americans’”. Lambert said: “it is a political articulation. We do not want to call them ‘African Americans’ because we shall not allow the American government to expel Black people out of the United States, because the wealth of the United States is built on the backbreaking grinding labor of Black people in the United States”. And Lambert said to Alan: “don’t make the mistake of comparing Black people to Latinos and so on, because their situation is not exactly the same”. Lambert said: “Black people in the United States are the only people in the United States who did not go to the United States to seek a new country, to look for opportunities, to want to live in the United States. They went there in chains as slaves, and therefore their situation is completely different from any other people in the United States’. He later brought me his book on how Europe underdeveloped Africa. And he said: ‘we always talk about the Jewish holocaust, and we support maybe the idea about the Jewish holocaust, but the greatest holocaust, that cost more than a hundred million people, was the holocaust of Black people who had been taken into slavery, who died in the passage, who had been off-loaded as extra-package when slave ships had problems”.

And despite the resistance of comrades Daniel and Alan, we took a very positive position on the organizing of Black people in the United States. And again, comrade Lambert said: “we should not talk at a theoretical level, go and organize in the Black community in the Unites States’. Comrade Norbert and myself were sent to the United States.

Of course, there is this little story I tell. I was very tired when we arrived in New York. There we look for accommodation among these general accommodations, and we got a place. There, I stripped, put my trousers and shirt a little further and slept... only to find out later that this accommodation was a place where boys, girls, men and women slept in the same room. When I woke up in the morning, I had to go and get my trousers, and there were so many girls waking yet, I just did not know how to get my trousers back. It was very awkward: there were some 16-17-year-old girls, and this 42-year-old man who was wearing only briefs in the room. When we came back and gave our report, comrade Lambert fought with comrades Daniel and Alan, and said: “how was it that no proper accommodation was arranged for the comrades?” Comrade Lambert was equal to the people he sent. He did not want a special treatment for himself and another treatment for other people. He said: “if you go to this country, you live in hotels, allow the comrades of the leadership who you are sending to this country to also live in hotels.”

**Direct, practical intervention**

When he heard there were problems in Côte d'Ivoire - Ivory Coast - Cote d'Ivoire was imploding in that time, and I too was very uncomfortable -, comrade Lambert said: “go there and organize”, despite the fact that it was almost a situation of war. And we went there, because we did not believe in solving problems from 15,000 km away from where
the problems are.
I will talk about two last things to show you the kind of comrade, who had so much value on us, Lambert was.

Marikana broke out in 2012, the 16th of August. Officially, more than 40 people died, gunned down by the government of Nelson Mandela, the government of the ANC. All kinds of people came to Azania to play solidarity, to work with the people of Marikana. But then, it was very obvious to us that comrade Lambert was no more. Because if comrade Lambert had been there, I am sure he would have sent a delegation that would have sat with the people of Marikana, that would have shared experiences, assisted them in whatever manner. But this did not happen because the leadership that was there was not exactly like comrade Lambert. It is not enough to say that Marikana was a turning point, that Marikana defined South Africa in a new way. What is it that we did directly to intervene in the situation in Marikana?

Because in all different situations, as I have explained, comrade Lambert wanted a direct intervention of the Fourth International. He did not believe that we could only argue about these things far away from them.

He respected everybody, but he called literally everybody in the leadership to order. The people I know, at one time or another had to be called to order by comrade Lambert. He would not elude by favors.

When the 1999 general elections in South Africa ended, I released a statement praising the ANC from winning the elections. When I came to France, comrade Lambert went into me like a raging bull and said: “how do you congratulate these criminals, how do you congratulate the people who have even stolen the elections, and stolen the land and the wealth?”

Comrade Lambert did not favor anybody. I have seen him disagree with any of us who would push up a line he disagreed with. Yet we felt comfortable in working with him.

I could speak until tomorrow about comrade Lambert, but enough of talking about him.

Let me now talk, because I think all of you want to know, about what happened in the local government elections on August 3rd in South Africa. I think all of you have heard the ANC leaders saying the ANC will rule South Africa until Jesus-Christ comes back. They said they did not care whether people do not have lands; they did not care whether people do not have homes. Actually, they summarized: ‘so long there are poor people, the ANC will rule’. And of course, Jesus-Christ came early. When the results of the elections were announced, the ANC was not able to get the extra votes that should allow them to rule Johannesburg, the economic hub of South Africa. They did not have enough votes to rule Pretoria, the administrative center of South Africa. They did not have enough votes to rule Cape Town, the seat of Parliament in South Africa. They did not have enough votes to rule Nelson Mandela Metro, a city named after Nelson Mandela. They were not able to get enough votes to rule Koeja, the place where they want to set up a nuclear station with Poutine.

Julius Malema did not get as many votes as the ANC, nor did he get as many votes as the white Democratic Alliance. He went to the ANC and said to them: “if you allow land expropriation without compensation, if you allow nationalizations and if you allow Jacob Zuma to go, we will give you our votes so that you are able to control these places.” The ANC refused and said, “No, we won’t do that.” So, Julius Malema released a statement saying that there are two devils in South Africa, the first devil being the ANC, and the second devil being, of course, the white party the Democratic Alliance. He said: “we are not forming a coalition with the Democratic Alliance, but we are giving them our votes, so a new government should be placed in the place of ANC.”

And of course in conclusion, you know that when the so-called parties of revolution failed, reaction comes up.

**Message from Comrade Clément**

_Dear comrades, as I am unable to participate in this important meeting of tribute to Comrade Pierre Lambert, I hereby take the liberty of sending you my recollection of my first encounter with him nearly 60 years ago, the beginning of a long militant road without interruption to this day._

_I was a young student of 19 years in 1958, engaged in the UNEF¹ for the Algerian independence struggle, against the dirty war against the Algerian people imposed upon the youth by the imperialist governments of the day, including that of General De Gaulle resulting from the coup d’état of the month of May organized by the top officers of the_  

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¹ UNEF: National Union of Students of France – translator's note.
Informations Ouvrières,roneo typed on yellow paper, that the oldest of us remember. He never abandoned that thread. And Pierre, from the CLADO of the 1950s up until the POI of today, never ceased activity in order that the forms of organization, adapted to the specific circumstances of the class struggle, constitute at each stage of the class struggle an instrument helping to group together a vanguard of the working class and the youth in order to advance toward the construction of a leading workers’ party. That was his reading of the Transitional Program, inseparable from direct intervention in the class struggle.

Several of us present here remember his work with the “flinters and steel-erectors” whose CGT trade union used to meet in the celebrated café under the Bourse du Travail3 in the Rue du Château d’Eau. Pierre, always merry after a couple of drinks, impressed us with his ability to grasp every incident, dispute, workplace accident, in order to propose initiatives susceptible to ranging the workers against the boss and raising class consciousness. Other comrades will be able to relate better than I his work as a Force Ouvrière trade union leader in the Social Security administration, which was crucial in the hours leading up to the double “no” to De Gaulle and the downfall of the latter.

The greatest care concerning the training of the youth

Pierre would not have liked to be put on a pedestal; contrary to some, he never believed he was indispensable. The very opposite of a “guru”, as our enemies sometimes sought to present him, he liked to refer to himself as an “ordinary man”, an allusion to a movement born in Italy after the war. There is no supreme savior or providential man. Totally immersed in the class struggle, he had unlimited confidence in the capacity of the proletariat to find within itself and by itself the instruments of its liberation, the task of the revolutionary being to help the class, though its own movement, to find the means of its emancipation.

Pierre was not for all that an easy man. In the daily work, for example in writing for and editing Informations Ouvrières, a task I had for several years, while he totally respected freedom of expression for everyone, he was just as capable of exploding with anger when this or that formulation appeared to his eyes to be contrary to our principles. We thus had a few differences. Among the titanic “rows” we had I remember the one when I wrote the front-page headline: “We want what the masses want.” This for him was an intolerable concession to the spontaneity of the masses. Again when, in 1974, the IMF decided to totally liberate the gold market, which led me to headline on the

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2 French section of the II Workers’ International – translator’s note.
3 House of trade unions and labor – translators’ note.
“demonetization of gold”, that for Lambert was an unacceptable abandon of Marxist theory. May I confess today, that in those two circumstances, Pierre did not convince me?

But there precisely the art of his leadership demonstrated all its measure. He perfectly accepted and encouraged search and reflection in everyone, even when in his opinion they were mistaken. Nothing was farther from him than the repetition of empty formulas or the use in bad faith of quotations to sterilize free debate. He was always avid for information, always looking for points of view, even ones far removed from his own, so long as the dialogue allowed one to advance. In the 1960s, the editorial work of *Informations Ouvrières* was often done at the table of the *Mistral, Place du Châtelet*, opposite the commercial court where Pierre (sometimes) worked as controller of the accounts of the URSSAF. Insatiably curious, he wanted to read all the more-or-less confidential information bulletins that I had access to through my work in a bank. And he read, read, read, and seeking every fact, every figure, every statement allowing him to reinforce his own convictions of the inevitable failure of capitalism and the lies of its stipendiary social democrat and Stalinist spokesmen.

When our organization grew, before and after 1968, Pierre took the greatest care concerning the training of the youth. His very personal style, his strength of conviction, his ability to bring alive and make accessible the foundations of Marxism, his authority as a leader in the struggle for the defense of the IV International, all that opened the way for the organization of hundreds of young militants who, today still, constitute the armature of our Courant Communiste Internationaliste (CCI) of the Parti Ouvrier Indépendant, French section of the IV International. He never forgot his comrades when they were in need. Struck down in 2002 by a serious illness while in a far-flung village of southern Italy, where I was on a family mission, he organized my repatriation and my admission to a big Parisian hospital whose cardiology department was headed by a doctor close to the struggle he had waged for the defense of medical deontology and patients' rights.

That was Pierre Lambert, our friend, our comrade, to whom we owe much of what we are today, beginning with our existence as French section of the IV International. Thank you, Pierre.

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4 Organism which collects social security contributions of employers – translator's note.
Address of Michel Sérac

Comrades, a public meeting of the IV International is always the continuation of another public meeting, held in September, but in London, some 150 years ago, and which saw the founding the International Working Men's Association. For the three Internationals, which followed, one another have in no way modified the initial aims of the International. Which, be it said in passing, differentiates them from our bourgeois republics whose numbering each times marks their state of degeneration.

A method of open international discussion

We have nothing to modify in this proclamation of the International Working Men's Association:

"Considering, that the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves, (...) That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means; that all efforts aiming at the great end hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labor in each country, and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries; (...) For these reasons, the International Working Men's Association has been founded."

And what also remains for the last 150 years is that the betrayal of the workers' interests always takes the same path, that of rallying to so-called "patriotic" interests, which are always those of the bourgeois, imperialist, colonialist class. To take just one example from the past, it was a government of patriotic union, ranging from De Gaulle to the PCF, which on May 8, 1945, the day of the World War II victory which had cost so much in the blood of Algerian and African soldiers, that bombed and massacred at Sétif and Guelma, stole the pay of African soldiers, machine-gunned them at the Thiaroye camp. And it was in 2015 that the same patriotic union of the French parliament, all parties together, approved the bombing of Syria and which was the accomplice of cynical lies about the "liberation" of Syria, while the air raids by the Rafales kill whole families of Syrian woman and children.

There have been several Internationals. Because the working class has had to rid itself, in this epoch of wars and revolutions, of those unworthy representatives that the bourgeoisie had corrupted, such that each time it was necessary to regenerate the International. It is this capitalist class, which has taken five centuries to impose its domination, which in five centuries has never completed the democratic tasks, which at the end of the 20th century saw learned political scientists decree that the era of revolutions was over and that what some people called the "communist utopia" had died with the USSR. In any event that is what our French high school students are taught by the academic authorities to learn by rote, between two demonstrations against the Labor Law.... Whether impatient petit-bourgeois elements like it or not, the construction of the International is not linear. Indeed, as of 1852, Marx had warned that the epoch of revolutions would be bumpy, frustrating, paradoxical. In The "18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", he wrote: "proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, constantly criticize themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished, in order to begin anew; they derive with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their opponents only so the latter may take new strength from the earth and rise before them again more gigantic than ever, recoil constantly again from the indefinite colossalness of their own goals – until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible."

It is thus the very nature of revolutions, which demands that the IV International construct itself with respect for, and in taking account of, the experiences, the mistrust, the convictions and the doubts, the hesitations of the combatants of the class struggle in each country. We would not be the IV International if we were to content ourselves with prescribing a catalog of correct watchwords to which the workers' movement should conform, precisely because communism is not a utopia: it is the real movement against the existing order, it is the real movement of the class struggle.

That is why, in the 1950s, with Comrade Lambert, the militants of the IV International elaborated a method of open international discussion in the same spirit as that of the Association of 1864. It's an international method and a national method. There are no short cuts for workers' democracy. Later, in the same spirit, at the initiative of Comrade Lambert, an institution was created called the CERMTRI, Center for Study and Research upon the international Trotskyist and revolutionary movements, the building of which is associated with the name of Louis Eemans.

Comrades, among that score of militants who in 1977 constituted the CERMTRI, the most senior in age was 88: he was born before Engels founded the II International. His name was Marcel Hasfeld and his name is associated with the Librairie du Travail, translated

5 Later known as the I International – translator's note.
6 French fighter-bombers – translator's note.
TRIBUTE TO THE STRUGGLE WAGED BY PIERRE LAMBERT

his life spanned three Internationals. In 1906, on May 1st, he went on strike all by himself in his workplace, because he had seen mounted guards charge against strikers. This was the time when Clemenceau had striking workers shot and sacked trade unionist civil servants, which is no doubt the reason that he is an avowed political role model for Manuel Valls.

This man (Hasfeld) knew nothing of the preparation in 1914 of the Zimmerwald conference. He created a committee against the war, linked up with Monatte at La Vie Ouvrière, and created the Labor Bookshop. He published brochures on the Russian Revolution, and we find him again, together with Rosmer and Monatte, in the Committee for the III International.

And when the principles of the International of 1864 were again reneged, trampled upon by the bureaucratization and reign of terror of Stalin, who took control of the International, he refused to surrender. He was expelled from the Communist Party and his Labor Bookshop banned from trade union conferences. It was thus this comrade, and other militants who waged other battles during World War II, in the trade unions, against the colonial wars, who constituted the CERMTRI in order to collect together the political and historical heritage of all the struggles for class independence.

The existence of the CERMTRI, a free and open association, was recently threatened by an attempt to denature it and make it the instrument of a sect. That enterprise was roundly defeated by its members who re-established its founding principles.

"We surrender nothing!"

Comrades, we are unquestionably living in an epoch of deep social regression, of decomposition of bourgeois society. This barbarity is expressed by the 65 million war refugees thrust upon the highways, upon the seas, herded into camps. It’s expressed by the massive impoverishment in Old Europe where tens of millions are expelled from productive work. But the big difference by comparison with 1864, when the trade unions and the workers’ International were at their beginnings, is that if one examines the demands of the time, one sees that for the protection of children, as for all collective rights, the working class organized for the last 150 years has imposed considerable conquests of civilization. And in today’s strikes and demonstrations, in stating, “We surrender nothing!”, the workers reject capitalist regression for the whole of society. And those who at this hour form the united core around the collective gains of the class, those thousands of combatant cadres, they want to control and use their organizations, they want answers to their political questions. And it is here that workers’ democracy takes upon its role in the building of the workers’ International.

And on the other side of the planet, there where our capitalists have gone to exploit the workers of Asia for a dollar an hour, they have not found submissive slaves, but proletarians who are organizing themselves, in their millions, in order to resist, as may be seen by the strikes of Chinese workers who force into retreat both our Western capitalists and their own bureaucratic police.

In Capital, Marx described that slavery which was the fate of children forced to labor in factories, working “for 14, 15, and 16 hours at a stretch, during several days in the week, and frequently for 36 hours, with only 2 hours’ rest for meals and sleep. A great part of them cannot read, and they are, as a rule, utter savages and very extraordinary creatures.” But in the same chapter he went on to add that because the collective work group was composed of individuals of both sexes and all ages, this “must necessarily, under suitable conditions, become a source of humane development; although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalistic form, where the laborer exists for the process of production, and not the process of production for the laborer, that fact is a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery.”

We today face the rotting corruption of the capitalist system. But the organized working class has already by its class struggle outlawed the destruction of its children, and these days the working class says "We surrender nothing!", in all countries one surrenders nothing! And for those who want life to triumph over social rot and decomposition, their place is in the IV International.

Address of Patrick Hébert

I have been asked to relate the trade union activity of Comrade Lambert, and in particular the importance it had for him. I confess that this task is not an easy one in the time I’ve been allotted, given that Pierre Lambert spent his whole life dealing with, among other things, trade union questions.

Even when he retired as employee of the Family Allowance Fund, having naturally quit his trade union mandates, he continued to follow contemporary trade union affairs closely, and notably his original trade union body, the Paris region office workers’ branch.

But he took an interest in the whole trade union
movement, what we in our jargon call the "interprofessional". He had contacts everywhere. He was certainly respectful of these organizations, but in his own way! While he was still a member of the CGT, he participated in the 1950s at a congress of the departmental CGT-FO of Loire-Atlantique!

This anecdote is amusing, but above all significant. For him, the trade union movement was a whole. He was not unaware of, and above all did not underestimate, what led to the split between the CGT and CGT-FO, all the more for having begun his trade union activity during the war, clandestinely, and in the CGT, before the split. He was moreover soon expelled from the CGT, but he immediately after joined the CGT-FO, because he could not for a single second imagine that a worker-militant not be organized and not intervene directly in the class struggle. That is what characterizes the trade union activity of Pierre Lambert.

**His immense role in defending the social security system**

While he built trade unions during the war, that was clandestinely. Many are aware of his important work afterwards in the Social Security system. Indeed, in the "Secu", those in FO at least, are all "lambertists". Even the most reactionary are "lambertists". They are certainly not Trotskyists, but everyone recognizes the immense role played by Lambert, not simply in putting forward demands on behalf of the personnel, but also for the defense of the Social Security system as a workers' conquest.

When he retired, he continued to have an activity, different of course, but he was very often invited to attend congresses. He went as often as he could. He did not miss a single speech, but he remained seated, often at the back of the hall, very discreet. He listened to everything, and he lapped it up. He attached great importance to what the comrades had to say in the congresses, he drew a number of conclusions from that.

If I recall this, even though it might appear anecdotal, that is because it's a lesson. Pierrrot, as we called him, was certainly someone who knew his theory; he even knew tons of it. But he was not a "marxologue".

Those who knew him well will recognize this phrase that he employed often: "Theory is dry, but green is the tree of life." To tell the truth, I sought out the complete quotation. It is from Goethe: "All theory is gray, my friend. But forever green is the tree of life." I think this quotation somewhat sums up what Lambert was: taking into account the real situation, not mistaking one's desires for the reality, remaining lucid at all times.

No, Lambert was not a "marxologue", he was not an ideologue, he was not one of those who, when their feet hurt, hold their shoes responsible... If you see what I mean! His starting point was the reality, the facts.

Of course one cannot speak of Lambert and the trade union movement without saying a word about Alexandre Hébert. My father defined himself as an anarcho-syndicalist and an individualist anarchist, Between Trotskyists and anarchists; there were a few "skeletons in the cupboard".

Their relations could have been difficult; let us simply say that they were based upon mutual esteem. There are a lot of things that could be said, for their joint work lasted more than 50 years, but as that's not possible in a 15-minute speech, I'll content myself with two examples.

Comrades, first about the 21 conditions and the revision of points 9 and 10. You know the 21 conditions of the Communist International, which, among other things on the trade union question basically required that the trade union be subordinate to the party. Before he met Alexandre Hébert... One could say that he was under the influence of the "anars". No, no. In a text which I have rediscovered8, Lambert wrote: "So far as I'm concerned, at the outset, when I began militant activity for the construction of illegal trade unions (this was in early 1940s), I was about 20 years old and did not query the relations between party and trade union as I was led to do later on the basis of my living experience." He continues by saying why: "This militant tradition of the Young Communists, then the Trotskyists, led me to consider that the manner in which the Communist Party conceived of its relations with the unions to be correct. It was my practical experience at the beginning of the 1940s that led me to reconsider this conception. It was at the time when we were striving with others to build illegal unions that I understood that the unions, which gathered together workers of different political and religious opinions, could not be identified with the party."

It was thus on the basis of his real experience that he was led, in 1947 (on listening to the preceding speakers, I’ve thought about this, Pierrrot, he was 27 years old), at the age of 27, in a congress of the Trotskyist organization in France, to propose a revision of points 9 and 10 of the 21 conditions, so that, in France at least, the reciprocal independence of the trade unions and the party was recognized. At the age of 27. A rather audacious character.

What’s important here – I tell you this not just for the story, but because there are lessons to be learned for today, in the workers’ movement – is that of course theory is essential, but that it is also on the basis of the real situation that we study things. It was on the basis of a living experience that Lambert was led to make this proposal, audacious at the time, especially given the communist tradition, as he himself said, of revising points 9 and 10 of the 21 conditions.

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8This document by Pierre Lambert figures in *La Vérité* N° 88 (December 2015) in the dossier entitled “Syndicats et Indépendance de classe”, on page 47.
The second example is a document written by Pierre Lambert that I did not know⁹, concerning the compromise of 1959. 1959, that was the year after De Gaulle took power. Here is what Lambert wrote: “For their own reasons, but which for once coincide with the veritable interests of the working class, the leaders of FO and the CGT have realized an operation which allows the workers not to engage a decisive battle in a situation where the balance of forces is not in their favor. For us revolutionaries, who see salvation for the working class solely in its capacity to develop its independent class movement, this compromise sanctions a governmental hesitation in the face of a trial of strength, and it is that fact which can raise the consciousness of the workers and strengthen their hate of the boss class and its State.”

Start out from the real situation
De Gaulle's political line was to integrate the trade unions into the State apparatus. In 1959, the problem was already posed. We know how it ended, 10 years later, with the failure of the referendum and the resignation of De Gaulle.

This document is extremely interesting, because there had been two big strikes in 1953 and 1955 in which the question of a general strike was raised. The trade union apparatuses broke the movement then. There was a new strike in 1959, but it did not have the same dimension. By 1959, the balance of forces between the classes had been modified. 1953, 1955 were still part of a revolutionary wave. One can characterize the return to power of De Gaulle in 1958 as a defeat without a fight. The 1959 conflict ended in a compromise, which, like all compromises, is debatable.

But at the same time the Confederal Bureau of the CGT-FO resisted pressure from De Gaulle who was seeking to integrate the confederations. Considering that this act of resistance was essential, my father for the first time voted in favor of the moral report presented to the Confederal Congress. He was immediately attacked by the phrase-mongering revolutionaries who already existed.

In these circumstances, here is what Pierre Lambert wrote:

“The verbal cavaliers condemned Hébert when he struggled for the general strike, and they are still condemning him today.” And he wrote: “in 1953 and in 1955, to take just those two moments of the class struggle, the trade union organizations opposed a general strike with all their force. What attitude should the revolutionary trade unionists adopt, in our opinion? That which a certain number of them adopted: push ahead with the action, try to outflank the apparatuses, publicly denounce the attempts to sabotage a general strike.”

Lambert thus explains to us that in 1953 and 1955, not only was the watchword of general strike justified, but above all that as anything was possible, one must “push ahead with the action, try to outflank the apparatuses”.

He then wrote concerning the 1959 strike, and this is an extraordinary lesson: “Everyone felt that the balance of forces had not been sufficiently modified since the defeat of June 1958 for the workers to be able to restore the situation to their advantage by their action. The relations between the class and its organizations are never simple and cannot be cast in a definitive mold. They evolve with the situation.”

“The most vehement criticism that the revolutionary trade unionists aim at the apparatuses is that they subordinate their actions to the imperatives of the defense of the bourgeois order. The struggle for the revolutionary destruction of the imperialist system, democratic or authoritarian, presupposes the organic independence of the proletariat with respect to the bourgeoisie and its State.

If, for given reasons, which are certainly not due to a revolutionary orientation in a given situation, the leaders of the traditional organizations are led to oppose their integration with the State, is not the role of revolutionary trade unionists to support, to back and reinforce this opposition? Do they not in this way remain truly faithful to ‘their general position as revolutionary trade unionists’? Because finally, is the revolution anything else but the most spectacular manifestation of the autonomous (independent) action of the proletariat rising up as a whole against the capitalist system and its State?”

The date of this document is 1959. There is a link with the double ‘No’ to De Gaulle’s referendum of 1969. A speaker who preceded me recalled Pierrot’s activity in constructing groups under appropriate forms, according to the political situation of the moment – what we in our jargon called the strategy of the Revolutionary Workers’ League.

Contrary to the big chiefs of the post-war PCI, Pierre Lambert, who led the trade union commission, sought the ways and means of breaking out of the situation described by Trotsky pre-war, according to which “we were exiles within our own class”. As of 1948, he proposed in a PCI congress an amendment, which broke with the ultimatist conception of the chiefs of the PCI. In 1953 he met Alexandre Hébert, anarcho-syndicalist and leader of the CGT-FO for the department of Loire-Atlantique. From their political convergences on the ground of independence of the workers’ movement and the class struggle would grow a first regrouping: the CLADO (liaison committee for action and workers’ democracy, which grouped together militant anarcho-syndicalists, Trotskyists and worker militants. It was the first materialization of the content of the amendment of 1948.

A year after the miners’ strike of 1963, and as the
movement of the tram workers of the Nantes region was getting under way, a new appeal by worker militants and trade unionists was launched in Nantes "for united class action, for the preparation of a common struggle". I’m not stressing these questions because I come from Nantes, but rather because in the France of the 1950s and 60s, the workers’ movement was dominated by the Stalinist apparatus which sought to lock everything down. The Nantes region, with the position occupied there by the anarcho-syndicalists, appeared as an island of resistance to this hegemony. Moreover, while the Lambert group was reduced to some 50 members in the whole country, in Nantes the Trotskyists held positions in the factories. Lambert took support from existing class struggle positions in this region in order, through permanent political dialogue with worker-militants such as Alexandre Hébert, to seek to materialize that orientation which the XIV congress of the French section of the IV International would adopt under the name of the line of transition as a means of building the revolutionary party. After the victory of Mitterrand in 1981 and the "turning point of rigor" of 1982-1983, a new initiative was taken in the Nantes region, that of a call by 121 militants (including militants and officials of the Socialist Party) posing the question of a party. That led to the Mouvement pour un Parti des Travailleurs, then the Parti des Travailleurs itself.

Drawing the balance sheet of the strengths and shortcomings of the PT, Lambert went on, in a new situation and with new forces, to propose constitution of the Parti Ouvrier Indépendant. The fight that we are waging today for construction of the POI and the initiatives we have taken, which have led to the constitution of Committees of Liaison and Exchange, are in continuity with the struggle of Lambert who, without dogma or sectarianism, sought the ways and means of implanting the revolutionaries more and more in the heart of the workers’ movement, in liaison with those thousands and thousands of worker-militants who want to remain faithful to the independence of the working class and its organizations.

The best tribute that we can render to Pierrot is of course to remember his work but above all to draw lessons from it for today.

Certain comrades have mentioned occasionally difficult discussions with Lambert. True, he was not always easy. When there was no agreement, when the points of view were different, there was a clash. But that’s democracy, and that also is how we progress.

Today, we are confronted with an offensive, which, through the Labor Law, seeks to undermine that which constitutes the working class as a class. We have fought for the constitution of an “axis of resistance” against “gathered unionism”\(^1\). The axis of resistance - a bit of theory here – also means class independence. “Gathered unionism” is to the trade union what holy (sacred or national – translator’s note) union is on the political level.

We have waged this fight, this has not always been easy, and nothing is definitively won. Incontestably, whether it displeases some or other bodies, we have taken up a broad place in this combat while respecting, as we have always done, the reciprocal independence between parties and trade unions. The significant success that we have had does certainly not mean that we are better today than 10 years ago. It is simply because our positions correspond to the political situation, and that, from a certain point of view, we are today more “the conscious expression of an unconscious process”.

In conclusion – this is a bit personal and a bit emotional - I would have much liked that Pierrot could have witnessed all that. He would have much liked to see the work that has been done these last years, in particular this year which saw the conference of June 4: 2,000 militants gathered together, thousands of fraternal contacts with militants implanted in the working class, often occupying important positions in all the trade unions. That is our work. That’s what Comrade Lambert did during years and years.

It is that task that we continue.

Long lives Comrade Lambert!

\(^{1}\) That is, unity between the CGT and the Christian-origin CFDT – translator’s note.
We are militants in the French section of the IV International, Christian Eyschen since 1972, Philippe Besson since 1976. Unionists and Free-Thinkers, in this conference in homage to Pierre Lambert, we would like to mention what he has given us. For us, “Lambertism” is the authentic Trotskyism, even though Pierrot didn’t like for us to say it.

We wouldn’t be what we are without his contribution and that of the militants of the French section. In this sense, we owe a debt, which can never be repaid. Regrettably, we are unable to be among you today, but we wish to share our moment of militant humanity as a part of this homage.

Lead you to understand for yourself
A good number of comrades have revisited, as others will revisit, this great school of formation, which is “Lambertism”. When we were young revolutionary militants, we absorbed Trotskyism like a sponge, as it corresponded so much to what we wanted and understood. It was and still is a coherent explanation of the world and its issues. Understanding in order to act isn’t a vain formula. It is the key to all rational human action.

Pierre Lambert didn’t teach. He wasn’t a lesson giver covered in the intolerable smugness of those who think that having a diploma implies true understanding and serves as an irrefutable argument in a debate. As Alexander Hebert’s formula put it: these folks who think that sometimes being something is always to be someone. Even though Pierrot was a ferocious defender of public education, of knowledge and culture, he didn’t teach: he made you understand. He didn’t lend anyone a hand to cross the street or to know what needed to be done. His method was to bring you to understand for yourself, without giving learned lessons in order to beat you over the head with the truth. His pedagogy greatly resembled that of Jean Rostand, honorary president of Free Thought: “forming minds without seeking to make them conform, enriching them without indoctrinating, arming them without conscripting, communicating a force which they can make their own, seducing them with the truth to bring them to their own truth, giving them the best of yourself without expecting of the salary of resemblance.”

In the secular combat, which has been ours for over 30 years, he made us understand a certain number of things. For example, despite our desires and wants, we must never change the nature of the organisations within which we fight for the cause. We must always respect the historical bases of the organisations. For this, we must immerse ourselves within and understand the nature of their functioning. Revolutionaries must never be foreign bodies in the environments within which they evolve.

We had an important debate on the question of whether Free Thought needed to proclaim itself atheist, or whether it needed to stay the crucible of the encounter of different philosophical currents. Pierrot, who defined himself as a “Jewish atheist”, showed us the importance of distinguishing “religion” and “culture”. This helped us a lot when liberal protesters, heirs to Ferdinand Buisson, returned to Free Thought.

For Pierre Lambert, the combat in defence of laicity in public education and the state wasn’t an empty expression. There wasn’t a discussion in which he failed to come back to the watchword: “Public funds for public schools, private funds for private schools”. It was his leitmotiv. For him, this synthesised the combat of the workers’ movement to defend the achievements of civilisation. The Oath of Vincennes of 18 June 1960 was for him the cornerstone of the lay movement, tying it to the workers’ movement in the struggle for human emancipation.

He would have been somewhat stupefied that, after his death, some who daring to call themselves his successors would be capable of writing a “Manifesto for the Defence of Public Education” which places Latin, foundation of civilisation and culture, on the same level as regional languages, nostalgic residues of obsolete culture. How would he have been able to accept that in a text on education there is nothing to be found on the Debré law and the diversion of ten billion in public funds per year? The combat against the Debré law was, for him, at the heart of all questions of laicity. It is what founded the very existence of the laicity movement backed by the workers’ movement.

Better than anyone, he understood what Ferdinand Buisson was saying in in 1904: “The separation of churches from the state is not the last word of the Social Revolution, but it incontestably constitutes the first.” Pierrot had thus greatly contributed to the inclusion of this separation in the Portuguese Constitution after the revolution of 1974.

He would have been appalled as well to see liars claiming his lineage put, to the detriment of the most elementary of truths, all teachers’ “unions” on the same level, thus mixing confederated unions with the SGEN-CFDT, dispensary of the Catholic Church. He would vomit at the lie by omission of the newspaper Le Monde, a method that he considered that of bad priests.

He was in the class, in the movement, in the organizations
We have just passed a week in the recent congress
of the National Federation of Free Thought. We have seen the true nature of those who have gathered behind Gluckstein and de Massot, and who had a small handful of representation in our congress. While many claimed to be the “dauphin” of Pierre Lambert, forgetting that often the tragic destiny of dauphins\(^{11}\) is to wash up on the beach between a garbage sac and a gutted shrimp, their character of total exteriority was shown before the eyes of everyone. Pierrot didn’t lead from his office; he was in the class, in the movement, in the organisations, even though it was sometimes necessary to be in his office.

He also made us understand that Marxism wasn’t a creation ex nihilo, but that it rested on all of the achievements of civilisation and humanity. There is never a rupture in history, there are only founding acts. Each event stands on the shoulders of the previous one. We have seen, in the congress of Free thought, this stupefying thing: these liquidators wanted to delete from a resolution the reference to the French Revolution, an element nonetheless determinant for democracy and the expression of conflicts of interest, in order to substitute a (propos) worthy of the “proletarian culture” of Stalinists on the “workers’ struggles, since 1789 was a bourgeois revolution”. This “proletarian culture” deeply disgusted Leon Trotsky.

Looking back over four months of the combat of the working class and its union organisations stemming from the old CGT, analysing things to better arm the militants of social and human emancipation, the general resolution of the congress of Free Thought was entitled: “Corporatism and communitarianism have been put in check”, thus translating the powerful class movement which expressed itself.

(...) Trotskyists will never be epigones. To continue his combat is to pay homage to comrade Pierre Lambert. And to do this we must stop all attempts, as pitiful as they are, to liquidate what we are.

To finish, let us cite the conclusion of the Program of Transition, which fully corresponds to the situation, yesterday as today: “The Fourth International, already today, is deservedly hated by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, bourgeois liberals and fascists. (...) The present crisis in human culture is the crisis in the proletarian leadership. The advanced workers, united in the Fourth International, show their class the way out of the crisis. They offer a program based on international experience in the struggle of the proletariat and of all the oppressed of the world for liberation. They offer a spotless banner. Workers – men and women – of all countries, place yourselves under the banner of the Fourth International. It is the banner of your approaching victory!”

Long lives the IV International!

\(^{11}\) A play on the French word « dauphin », at the same time the heir to the throne and “dolphin”, the animal.
Dear comrades, I was asked to complete the remarks of comrade Patrick. I will start where he left off: comrade Lambert would be content to see the results of our work of implantation, and particularly the results of this work of implantation in the CGT these last years—results of which it isn’t necessary to give the details here—with an important number of comrades occupying responsibilities in several dozen departmental unions and federations. Numerous comrades have subscribed to our newspaper, including leaders, some of who have given interviews in Informations ouvrières.

I believe that this work, which is a continuity, is due to the contribution of comrade Lambert, even though he could not see the fruits of his efforts these last years.

Comrade Patrick evoked an important element: for Lambert, indeed, the workers’ movement forms a whole, the CGT and the CGT-FO being two branches from the same root, of the same origin. This fundamental point of view was expressed by Lambert not only in theory, but also in practice, and he taught us to put it into practice.

There is an episode in the life of Lambert, which, I believe, explains this. He summed it up in this way, after his exclusion from the CGT in 1952: “I got into contact with the comrades of the CGT union of fitters and lifters who are militants in the class struggle, members of the building federation of the CGT. They asked me to help them and, in a general assembly, proposed to me that I become one of the secretaries of the union of fitters and lifters of the CGT. I accepted. I was thus at the same time, for a long time (nearly 10 years), secretary of the union fitters and lifters of the CGT and secretary of the Union Chamber of employees and managers of the FO of the Paris region. One office on the third floor of the Labour Exchange as well as another office on the fifth floor”.

This sums up what had been his lifelong combat. Outside of the personal aspect, this is not an anecdotal element. Comrade Patrick recalled the conditions, which brought comrade Lambert to propose the revision of two of the 21 conditions of membership in the Communist International concerning the subordination of the union to the party.

On this subject, I would like to read a citation, which is complementary to the one that Patrick read and which subsequently served for decades as the plumb line for the work of implantation in the CGT. Lambert explained: “I couldn’t accept the subordination of a union organisation to Stalin and the Stalinist bureaucracy (...). I figured, for my part, that the union needed to bring together the workers, whatever their political, philosophical or religious tendencies. In this way, I didn’t have to answer to the Stalinist apparatus for what I was doing politically”.

This profession of faith served as a compass for dozens and dozens of comrades who were formed in the experience that the organisation and the apparatus are two distinct and antagonistic things and that, particularly concerning the CGT, the Stalinist apparatus didn’t have any sort of legitimacy to decide which militants needed to be elected or not in the organisational bodies. The numerous comrades who, particularly in the recent period, were brought to take responsibilities did it in the continuity of this heritage: the apparatus doesn’t have any legitimacy and we deny it any legitimacy to decide who must or mustn’t occupy union responsibilities.

It’s the living and permanent matter of the combat for the defence of the organisations.

Then, when the USSR fell, the very nature of this Stalinist apparatus was blown to pieces. Comrade Lambert liked to say and repeat, concerning the band at the summit of this apparatus, that it was “yesterday subordinated to Moscow, today sold to Washington”. In effect, for all those who, at the summit, had been subordinated for years to Stalin and his clique, when mafia-esque privatisers, with Gorbachev, Yeltsin, etc. came to dominate the former USSR, this orientation of submission to imperialism developed, particularly in the conduct of the CGT union apparatus.

Patrick alluded to the CES and to “syndicalisme rassemblé”. It’s precisely in these years following the fall of the USSR that the CGT adhered to the CES. And the formula “syndicalisme rassemblé” was invented at the end of the 1990’s to materialise the alliance with the CFDT and, through this, what we currently call unionism of accompaniment.

What was important in what comrade Lambert had taught us was that this disintegrating apparatus wasn’t homogenous. In a speech at the general council of the IV International in 1995, he developed on the difference of nature between the reformist apparatus based on the social conquests of the working class and the Stalinist apparatus, which was outside of the working class. And he pointed out an element, which I believe was very useful for our subsequent work. After having developed on what a wing of an apparatus directly subjugated to corporatist integration was, he explained: “from this angle, the central core of the reformist apparatus (and with it a

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fraction of the CGT apparatus), which seeks to resist and which draws its place from the oversight of social conquests, has a position which could be qualified as centrist. From that moment, he had perfectly understood that the disintegration of the USSR had brought about a disintegration at the very summit of the apparatus called ‘Stalinist’, but which wasn’t in the strictest sense of the term, between a majority wing who entered the path of corporatist integration (and it could be said that for several years, it was Bernard Thibault who symbolised the summit of this orientation) and a fraction who searched with its own methods to resist, as he qualified the reformist apparatus.

We could look back to turning point, which was the Confederal Congress of 1995 of the CGT where, for the first time, we made an organised collective address, as opposed to what happened before where, in the best of cases, a single delegate made a declaration.

To conclude, I would like to revisit another aspect of the combat of comrade Pierre Lambert. In 1995, still in this discussion at the general council, he said: “it is necessary to promote a policy of unified front which will ‘inevitably’ lead to “conclude accords with different organisations”. (Leon Trotsky). “Everywhere, while fully conserving our own independence, we make a front against the unionism of accompaniment, we aid the resistance against the tenants of unionism of integration.”

We see to what point we are very far from the liquidators for whom all is identical, every wing of the apparatus. So called “independents”, the liquidators don’t discern the difference between those who represent accompaniment and integration unionism and those who, more or less, seek to resist.

This permanent approach of comrade Lambert helped us considerably to reorient ourselves in the last period, even though he couldn’t live it. When the famous Lepaon affair happened, at first, we defended a position of principle, which was that we refuse the meddling of the bourgeois press and the bourgeoisie in the internal affairs of the organisations.

Soon after, when we saw that there was a tidal wave of militants who, through Lepaon, rejected “syndicalisme rassemblé”, subordination to the CFDT, to the company bosses, and the modus operandi of the apparatus, we understood that something else was happening.

And we didn’t stay neutral: on the contrary, concerning the Aventin, we have conducted a policy of unified front. Unified front as well at the Confederal Congress of the CGT, which took place a few months ago. Unified front while maintaining our independence. These are, I believe, the two terms which serve us as a compass today.

Patrick said that Martinez, recently, while insisting on the unity with FO, hadn’t abandoned all alliance with the CFDT. The journalist Noble court had thus summed up the question at the press conference of session opening of the CGT: in a hard hitting formula he said: “If I understand correctly, we can’t say that the CGT agrees with the FO on everything and with the CFDT on nothing.” Martinez responded: “It’s a Noblecourt formula, but it’s that”.

Unified front in the preparation of the 15 September, for example, and independence in the discussions. It’s the matter of the debate which will be pursued in Informations ouvrières, open forum of class struggle, newspaper founded by comrade Pierre Lambert and which is today a major tool in our combat.

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14 This address by Pierre Lambert figures in *La Lettre de La Vérité*, no. 776, 20 April 2015, under the title of *Discussion au conseil général sur la situation française (11 décembre 1995)*.
Address of Hubert Raguin

Comrades, I will be brief because I understand that it's hot. However, I would like to complete the remarks of comrades Patrick Hebert and Daniel Shapira. Both of them have insisted on the passion of comrade Lambert for intervention in the unions. Indeed, he never took up this question from a theoretical or abstract point of view. He always took it up from the point of view of the necessity of defending class organisations, which starts with the implantation of revolutionary militants in their class organisations, in strict respect of the reciprocal independence of parties and unions—and for him, it wasn't a formula—, and this always proceeded from the exigency, in his method, for discussion. Of course, I will talk to you a little bit about teachers...

I participated, like other comrades in this room, in dozens of discussions with Lambert on the intervention of Trotskyists in education, and he could tell you all the demands of the teachers of preparatory classes or what the PEGG was; he always started with the demand, with the details of the demand. And it's based on the demand and the combat to obtain satisfaction that he helped, that he participated in the elaboration of an orientation.

The union question in education has seen ups and downs closely tied to what Patrick and Daniel have just evoked. That being said, there are two episodes, which I would like to revisit.

At the time of the split between the CGT and FO and creation of the CGT-FO in 1947-48, as you know, the Federation of National Education, which was at the time the teaching federation of the old CGT, chose to stay autonomous. And at that moment, a question posed itself: this autonomy was an issue for the union movement, an issue for the existence of the confederations. It was necessary to elaborate, to find an orientation concerning this question. And finding an orientation regarding this context required the formulation of an orientation, which would prevent this autonomy from being anything but provisional. It was necessary that this autonomy was provisional and that it could only exist in relation to the necessity of posing anew the question of a unified confederation and of reunification.

At that moment, the question stood thus. And Lambert participated in the elaboration of this orientation which led to the fight in the congress of the SNI at the time of the FEN about a motion, the Bonnissent-Valière motion, that defined this question of provisional autonomy and limited it by providing a mainstay for the combat against the fact that this autonomy was becoming definitively reactionary, in other words, turned against the confederations.

Up until the beginning of the 60’s, the motion Bonnissent-Valière had also allowed the Trotskyists intervening in class struggle and in teaching to bring together militants from diverse origins, from diverse currents, to defend the working class character of the FEN and its unions. There was the constitution of the CNAL in 1953, within which sat ex officio the confederations CGT and FO.

There was the combat against the war in Algeria; there was the opposition to the De Gaulle's coup d'état in 1958... There was, in 1970, the combat against the inter-professional accord on professional training... And Trotskyists intervened, in the unions of the FEN, in the FEN, in support of this orientation.

But along the way, this autonomy was transformed into something else. Because there was De Gaulle's coup d'état, because there was the state's fight for the integration of the unions of the FEN—and from the FEN—in all the workings of the reforms and counter-reforms of the V Republic. Because there was the will to insert the FEN and its unions into all levels of the co-management of the National Education against the rights of personnel, against their statutes, against the laicity of education. Because there was on the part of the leaders of the FEN the adherence of the leaders of the CFDT to the National Committee of lay action. Then there was the acceptance of school councils, in other words, the tripartite management of schools. Then there was, in 1981, André Henri, general secretary of the FEN, who became the ephemeral Minister of Free Time in the first Mitterrand government.

In 1979, one of the highest points of this fight was the proposition by Lambert to constitute the Committee for the call to the laicity, bringing together militants of the diverse origins, the leaders of the CGT-FO, the leaders of Free Thought, certain individuals from the Communist Party, the Committee for the call to the laicity who posed the entire axis of the necessary fight in defence of laicity, in defence of public education.

But from 1981, the alignment of the leaders of the FEN and of the SNI on all the corporatist theses accelerated. The provisional autonomy had exhausted its potential and had become a reactionary tool against the confederations, against education and the personnel. And at the initiative of comrade Lambert, at that moment, we initiated a discussion to bring an appreciation of this reactionary autonomy and the necessity of engaging in the fight for the reintegration of teachers in the confederated workers’ movement in order to reintegrate them within the workers' movement. And it was this fight which opened the way for the decision of Trotskyist militants to initiate a regrouping among the teachers of several hundred union members who decided to quit the FEN and to join confederated labour unionism in the CGT-FO.

Comrades, these successive episodes are the expression of the whole orientation of comrade...
Lambert in the union movement. It wasn't a question of "teachers," it was a question of defending the unity of the working class, of defending the existence of the labour confederations against the attempts at disintegration which were brought against the personnel, against laicity. You know the later developments: in 1983-84, several hundred militants switched to FO; in 1992, the FEN split, prolonging itself in the FSU; Then the FEN became UNSA-Education in 2001, completing a perfectly reactionary course. In this fight, the Trotskyist militants, in discussion and at the initiative of comrade Lambert, knew to preserve and propel an orientation of defence of the organisations in the interest of the entire working class. This is what I wanted to point out in this discussion.

Address of Marc Gauquelin

Comrades, I know that I will abide by the wishes of this full and overheated room: I will be brief. I add nothing to what the comrades have excellently said about comrade Lambert, about who he was, about the essence of his thought and the method which allowed him to bring together, year after year, generation after generation, these organisations which are today the French section of the IV International and the IV International, solid and experienced, which he bound himself to rebuild his entire life.

I would like to talk about you who are in this room and give you the best political image of the aggregation of different generations of militants, of diverse origins, coming from different experiences and who have succeeded, under the direction of comrade Lambert, in fusing into one organisation. I insist on this aspect because Lenin put a particular insistence on underlining this dimension: the absolute necessity of realising this fusion of militants of different backgrounds into a single party, solidly established on the bases of Marxism.

I will remind you on the subject of this fusion that Pierre Lambert was able to get the "old guard" grouped around him in the 1950's to dialogue and work together with the younger militants who joined the IV International during the following years. He got militants to dialogue and work together, militants like Alexander Hébert (who was anarcho-syndicalist) – of whom Patrick spoke—, militants like Daniel Renard, leader of the Renault strike, like an entire series of other militant workers, or like Clément—whose message we just read—, like Sorel, central artisan of our organisation, who has recently left us, like Marika, revolutionary militant and combatant in the Hungarian revolution of workers’ councils of 1956, or like Mustapha Ben Mohamed, and this in a single organisation, equal in debate, the youngest included. I think that it's an extremely important element.

Comrades, this organisation has shown anew its force and cohesion. The departure of a clique daring to fraudulently pretend to be the continuator of the work of Pierre Lambert has brought us to reinforce our own appropriation of this political heritage called "Lambertism" as today's living political expression of the program of the IV International. Imagine the scandal which was provoked within the ranks of these liquidators—while they were still members of the leadership bodies of our current—, by the decision which we took to cite in a resolution of the national leadership the famous letter from Trotsky to Jean Rous of November 193515, which said: "It is repeated that between fascism and us, it's a speed race. But we must analyse well the content of this formula from the revolutionary point of view. Would we know how to give the masses a revolutionary armature before fascism crushes them? It would be absurd to believe that we would have sufficient time to create an omnipotent party which could eliminate all the other organisations before the decisive conflicts with fascism or before the break out of the war. But it is completely possible in a short period of time, events aiding, to gain large masses, not to our program, not to the IV International, but to committees of action and, once created, these committees of action would become a magnificent springboard for a revolutionary party."

Of course, we aren't menaced today with the installation of fascism. But nonetheless, the violence of the coming shock between the unbridled offensive of financial capital and the masses, its proximity, fully justifies that we make this reference to Trotsky's method.

Comrades, simply having dared to cite this appreciation of Trotsky and the implied method provoked an incredible scandal. The leaders of this clique judged that it was a formulation, which called for the liquidation of the construction of the French section of the IV International. Enough said!

Comrades, this reinforced organisation exists and

15 This letter from Trotsky to Jean Rous figures in the work of Nicole Braun, L’Organe de masse, contribution sur la crise de la section française de la Ligue des communistes-internationalistes (bolcheviks-léninistes), édité par le secrétariat international de la LCI (BL) en Juin 1936 (60 pages).
fights at the very moment when—as was already underlined before me—the signs, which precede a revolutionary wave of an unprecedented depth, are being confirmed.

That in a country such as the United States of America, 13 million people voted for Sanders against Clinton and entire sections of American labour unions—who had given their support to Sanders—have refused to follow him in his rallying to Clinton has an extremely profound significance. The social crisis, which is tearing apart the United States, is provoking a structural shift, which we haven’t seen since WWII.

Closer to home, in Great Britain, 200,000 young people joined the Labour Party to defend Corbyn against the “Blairist” leadership of the Labour party... not to mention the significance of the four months of mobilisation which we have known in France, which are the continuation of many years of a nationwide movement and which undoubtedly announce new developments.

We discussed it at the International Secretariat which just took place: the strikes which are resuming in Tunisia indicate that the revolutionary explosion which took place 5 years ago in Tunisia and Egypt is far from over. On the contrary, it is deepening and taking root.

And of course—our comrades have evoked it—, the Palestinian resistance, which won’t back down, traces, in the atrocious situation in the Middle East, a guideline capable of opening the way to a resolution by rejecting interethnic, intertribal and interreligious combat to install a lay Palestinian Republic on all its historical territory where, on the ruins of the Zionist state of Israel, citizens would live in equality, whatever their origin or religion.

To echo the words of comrade Sérac, I will cite Trotsky, in 1940, on the brink of the great plunge into Barbary, who explained: “A delay of a quarter century has shown itself too short for a revolutionary rearmament of the international proletarian avant-garde and too long to preserve the soviet system of a backward country. But the essential task of our time hasn't changed, for the simple reason that it hasn’t be resolved (...)

Marxists have no right (unless you count weariness and disenchantment as a “right”) to draw the conclusion that the proletariat has exhausted its revolutionary possibilities and must abandon its pretentions of coming to power in the coming period”16.

What is happening today on the world scale indicates that we are on the verge of gigantic explosions. We can have confidence in political, theoretical and organisational capital constituted by the IV International and by its French section.

In conclusion, I’ll say that it’s up to us to play our part, comrades! Play our part, drawing on this considerable political inheritance, with the mastery which we already have, it’s up to us to elaborate the forms which will permit us to implant the revolutionary organisations which will aid the class to wrest the power from the hands of imperialism and capitalism, to expropriate the capital and install the power of the working class, each in his own country, linked one to another in the international combat for the Socialist United States of the World!

Conclusion

All the expected speakers having given their address, I would simply like to say concerning today’s meeting that comrade Lambert would have been proud to appreciate the quality, as well as that of its speakers; as he would have been proud of the combat of the sections of the IV International in Brazil, in Azania, of the combat of the French section, of all our combats on all continents. This combat, you will continue it in your basic units of the French section for those who are members. For those who aren’t, you will continue it by participating in a revolutionary study group, un GER, and I invite you to enrol.

And before singing the Internationale, I invite you renew a tradition, a tradition which Lambert would have supported, that’s to say that the French section will buy you a drink in the courtyard.

Annexe 1

The “Lambert group” and the publication of Informations ouvrières

We have seen that at the centre of the PCI resisting Pablism there was the workers’ commission. Crises and demoralisations reduced the PCI to a small group of fifty or so militants in 1958, but militant workers.17

"After the split, the Trotskyist fraction stopped functioning as an organisation: it shrunk, by the force of things, to a “group”, where the old core substituted itself for all the organisms and pulled behind it the militants, in the accomplishment of tasks, on a political line defined essentially under its sole responsibility, with minimal control of the militants. It couldn’t be otherwise; it was only at this price that the essential could be saved: the permanence of militant Trotskyism in France.

The old core saw itself obliged to “carry at arm’s length” the organisation in order to lead it to the combat, essentially in businesses and unions. All this was a necessary evil. For the interior regime to be in conformity with the principles of bolshevism, the militants must be convinced of this necessity. But doubt ravaged and thinned the Trotskyist squad. Henceforth, the formal aspect of things passed to the background, long behind the conformity of the political content of the decisions to the principles of Marxism. This isn’t to say that one had to rest complacent, rejoice, or hold it up as a virtue. If the Trotskyist faction of the time hadn’t already understood it, the content would have quickly been spoiled in turn. Its merit, moreover, was to have understood it". (Quelques enseignements de notre histoire)

The events of East Berlin in 1953, the Hungarian revolution of the workers’ councils in 1956 would be the occasion for the French section, opposing itself to Pablism, to seek to tie itself with sectors of the workers’ movement, and also that of the intellectuals. Trotskyists militants would notably, in admittedly limited sectors of the working class, but also in the Federation of National Education, organise the combat to support the Hungarian revolution of the workers’ councils, against the leadership of the PCF, which denounced a fascist coup.

The French section would realise accords against the war in Algeria, accords which sought to loosen the vice on the Trotskyist ranks, passed with intellectuals such as Edgar Morin or Jean Duvignaud (with whom they would break due to their adaptation to imperialism), but also with Roland Barthes and some close to Sartre, who would then be brought to cede before Stalinism.

On the other hand, the link was always conserved with André Breton, the founder of the surrealist movement, he who, with Trotsky, published the Manifesto for an independent art, and who, the 20 April 1956, spoke in a meeting to denounce the repression of Trotskyists and the seizure of La Vérité. “La Vérité, we have just learned, is seized for the fourth time. I salute what it has done to merit this very special solicitude on the part of the authorities and, through it, the exiguous and imperishable memory of Leon Trotsky.”

This pursuit, in all forms, sought to have Trotskyist militants leave behind them the repetition of doctrinal formulas, to leave their “exile” and engage themselves on the terrain of practical action. In relation to the developments of class struggle, the general strike of 1953, the strike movement of 1955, where Trotskyists

17 Extracts taken from the brochure N° 5, “documents de formation de la section française de la IV Internationale”, “Qu’est-ce que … le trotskysme”, (training documents of the French section of the IV International, “What is … trotskyism?”), edited by La Lettre de La Vérité, pages 39 to 42.
actively intervened, the first steps of the reconstruction of the Trotskyist movement were being taken. But this time, it was directly on the terrain of the working class that from a call from militant workers and unionists of the Nantes region would be constituted a Committee of Liaison for the workers' action and democracy (CLADO). The CLADO thus brought together militant workers, unionists, including Trotskyists and anarcho-syndicalists. It was a first materialisation of this search for a framework of confluence and convergence of militant workers of diverse origins fighting on the terrain of the working class's political independence. It was a first materialisation of the idea contained in the amendment of 1948. A practical step had just been taken. A second would be taken with the founding of Informations ouvrières in 1958.

In Quelques enseignements de notre histoire, Pierre Lambert writes: "From 1952 to 1958, two political lines within the Trotskyist ranks effectively existed: the correct one, that which the Trotskyists had started to elaborate during the last years of the war and after the war, which in particular found its living expression in the defeat of Publism and in the intervention had happened in the class struggle in France; the other, which perpetuated the flaws inherited from a petit-bourgeois past, incapacity to elaborate a firm policy of organisation, particularly in the financial domain, carelessness, absence of method, partial abandonment of the spontaneous process. On this last point, everything happened as if the spontaneous movement had been vested with the power of mechanically realising under the pressure of objective conditions, to somehow exude revolutionary party" (La Vérité, no. 60-61, special number Pierre Lambert, March 2008).

The turning point would be the decision to publish Informations ouvrières. Up until 1958, the petit-bourgeois methods of the SI persisted. La Vérité was published weekly, but without a policy of sales and organisation, the deficits accumulated. In 1958, Pierre Lambert, from the proposition to be done with this situation, decided to publish a mimeographed recto-verso newsletter on the basis of self-financing; he would modify the functioning of the group. La Vérité would become a theoretical organ. The newsletter Informations ouvrières was conceived as an "open forum of class struggle", on the Trotskyists initiative, but open to militant workers of diverse origins. In 1960, "the Trotskyists decided to give themselves the means of an organ of the press, pole and arm for gathering an avant-garde larger than that which they had constituted: the appearance of the mimeographed weekly newsletter Informations ouvrières therefore inaugurated a patient work of gathering which permitted the constitution of the first network of militants, "friends" or readers though which a class politic enlarged its influence (...)"

From February 1964, the mimeographed newsletter Informations ouvrières became a printed monthly publication and defined itself as an "open forum of class struggle". It would henceforth force itself, by enlarging its audience, by planning and systematising its distribution, to become the organising centre of this avant-garde which, without being convinced in a preliminary phase of the validity of the Program of transition, of the program of the IV International, accepted nevertheless to participate in the common combat for the realisation of the unified front of workers through discussion, intervention, coordination of efforts, in concert with Trotskyists" ("Quelques enseignements de notre histoire").

In respect to the developments of class struggle from 1953 to 1958, and to ties, which were established with limited but real sectors of the working class after the constitution of CLADO, the French section would adopt a resolution in 1962. We can read there:

"The problems posed by the construction of the IV International won't be able to be usefully studied in all their generality until an important step is crossed in the reconstruction of the international Trotskyist movement. Nevertheless, it seems necessary from now on to underline that, in accordance with the experience of the communist International, it is certain that revolutionary workers' tendencies with origins other than our own, and even, in certain cases, non-Marxist, will be called to participate in the construction of the new revolutionary International of which they will form an integral part.

To facilitate for them this evolution, organisational methods must be elaborated. The programmatic basis of the revolutionary International is, of course, intangible, which doesn't mean that presence within the ranks of the revolutionary International of revolutionary workers' tendencies with more or less extensive disagreements is excluded, on the contrary. The criteria for judging these tendencies are above all their ties to the working class and their behaviour in the great class battles in which they participate."

A first proposition would be elaborated at the XIV Congress of the organisation in 1964. A resolution presented by Pierre Lambert formulates, for the first time in a coherent manner, the line of transition concerning the construction of the party.

It is within in this same movement that the French section would formulate the same pursuit on the international level, expressed by the proposition of an "Open World Conference", conceived as a framework for consolidation on an international scale. In France, this orientation expressed itself, in the period preceding May 1968, in the "Workers' Alliance", seeking to bring together, with Trotskyist militants, militant workers, anarcho-syndicalists, militants breaking with the PCF... This gave birth, at the beginning of the general strike of 1968, to committees rallying these forces, called workers' alliance committees (CAO).
Annexe 2

The step to the organisation: the OCI and the line of the transition

It’s on this line, combining political intervention in class struggle and internationalism, with an organisational rigour, that the group counting 52 militants in 1958 recruited militant workers and young people and, on this basis, decided at its XIV Congress to constitute the organisation.\(^{18}\)

The passing of the “Lambert group” to the Communist Internationalist Organisation (OCI) brought up a number of theoretical, political, and organisational problems, notably that of expressing objectives and results through in by concrete tasks, therefore a policy of organisation. It was a clean break with what had marked the French section, the idea of letting itself be guided by the “chain of events”, which, combined with the “correctness” of our program, wound somehow miraculously result in the construction of the party. This was replaced by a discussion within the organisation based on the amendment of 1948 to formulated the line of transition concerning the construction of the party.

The congress voted a resolution entitled: “The strategy of the Revolutionary Workers’ League (LOR)” which formulates a line for the rallying of Trotskyists with the currents coming out of the crises of the PS and the PCF. It opened the possibility of building a common organisation, without (op)posing as a precondition the recognition of the program of the IV International.

(However) the Trotskyist current wouldn’t dissolve, but would contribute to the evolution and to the construction of the (aggregation), with its own positions, within the framework of workers’ democracy.

We could say, nearly 40 years later, that these events didn’t take place, that entire currents of the PC and OS didn’t break away from the apparatuses and didn’t organise themselves in the envisaged form. This would be a formalist vision of the problems. It didn’t happen in this way.

The developments of class struggle, the collapse of the USSR and the dismemberment of the Stalinist apparatus, on the international scale as in France, modified the forms of the reorganisation of the workers’ movement on a new axis. Also, the resolution of the XVII Congress underlined that it was a question of one of the possibilities and that none of the others should be excluded. The end of the resolution specifies: “Many other eventualities are possible (...) The LOR’s perspective thus gives us the indispensable flexibility, the necessary suppleness to accomplish our tasks.”

But it’s precisely the line defined by the resolutions of the XIV, XVII and XVIII Congresses which has permitted us to move forward as much on the national as the international level, to pass to another stage on the path of the construction of the IV International on the line of transition, and which has thus contributed to the foundation of the Workers’ Party, and today permits us to move forward, in equality with militants of diverse origins, in the construction of the Independent Workers’ Party (POI).

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\(^{18}\) Extracts taken from the brochure n° 5, “documents de formation de la section française de la IV Internationale”, “Qu’est-ce que le trotskysme ?” (training documents of the French section of the IV International, “What is trotskyism ?”, edited by La Lettre de La Vérité, pages 42 to 43.
It is in this same movement, in effect, and in the same period (1991), that, simultaneously, the International Entente of Workers and Peoples and the Workers’ Party would be founded. In effect, from the end of the 1970’s up to the fall of the USSR, the IV International had participated in international initiatives on subjects such as the debt imposed by the IMF, bringing together Trotskyists militants with militant workers from other political origins. This continuity it what permitted, on the brink of the first Gulf War in January 1991, the holding of an international conference proclaiming the International Entente of Workers (EIT), bringing together militants of every tendency. But let us repeat that this was only possible through the consolidation of the organisation, the OCI, which situated itself firmly on the terrain of the IV International and of bolshevism.
TRIBUTE TO THE REVOLUTIONARY MILITANT MARIKA KOVACS

Tribute
to the revolutionary militant
Marika Kovács

The Hungarian October of 1956 revisited

The big cupola room at the Père-Lachaise cemetery was full, that Friday June 10, 2016. Many of the participants remained standing. They had come to attend the funeral of Marika Kovács: her family, her friends, her museum colleagues’ trade unionists, militants of the POI (and notably those who are members of the French section of the IV International).

Upon her coffin, the flag of the IV International. Her children, their partners and her grandchildren gathered while one of her sons read in their name an emotion-filled text about Marika.

A Hungarian trade unionist, Lazslo Aztalos, who came specially from Hungary, made a short statement and delivered the greetings of his trade union. Bernadette, one of Marika’s museum colleagues, also recalled her activity.

Jean-Luc Antonucci, joint general secretary of the Ferc-Sup-CGT (the union of Marika’s partner Jean Mennecier), who came with a union delegation, also spoke. Lucien Gauthier paid tribute in the name of the IV International (see hereunder).

The whole gathering then sang the Internationale.

The Tribute of the IV International

I hail Marika Kovacs in the name of the French section of the IV International and the International as a whole. It’s difficult to pay tribute to Marika without respecting what she always was: a distinguished, discreet, shy woman, who shunned flashiness and ostentation, showing off and idle talk.

Much persuasion, time and the friendly pressure of her friends, her comrades, were necessary before Marika agreed to write a book. Not her memoirs: Marika would never have written her memoirs. But with her friend and comrade Liliane Fraysse she wrote a book, a duet, about the Hungarian October of 1956. A book, which for her meant furnishing younger generations with the lessons of the workers’ revolution of 1956. That was the aim of the book. She states in the preface: “I was just a simple militant.” That was Marika.

As you know, Marika was Hungarian, unquestionably Hungarian. This could be read from her handsome face, her slanting, almost Asian, eyes, and her high cheekbones, which showed that her roots were among the Magyar tribes who arrived in the 9th century upon the Hungarian plains. It sufficed to hear her speak with an accent, which she never lost despite her decades in France, because she was Hungarian. Marika was a worker-militant in France, but she remained Hungarian. She was born in the central Hungarian plain to a family of the poor peasantry. Her paternal and maternal grandparents were peasants, her father a blacksmith and farrier. In that Hungary she was, as one says today, from a
modest family. From adolescence, she felt herself to be communist, and she joined the Young Communists. The grand nationalizations of 1948-1949 were for her the sign of the start of the march toward socialism, toward a society rid of capital, a society rid of oppression and exploitation. At the end of her secondary education, she went to Budapest where she was to study philosophy. She was chosen for entry to the prestigious Lenin Institute. As for the philosophy, what they taught there was “Marxist-Leninist” – in inverted commas. For the Lenin Institute, in the grip of the Stalinist apparatus was a pool, a forcing house, for the training and recruitment of party cadres. The path for Marika was marked out: if she behaved herself, she would enter the privileged realm of the Nomenklatura. But there was a but, and this but was Marika herself! When, in 1956, the youth and the workers went out on the streets, Marika was with them from the very first days, because she was a communist! A communist stands by his class in the fight, and a communist fights alongside his class. Marika, like other communists, clashed in 1956 with the leadership of her party. Together with numerous comrades, she fought in this revolution. She was there in the demonstration of October 23 in front of the radio buildings. Soldiers were sent there to disperse the demonstrators, but they refused to open fire, because they themselves were the sons of workers, of peasants. It was the political police, the guard dogs of the Nomenklatura, who fired on the crowd. That day there fell the first three dead of the Hungarian Revolution. That day, the dawn of the Hungarian Revolution, Marika was there with her comrades, members of a committee of revolutionary students. She took part in the meetings, the rallies, and the demonstrations. She took part in drawing up the platforms and programs of these committees. She was a committed militant. The whole of Hungary was boiling; the working class invested the streets. Strikes developed, as did workers’ councils. The party apparatus divided. A majority of the leadership of the Hungarian communist party sided with the Kremlin. Former party cadres who had been sidelined or imprisoned, and were now again free and tended to side with the revolution, formed a provisional government. All this was unbearable for the Stalinist bureaucracy of the Kremlin, which sent in the tanks of the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary in order to repress the insurrection.

The population took a stand, calling on its soviet brothers to fraternize with them. Marika had learned to speak Russian at the Lenin Institute. With other students, she was given the task of distributing leaflet to the soviet soldiers. She related how she climbed onto a tank and slid into its aperture a leaflet written in Russian bearing a slogan with marxist resonance: “A people which oppresses another people cannot be free!” With this fraternization, the soviet workers and peasants discovered that they are not dealing with a counter-revolution but with a people, a working class in movement, and this forced the bureaucracy to end that first intervention and withdraw its tanks. The boiling cauldron became a torrent sweeping everything away. The workers’ councils developed and began their centralization. They wanted to support socialism, to progress in order to free themselves from the Bureaucracy. They wanted socialism and freedom. Within the provisional government, there were procrastinations, hesitations, left-turns and right-turns. There was no organized force, as there was in Russia in 1917, to help the Hungarian people and working class to surmount these obstacles and centralize the committees and take power. Yet this was the necessity expressed in declarations of the committees in all of the country: “All power to the workers councils.” In the face of this situation, the Kremlin was terrified; terrified to see an upsurge in Hungary of what happened in Russia in 1917 when the soviets took power. Since taking power in the USSR, the bureaucracy had not ceased to combat all the gains of the revolution of 1917. But there was a difference between 1956 and 1917. When the soviets took power in Russia, they abolished capital, decreed its expropriation. In Hungary the revolution was not motivated by a change in the social order.
Its aim was also not to restore capitalism. Its aim was to support, to strengthen socialism and the expropriation of capital. Which implied driving out the bureaucracy. The Kremlin bureaucracy reacted again. Troops from the USSR, Rumania, Poland and elsewhere invaded the country. They shot and they killed. It was to crushing the Hungarian Commune and this workers' revolution that the bureaucracy dedicated itself. Marika was right, this revolution was a major turning point in the history of the 20th century. The working class, acting according to the methods of class struggle, with workers' councils, rose up in order to affirm that socialism is not Stalinism, not the Stalinist Bureaucracy. This took place three years after the death of Stalin, opening the road for all the processes of political revolution. 200,000 Hungarians were forced to flee their country in order to escape prison, torture or death. Marika had to leave her native Hungary. More than this exile, the question, which above all tormented her was: why did the party betray us?

She asked herself this painful question for years and years. She was exiled in France, a country which she did not know and whose language she could not speak, where she knew no one. In these conditions, lacking all material and economic means, she was able, thanks to some kind hearts, to find a Parisian university lodging. But the Stalinists there repeatedly treated her as a "fascist", as a "counter-revolutionary" – she who since adolescence had been a militant of the Young Communists. The crushing of the working class by the bureaucracy, Marika suffered this in her bones and felt it during her exile. She was forbidden to return to her own country, even for the day that she wanted to attend her mother's burial. She was on a blacklist of alleged counter-revolutionary fascists, although she was an authentic communist.

After some time in the Paris region, she went to Toulouse. There she found precarious employment as an assistant in the education ministry. Her path crossed that of our comrade Michel Eliard, who gave her a copy of Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* to read. For Marika, this was an illumination; not a religious revelation but a theoretical and political answer to the question that she had not ceased asking herself: why did the party leadership betray us? She understood that this leadership was an anti-communist social layer, the Stalinist bureaucracy that smashed the revolution. She understood the mechanisms of Stalinist domination. She understood the repression that she had suffered. It was in these conditions that she decided to join the IV International. She would later say: "In order to remain communist, I have become Trotskyist." She was a militant of the IV International all her life. All her life, she fought under its banner. As a worker-militant, as a revolutionary militant, she built the IV International in Hungary, but also in France, she built the Parti des Travailleurs (Workers Party) and the Parti Ouvrier Indépendant (POI – Independent Workers Party). Marika was faithful to the IV International. Not with a religious faith, but faithful to the commitments she herself had made, faithful to that voluntary and free association which she had decided. For her, nothing was more important than fidelity to one's own commitments. That is why, when a provocation against the IV International emanated from a group of Hungarian Trotskyists, despite the link with her Hungarian origins, Marika sided with the IV International. In the same way last year, when faced with the split operations mounted against the French section, Marika fought, in Hungary and in France, to defend the IV International. Marika detested treachery, for her it was physically repulsive. She had nothing but contempt for the liquidators.

Faced with the vicissitudes of life, she left Toulouse with her children in her arms. When she returned to the Paris region, the year 1973 was terribly difficult for her, being out of work. She survived thanks to the workers' solidarity of her IV International comrades and worker-militants. Then came a silver lining. Having worked for the Museum of Man, she was given a post there, even if it was at the lowest level. This was the time when she met our comrade Jean. A family was established of Marika, Jean and their three children. Her situation stabilized. At the Museum of Man, she was active as a political and trade union militant. She defended this
museum, which she saw as part of the education ministry, which generations of children visited with their teachers or parents. She defended this unique museum, this jewel of knowledge and intelligence, where generations of researchers have gathered together all that Man has realized and which is the object of an offensive of governmental destruction. She defended this museum against the dispersion of its collections, against the disappearance of this Museum of the Enlightenment, against the destruction of the work of generations of researchers. She was a member of its Force Ouvrière section, of which she was a leader for a good while. Then she went into retirement. The CGT section at the museum, including our comrade Jean, sent a message to its members, which I read with emotion. The CGT communiqué reproduced the message of the FO section. Marika would have been enchanted, she who life-long never ceased to fight for the unity of the workers with their organizations. She who, until the end of her days, kept abreast of the struggle against the Labor Law, the FO-CGT axis, the preparation of the national conference for the defense of the conquests of 1936 and 1945, of the numbers in the Val-d’Oise department registered to attend in order to know if this figure was on a par with the political situation.

Her museum colleagues knew Marika well. When she went into retirement, they made her a present of geese, this animal so common on Hungarian farms, so present in Hungarian cuisine. In Marika's garden, there are now geese. Ah! Marika's garden! After her long working days, she spent time there to ease her mind. By her origin a child of nature, she stayed there, in the open air... She didn't like hotels, air-conditioning, and in her house at Nerville, when the season permitted, she installed her bed under the stars: “It's better than sleeping in a bedroom with the window open!”

To conclude, I would like to hail those who were close to her. I would like to hail her children in the name of the IV International: Clara, Gyuri and Jean-Denis, to hail her daughters-in-law Hélène and Irina, her son-in-law Christian, her grandchildren Alice and Raphaël, Vladimir and Volodia, her friends and comrades from the Val d’Oise, from Hungary, France and elsewhere. I would like to hail particularly our comrade Jean Mennecier, fighter for the IV International. All our thoughts go to him, he who was at her side, the daily companion, the companion in life.

Hail the revolutionary militant!

Lucien Gauthier

From Jean Mennecier, the companion of Marika

I have received a letter from Dominique Ferré, Jean-Jacques Marie, François de Massot and Daniel Gluckstein “paying homage to Marika” (sic). Who are they, that dare to write that Marika “remained faithful to the IV International right until the end”? Would they like, in these circumstances, to appropriate for themselves the memory of Marika? Marika was armed against treachery. Yes, she remained faithful to the IV International and she fought from beginning to end against the split and liquidationist offensive of those people.

With what impudence do they dare write on this matter: “whatever may have occurred”(!) Another newspaper, a “TCI”, a POID. Marika never accepted any of that and made it known to those around her. That which occurred was a rupture between those who defend the IV International, like Marika, and those who, like the four signatories of this letter, have sought to destroy it. Such a letter is ignoble and characterizes its authors for what they are.

Jean Mennecier
We reproduce hereunder the talk given by our comrade Marika Kovács on the occasion of a day of study held September 29, 1990, in Paris to mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Leon Trotsky.

“In order to remain communist, I have become a Trotskyist”

As a young student in 1956, I left my country at the end of that year, because the party that I believed to be communist betrayed us, betrayed the aspirations of a whole people. I left Hungary after the second intervention by troops of the Stalinist bureaucracy of the Kremlin to crush the Hungarian revolution of workers’ councils and to drive thousands of revolutionary young people, workers and intellectuals out of the country.

The troops surrounded and arrested the mandated representatives of the workers’ council of Greater Budapest, who were meeting with the commanders of the Soviet army to decide the modalities and timetable for a withdrawal of the army occupying Hungary, that same army which murdered the fighters of 1956, dismantled the independent organizations of the workers and of a whole people, and imprisoned the leaders and militants of the revolution.

I spoke just now of the Soviet army, I should have said: the military arm of the bureaucracy of the Kremlin, which by the way has remained in Hungary until now.

In order to vanquish this October revolution, the Kremlin was obliged to send special units from distant republics and recall the soldiers stationed for a long time in Hungary, who had been able to witness the nature of the revolution, and had often even fraternized with the youth, with the people in arms.

That was the case on October 25, 1956, two days after the start of the revolution, when an enormous statue of Stalin was toppled: a silent demonstration of several thousand people headed for the Kossuth Square, situated behind the parliament, in order to demand the release of leaders under arrest since October 23 and to demand the appearance before them of Imre Nagy. On arriving in the square, we found ourselves confronted by several Soviet tanks. I climbed onto one of them, and several of my comrades followed me, and in a few seconds all the tanks were covered with demonstrators. I was busy distributing leaflets in Russian to the soldiers to explain who we were, what we were fighting for, why the Soviet army must withdraw from Hungary and so on, when from the roof of the Interior Ministry across from Kossuth Square, the AVO political police opened fire on us. Immediately, the Soviet tank crews turned their cannons toward where the shots had come and returned fire. In the space of two minutes, 80 young people were lying dead or wounded by bullets fired by the political police.

Across the whole of the country there were scenes of fraternization between the Soviet soldier stationed in Hungary and the fighters; free radios of that time informed public opinion about these fraternizations with the message: “When one sees fighters of 12 or 14 years old, there can be no counter-revolution.” These units therefore had to be changed and replaced by others. Thus there was a second armed intervention by the bureaucracy on November 4. The soldiers sent in against the workers and youth this time spoke little Russian and, as I was able to witness, by the banks of the Danube, they thought they were at the Suez Canal to fight French and English imperialism.

The day following the events of October 25, workers, students, intellectuals and peasants across the whole country began forming their councils. The workers’ councils were active in the factories, in the mines, in the working class districts; organizing the protection of the...

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1 This talk was published in La Vérité N° 1 (new series) of November 1990.
factories and mines, strike pickets, local security... In the universities, the students with their lectors constituted university councils organized the distribution of arms, of food. The food was brought from the villages, accompanied by peasants, to the extent that we in the universities had never been so well fed as during the revolution.

But a fundamental problem was not resolved. A national council, as organ of power, was not formed and, when after long debate the workers’ councils wanted to form this national council, it was too late. Yet, for a short period, there existed in fact a situation of double power between the Soviet army command and the Greater Budapest council.

It is significant that even today, the different liberal, alternative, "democratic" forces wish to prevent the establishment of workers’ councils as a political force. Since the autumn of last year, workers’ councils (neither trade union nor political organizations) are being organized in the factories as “legitimate partners” in order to privatize. Last Sunday September 23, the 1st congress of these workers’ councils was held in Budapest to approve the unification of three national councils.

Workers’ councils are an important tradition in Hungary. At each capital stage of the revolutionary movement, workers’ councils have formed: in 1919 in the situation opened by October 1917, a Republic of Councils was constituted; in 1945 in order to deal with the disaster left by the Second World War; in 1956 in order to safeguard the social gains and for a socialist society: "We shall surrender neither the factories nor the land", for the withdrawal of the Soviet army, against the Hungarian lackeys of the Kremlin bureaucracy, against the Rákósis and Géros, against the AVO (political police).

The Stalinist party, called the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, like the regime, which it established in Hungary and “brother” countries, was neither communist nor socialist. It usurped these descriptions. It was a privileged caste, foreign to the workers, to the people whom it claimed to direct. It led the economy of these countries into catastrophe, on the orders of the Kremlin which had established the Yalta accord, an alliance with imperialism aimed at dividing Europe, which organized the cutting up of countries and redistributed regions inhabited by several nationalities or strengthened the pre-existing divisions of this or that State, thereby aggravating to the extreme the situation of national minorities.

Macedonia was thereby cut into four and attributed to four different states, while Kosovo (with a population 57% percent Albanian and 80% of its youth unemployed) is part of the Serbian Republic, and there are Hungarian minorities in Rumania (Transylvania), in Slovakia, in Yugoslavia, in the USSR and even in Austria.

This situation requires that the proletariat of Eastern Europe resolve the national question; which poses the question of a Federation of the Balkan countries and a Federation of the Danube countries, for which there have been attempts in the history of the countries concerned.

1956 was a stage in the mobilization of the workers of Eastern Europe. It was the follow-up to June 1953 in Berlin, a living demonstration of solidarity with the movement of the Polish people in 1956; it preceded the mobilization of the 1960s in the USSR and then in Czechoslovakia in 1968, in Poland in 1970-71, in 1976-77 and in 1980. (This summer in Bulgaria, in the capital and in a little village, an intellectual and an agricultural worker paid tribute to the Hungarian people for their revolution of 1956, “for without 1956, we would not be here today”)

All these movements, those of last year in Czechoslovakia, in East Germany, ended up by causing the fall of the Berlin Wall. The fall of the Wall was the palpable physical expression of the failure of Stalinism which, unmasked, appeared for what it had always been: the best auxiliary of American imperialism. This is the end of the Yalta order, the liberation of all the contained energies of the peoples, the possibility of belonging to a united Europe of workers.

We are presently only at the beginning of a complex and contradictory process. Stalinism has been beaten, the workers, the peoples, want freedom, political and social democracy; they want a better life, aspire to the gains that the workers in the West have obtained, but they do not want to be laid off from their jobs, they do not want the privatization of the main enterprises, the land. They want to have access to medical care without having to pay bribes, to social protection for mothers and children; they also want decent housing, education to be available for everyone and at all levels...

Of course, that is not the preoccupation of either the old or the new Nomenklatura, of the government. On the basis of crushing 1956, Kadar’s Nomenklatura has led Hungary into a social, economic and political dead-end; however it has also accumulated huge privileges. Since 1982, this policy has totally impoverished the country, run up a debt to the IMF of more than 20 billion dollars and enriched the Nomenklaturists.

At present - this is what a Hungarian militant expressed at the study days of the month of February, the danger of seeing the former
holders of political power become an economic force by grabbing hold of State enterprises – has become a reality. The former Nomenklaturists are preparing privatization together with the new government. On November 11 the mass-circulation daily newspaper Magyar Nemzet headlined: “The most important task looming before the country is privatization. (...) In order to attract foreign investment, the country has for several years been granting advantageous conditions to foreign capital. But this is still not sufficient, it is necessary to continue simplifying legal requirements, to reform the accounting system of companies (...).” In mid-September, in the weekly Tallozo, one could read: “The land belongs to those who purchase it.” Businessmen are encouraging old people to demand the return of land, which belonged to them before the organization of cooperatives, in order to buy it cheaply and set up limited companies. Or again: “One cannot see the end of the tunnel.” There is a question concerning agriculture: who will harvest next year? He who sowed or somebody else?
The Hungarian Justice minister declared a few days ago, before the Council of Europe: “The essential aim (in Hungary) is to restore the market economy system. With this aim, an economic change is indispensable. Change which will severely regulate financial policy, strengthen orientation of the economy towards the exterior, establish a list of items whose export will be limited and liberate imports, widen the circle of free prices and end most State subsidies.” The minister at the same time reassured the Council of Europe by declaring that in Hungary one was still elaborating legislation guaranteeing the exercise of fundamental human rights. In Hungarian society today there is a proliferation of gangsterism, prostitution, introduced by wheeler-dealers, the Nomenklaturists. But the vast majority of the population does not want the mafia, prostitution, selling short of the economy by the nouveaux riches, an increase in homelessness; that is what the result of elections show. Everyone is aware in Hungary that the streets have not yet spoken. We did not fight in 1956 for this kind of change!
Me, I have remained faithful to the commitments I made as a young student communist, I remain communist, that is why today I am a Trotskyist, militant of the IV International (ICR), and I fight for the constitution of a workers’ International. From this speakers’ platform, I pay tribute to all those who fell in 1956, to all those who, victims of Stalinism, ended their lives in prison, in camps, in Hungary and in other countries.
Tribute to all the victims of Stalinism!”

Marika Kovács
Below we present a communiqué of the IV International issued in The Truth, no. 433, 23 November 1956.

The international Committee of the IV International salutes the Hungarian proletariat...

Inspired by the events in Poland, the Hungarian people, arms in hand, raised against the native Stalinist bureaucrats and their Russian overlords. In their heroic struggle, they have established workers councils in several important industrial cities. The international Committee, on behalf of the world Trotskyist movement, warmly welcomes the workers Councils that currently operate in Miskolc and elsewhere. By taking the lead in the fight for its vital interests, the Hungarian working class strives to accomplish its historic mission and establish genuine socialism in his country. The whole world can now appreciate the real content of the so-called "popular democracy". Thanks to the intervention of the Stalinist bureaucracy, through its local instruments, and the presence of the Red Army, the Hungarian people was prevented in 1945 to take power through genuine soviets, bodies of workers democracy. Under the pretext of containing the counterrevolution, the Stalinist apparatus submitted the Hungarian people to the most cruel persecution. Once again, it has been shown that there is no bureaucratic substitute for the working-class fulfilling its historic mission, which is to direct the execution of the most profound social transformations. Creation of real revolutionary soviets in Miskolc and in other districts demonstrates powerfully that the Hungarian proletariat has rejected decisively the counter-revolutionary bourgeois and social-democratic propaganda. The experiences and the ideals of the Russian revolution of October 1917 and the Hungarian revolution of 1919 remained alive in the consciousness of the masses of Hungarian - to the great disappointment of the world bourgeoisie and its social-democrats agents.

To destroy the Stalinist bureaucratic oppression and the counterrevolution, the Hungarians have resorted to the Soviet method of organizing that, as in Russia in 1917, is forming the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat...

Social democracy must share much of the blame for the events of Hungary with the Stalinists. While the 'statesmen' of social democracy were bemoaning about the fate of the Hungarian people, they endorsed the worst crimes of the imperialists, as for example those committed in Algeria...

To all members of the Soviet armed forces, we say: remember the revolutionary traditions of the Red Army, founded by Léon Trotsky. Show your solidarity immediately with the valiant Hungarian Socialist freedom fighters, organized in their soviets.

Hungary is a call to action, not only for the working class of Eastern Europe, but for the whole world.

With Poland, it is the starting point of the political revolution of the workers and peasants to overthrow Stalinism. She is likely to be extended to all the countries of the Soviet bloc and the Soviet Union itself.

Long live the democratic republics of the Councils of workers and poor peasants, in Hungary and in Eastern Europe!

Long lives the resurrection of Soviet democracy in Russia!

All the power to Councils of workers and peasants in Hungary!

Long lives proletarian internationalism of Lenin and Trotsky!

Long lives the IV International, which has never ceased to organize and lead the struggle against imperialism and against the Soviet bureaucracy!

27th October 1956
... and condemns the imperialist aggression in Egypt

In the same time Israeli troops were attacking the Egyptian territory, the British and French Governments started the war for the reoccupation of the Suez Canal. Their ultimatum to the two parties, camouflaged in a peaceful process, was only a bad excuse. In fact, the Eden and Mollet governments, since the nationalization of the canal, on 27 July, have prepared consciously and systematically the reoccupation of the canal. Not only did they submit Egypt to diplomatic pressure, at the two conferences of London of "users of the channel" but they increased this pressure by military preparations for the recapture of the canal by force.

They chose the moment, to take action, when their Russian opponents were absorbed by the events of Eastern Europe, and their US competitors by the presidential election, hoping to be able to carry out, quickly and without trouble, their act of brigandage. This brutal imperialist action will face not only the resistance of the Egyptian people, but also of all other Arab peoples. If this war is not quickly finished, it will not be limited to a conflict between the Anglo-French imperialists and Egypt, but will turn into a war against the Arab peoples.

The Government of the United States has condemned in words the Anglo-French aggression and called for a peaceful settlement of the conflict within the United Nations. This does not prevent him to provide armament to the imperialist aggressors under the auspices of the Atlantic Pact. Like London and Paris, he is hostile to the Nasser Government, and like them, he actually challenges the Egyptian people the right to control the channel. But he wouldn’t leave this control to his competitors; he would prefer to exercise it himself. At the same time, the U.S. approach to the United Nations was intended to prevent a Russian "interference". For its part, the Kremlin bureaucracy, for his own defense and under the pressure of the revolutionary events in Eastern Europe, is looking for as a peaceful solution within the United Nations.

The IV International has always and everywhere held for the liberation of the oppressed colonial peoples. Even today, the international Committee of the IV International called all peoples and, in particular, all labor organizations to support the cause of Egypt, and to do everything in this unequal fight to support morally and materially the Egyptian people...

- Stop the imperialist aggression against Egypt, before it set the world in flames!
- Immediate withdrawal of the English-French occupation troops! Refusal of any occupation by troops of the United Nations, which would also serve the imperialist domination of the canal!
- Long lives the victorious resistance of the Egyptian people!
- Long lives the liberation of all Arab peoples and all other peoples who suffer from semi-colonial or colonial oppression!
- Long lives the solidarity action of the working class of the imperialist countries and colonial peoples against imperialist capitalism, for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a free and fraternal Socialist world!

3rd November 1956
The Truth of October and November 1956 gives an account of the Hungarian revolution

Thanks to the work of digitization of back issues of The truth by the CERMTRI and that is available online (digital library site of the CERMTRI: www.trotsky.com.fr), we were able to find and select different articles of The truth in October-November 1956 (then weekly journal of the Communist internationalist Party, French section of the IV International).

DOCUMENT NO. 1

"Poznan, the red flag against bureaucrats"
(The Truth, No.426, 12 October 1956)

"The House of cards of Stalinism collapsed" (Radio-Budapest). Thwarting all plans of the Polish rulers that had yet carefully staged them, the Poznan trials quickly transformed themselves into trial of the regime. And the echoes of the small courtrooms in Poznan, passed far beyond the borders of Poland, shook the already staggering power of the Stalinist bureaucracy throughout Eastern Europe, and even the USSR itself. Minc, the last of three men who, invested with Stalin confidence, ruled Poland since 1945, resigned. Mikoyan and Moutchidinov, members of the presidium of the Russian Communist Party, returned hastily from Beijing, where they were attending the Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Tito is called in haste in consultation by Khrushchev. Neither the legend of the "imperialist agents" authors of the Poznan uprising, nor could the "misguided youth, misled by the imperialist radio" be supported by the prosecution. His last fallback position, which featured the accused as ordinary criminals of common law, unrelated to the "legitimate" demonstration of strikers, has not resisted the assaults of the accused and their advocates. The sense of the insurgency, the objectives of the insurgents - who are those of Eastern Europe and even the USSR - are no less enlightened by the debates. Polish workers, like all those who are under the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy, do not fight for the "Western democracy", for the "free enterprise". No wonder if some essential aspects of the debates are more or less hidden by almost all of the Western press. There is nothing here to delight the bourgeoisie, the capitalists. Workers from these countries are no more thinking to restore capitalism that French workers to restore the throne of the Bourbons. Nationalization of banks and industry, the planned economy, they are prepared to defend them against any attack; but they want all the people to enjoy the fruits of the socialist economy; they want to abolish the privileges of bureaucrats, cutting down the police state that defends them and chase the Russian occupants who allow them to remain."
TRIBUTE TO THE REVOLUTIONARY MILITANT MARIKA KOVACS

DOCUMENT NO. 2

Call from the political Bureau of the PCI of October 30, 1956

“Long live the Hungarian workers councils fighting against the Kremlin bureaucracy!
Long live the independent Socialist Poland!
Down with the infamous Russian intervention against the Hungarian proletariat!”

(Supplement to no. 430 of The Truth, 2 November 1956)

“Against them, a tacit alliance, a shameful collusion occurred between all Governments in the world. All these men in place cannot conceal the mortal anguish which hugged them in front of working democracy in action, in front of the direct irruption of the oppressed masses on the scene of history, upsetting their secret diplomacy, their politician’s combinations against the oppressed and exploited masses. In the Kremlin, the counter-revolutionary tyrant, Stalin, the murderer of Lenin’s companions, strangler of the Spanish revolution, has found disciples worthy of their master. The sinister trio Khrushchev-Bulganin-Zhukov, fearing that the Hungarian example is followed by Russian workers (already, in the Stalinist units in Hungary, Russian soldiers are fraternizing by the hundreds with the Hungarian proletarians and joined their ranks) sent fresh troops, chosen among the safest to drown the Commune of Hungary under a deluge of fire. However, American imperialists, hardly hide, under their honeyed phrases, their satisfaction to see the Kremlin bureaucracy crushing a proletarian revolution that is likely to be contagious to the West, and not only to the East. The Anglo-French, them, were too happy to denounce the crimes of the Kremlin to attempt to let forgotten their criminal intervention in Egypt.

The great alliance of slander against the Hungarian revolution has been tied between bourgeois and Stalinists. The bourgeois press put forward, for the greater benefit of the Stalinist press, cardinal Mindzenty, at the same time when the new Nagy government proclaimed: ‘The new Government, unanimous, declares that he will make no concessions regarding the positive conquests of the past twelve years, like the agrarian reform, nationalization of factories and social conquests.’ At the time where the new organization of Hungarian Youth said: ‘We do not want the return to Admiral Horthy’ fascism. We will not surrender the plants to capitalists and the land to the big landowners’, bourgeois and Stalinists work together to hide from the people, the oppressed and exploited of the world, the truth about the Hungarian revolution, because the Hungarian revolution of the workers councils was a deadly threat to the privileges of the capitalists as to those of Russian bureaucrats.

In France, the bureaucratic bastards who run the French Communist Party, the Thorez-Duclos-Servin, are the same ones who sabotage all workers’ struggles to better collaborate with employers, those who preach the partial strikes, the rotating strikes, when the workers want the general strike, those who voted the special powers for the dirty war against the Algerian people. Obedient to their masters in the Kremlin, they do everything they can to prevent the victory of the proletarian revolution in France, everything to save the capitalist regime of misery and war.”
DOCUMENT NO. 3

"We must break the Stalinist apparatus" (Pierre Lambert)

(The Truth, No. 431, November 9, 1956)

"The illusions that could have risen by the ‘destalinization’ vanished brutally with the bloody repression of the Hungarian revolution. The international apparatus put in place, piece by piece, by Stalin during 30 years cannot be reformed. It must be broken. Two new glaring evidences have just come to light. In Hungary, in the heat of the revolutionary action, the masses have liquidated the Hungarian CP. In Italy, the Stalinist Togliatti, after completing some entrenchats in order to keep, on behalf of the Moscow bureaucracy, his control over the masses, did not balance a second. L’Humanité dated 1 November 1956 quotes an article from the Italian leader of the NKVD in Spain, Togliatti, in which he writes:

‘To the armed riot playing havoc in Budapest, it can be answered only by arms’ (...).

Directly selected by the GPU, taking strength of the organic binding with the Kremlin, totally subservient to the Russian bureaucracy, an apparatus covering the whole country, settled in bourgeois municipalities and councils, in the Union offices, at the federal and local headquarters of the sections of the French CP, with its MP, Secretaries, etc. Caught in the pincers of the insurmountable contradictions imposed by the privileges of Moscow defense policy, the apparatus, to stay consistent, requires the utmost prioritizing, absolute fidelity to the dictates of the Summit. All obtained, so far, by the purges, bloody ones in the USSR, liquidating ones in capitalist countries.”

DOCUMENT NO. 4

"The Hungarian revolution, step of the world revolution"

(The Truth, No. 432, November 16, 1956)

The meaning of the Councils

"Within 48 hours, the Hungary was covered with Councils. Everywhere, those Councils have been elected, by secret ballot, in enterprises, schools or army. Nowhere there have been any officials of parties, trade unions, organizations, as such. The Councils were the united front of the working class as well as the body of his power: Chosen by the workers themselves, fully enjoying their trust, they began the two key tasks. They have swept away the bureaucracy, broken the State apparatus and the repressive apparatus, and have substituted their authority, that of the Socialist democracy. And they have directed, organized the struggle against the Russian army. By the workers democracy of the Councils, supported by the workers in arms, the parasitic bureaucracy, fulfilled the political revolution. The workers had taken power. And this is the dominant, crushing fact, for all theorists of the regeneration of Stalinism: like the Russians workers in 1917 with the soviets, the Hungarian workers find back, with the Councils, the instrument of their struggle and the body of their power. Thirty-nine years after, without worrying about the skepticism of the pseudo-theorists, workers were getting back, by building their councils, to the road traced by Lenin and Trotsky. Like the soviets in their early days, their orientation wasn’t everywhere uniform and identical. There were Socialists-revolutionaries soviets, at the beginning of the Russian revolution, and, for a long time, an overwhelming majority of Mensheviks soviets. The Hungarian Councils have, in the same way,
presented a range of political shades: national-peasants, small owners, Social Democrats, Communists, no-party, dominated here or here, or were balanced. But the major fact is that no one organization rose against them; all parties expressed themselves through them. They represented so well the workers democracy in action that even the puppet Kadar had to proclaim their legitimacy, at the time where he threw against them the tanks and aircrafts.

The Councils’ program
After ten years of Stalinist yoke, ten years of terror under the sway of bureaucrats and their minions, the constitution of the Councils open the way to a real burst of the masses’ wishes. You should need pages and pages to reproduce their claims expressed under the fire of the Stalin executioners, and ranging from the restoration of the national flag of 1848 to the suppression of the class differences, through the freedom in art and literature. But, through the Councils’ programs, despite local nuances, a common program has emerged, the one of Hungarian workers, the one of the Hungarian youth raised under the Stalinist boot. Restoration of the right of criticism and authentic electoral freedom, restoration of the liberty of the democratic parties (parties represented in the Councils), revival of trade unions, reviewing of plans and free discussion of economic issues, working-class houses instead of the monuments ‘to show off’ (the useless subway of Budapest), rising of low wages, capsizing the highest ones and reduction of their range, freedom of science and art, foreign policy consistent with the principles of proletarian internationalism...

This is the program of the Polish revolution, as it has been expressed in many resolutions of workers meetings; this is the program of the Hungarian revolution, as you find it in all the proclamations of the Councils. It is, word for word, the program of the political revolution against the bureaucracy, as Léon Trotsky draws it in “The Revolution betrayed”, in 1936. This is the Trotskyist program, taken over and defended at the cost of their blood by Hungarian students and young workers. This is the program shouted by hundreds of thousands of mouths that the Kremlin wanted to close forever.

The Councils action against the Stalinist apparatus
Everywhere, one of the first official acts of the councils was the suppression of the bodies of the Stalinist party. In the early hours of the armed struggle, the masses have undertaken a struggle without mercy against the apparatus, and it has shattered. From the moment the Russians fired, there was left alongside them nobody but the security officers, faithful to the end. Many activists of the CP dug in, frightened by the anger of the masses. Much of others joined their class and ranked in the camp of the workers in struggle, and fought, in their place. Some have been found to be trustworthy and have received responsibilities. Others have been left out. But it is no longer as activists of the CP that the Foldvari in Miskolc, Gera in Magyaróvár, Maleter in Budapest, have fought. It was as revolutionaries, as proletarian fighters, as ‘Foelskelői’, ‘freedom fighters’, as they say in Hungary. And, as Foelskelői, they took, too, with their class, their responsibility in the destruction of the apparatus by the masses. The Nagy-Kadar-Lukacsz attempt to build a new party certainly consecrated the failure of their orientation of redress of the CP, but it resulted also in an immediate failure: the masses no longer wanted anything that reminded them of Stalinism. Here again, it is the striking confirmation of the correctness of the Trotskyist program: the Stalinist parties have moved definitively on the side of the counterrevolution. By destroying the apparatus, the Hungarian masses have shown that they understood its true counter-revolutionary meaning. The Hungarian masses gave reason to Trotskyites against all the theorists of the ‘redress’ of the CP...”
The Hungarian October of 1956
The Revolution of the Councils

Stories and Memories of Marika

In the work that she wrote with Liliane Fraysse1 in 2006 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Revolution of the Councils, Marika Kovács imparts numerous elements of her combat and that of the Hungarian working class.

She reports the conditions of her life in the countryside as a child under the dictatorship of Horthy. Semi-feudal relations had been kept in place by a series of repressions of peasant uprisings. That of 1519, which, like the peasant war in Germany, ended in massacres, strengthened the position of the privileged feudal classes, the nobility and the clergy, for centuries. The Revolution of 1848 posed the problem of feudal class privileges, the distribution of lands and the establishment of the nation. The combination of bourgeois hesitation, scared of the people, and the intervention of reactionary monarchies, Russia in particular, brought about a repression that blocked bourgeois democratic reform. The nation was unable to establish itself and the oppressed nationalities of the Habsburg Empire continued to be a recurring problem.

It was the fall of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, following that of the tsars, which unleashed a new revolutionary situation in 1918-1919. Germany and Austria-Hungary became covered with workers’ councils. The victory of the Revolution of October 1917 served as a model for all the workers. Following the ultimatum of the victors (the France of Clemenceau in particular), the bourgeoisie pulled back, and a government of workers’ parties, socialist and communist, formed under the direction of Bela Kun. But while the Red Army was arriving at the end of the counter-revolution in Russia, the French government sent in its generals, organizing expeditionary forces of killers armed with the over-abundant weapons of recently demobilized armies. As with the previous uprisings, the Hungarian Revolution was crushed by external intervention: as the tsarist monarchy had been the reactionary spearhead in 1849, this time France and England kept order and pushed back all of the democratic reforms. Horthy, the dictator chosen by the foreign counter-revolution, installed the first fascist regime in Europe.

It was in this countryside marked by very strong quasi-feudal inequalities, where the church ran the schools, that Marika, daughter of the village blacksmith, passed her childhood. She would later learn that her grandfather had participated in the Revolution of Workers’ Councils in 1919 and had led the fight for agrarian reform.

In the beginning, the war was little felt in the countryside, then, with Horthy engaging himself alongside Hitler in the attack on the Soviet Union, little by little the weight of the war made itself felt by the mobilization of men and by requisitions. In 1944, Hitler did away with the Hungarian government and took control of the totality of the country. The Nazi army counted on using Hungary as an anti-Russian bunker. The Jews were rounded up and deported; the towns became fields of ruins.

Extracts (p. 64-66):

“The last year of the war was the most difficult: from autumn 1944, the Red Army was already present on Hungarian territory... The German Army occupied all the strategic points... A veritable murderous rage fell on the country, Budapest under siege, bombarded, and suffered enormous human casualties... We didn’t know that in our capital the combats raged from street to street, taken by Russian soldiers, and then retaken by the Germans. The echo of these

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different events only came to us partially. My father spoke to us of it when he returned from Budapest, where he brought food to my uncle.

On the other hand, we suffered a very difficult occupation: forced labor for the men, rape and violence for the women and young girls. I was 12 and, like the other young girls, I hid my face under a scarf to protect myself and to avoid being attacked.

It was thanks to family affection, the ingenuity of my parents and the solidarity of our village that I was able to “grow up” in this so difficult period. In mid-January 1945, the left bank of the Danube was liberated, and in mid-February the last of the SS holed up in the Buda chateau were defeated. The total liberation of the country was finished April 4 (…)

My grandfather, like millions of men, had been mobilized in the First War; he had passed the period of 1914-1918 on the Mediterranean front. He came back from Italy on foot and in a village of a neighboring department, Somogy, he found an old army comrade. They had mutually saved each other’s lives. They discussed together, and this man, a Communist, convinced my grandfather. When the Republic of the Councils was installed in 1919, my grandfather participated in the village council. It’s in this way that, with one of his comrades, he started to organize the repartition of the lands of the Esterhazy family, part of which was found in our village.

But the period of repression of the White Terror, which followed the failure of the Republic of the Councils, fell on our village. My grandfather was forced into hiding. He survived thanks to shelters, which the villagers had arranged in the caves of the hills of the vineyards…

But his act wasn’t forgotten: the area of the commune that had been distributed to the landless peasants is still called ‘proletár’ today.”

In 1945, all of the problems that hadn’t been resolved in the revolutions of 1848 and 1919 resurfaced, and this time it seemed that the Red Army would be on the side of the workers. In the countryside, the peasants reconstituted the councils and divided the land amongst themselves; in the cities, the factories were reopened by the workers themselves. Contrary to the legend later constructed by historians, Stalin didn’t seek to develop social property: quite the contrary, it was a policy of alliance with bourgeois parties, called the “Popular Front”, which was put into place and which sought to preserve the bourgeois States in full disintegration. It was the emblem of the accord of Yalta. But the workers and peasants didn’t share this orientation: on the contrary, they hoped that this time the counter-revolution wouldn’t deprive them of their conquests. From 1947, the tensions between the USA and USSR brought a modification in Stalin’s politics. He decided to tighten his control on the zone of influence given to him by the accord of Yalta and replaced the governments of the Popular Front with those of Communist Parties with a reinforced police apparatus directly under the absolute control of the KGB. To terrorize the workers, the method of the Moscow trial was adopted: in Hungary, it was the Rajk trial2.

Therefore, it wasn’t at this time that social property developed but, on the contrary, the bureaucratic and police character of the State was strengthened to forbid the workers from developing their conquests by workers’ democracy. Once again, a counter-revolution imposed from outside was painfully felt by all those who had enthusiastically fought to finish with the shameful capitalist system.

As soon as, at the death of Stalin, the leaders relaxed the repression, the mobilization resumed and the bureaucratic system was menaced.

Marika, able to study thanks to the democratic conquests of 1945, joined the Young Communists. She would find herself at the heart of the events, which raised up the youth, then the whole of the working class, against the Stalinist regime.

After the workers’ revolt of East Berlin in 1953, the Kremlin bureaucracy made concessions and appealed to Imre Nagy, who constituted a government and pronounced a discourse before the Parliament in which he announced a reorientation of the agrarian policy, taking in to account the grievances of the peasants, repudiating Rakosi et Géro. These two wouldn’t rest until they returned to complete control of

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2 Leader of the Communist Party since 1930, combatant in the international brigades in Spain, he led the illegal party in Hungary during the war. Minister of the Interior in 1945, then of Foreign Affairs, he was arrested in May 1949. Stalinist trial in October: accused of being an agent of imperialism, he was executed.
the political apparatus, pushing aside Nagy, and then excluding him from the party in December 1955. The events then accelerated, as a mobilization against the Stalinist regime developed in Poland.

Extracts (p 100-104):

"As soon as the Khrushchev report of February 1956 was known of in the country, circles of discussion were constituted. The movement of ‘de-Stalinisation’ boosted our hopes. At the Lenin Institute, we had been the first to become aware of the Khrushchev report, first by rumors, then by our philosophy professor... nobody defended Stalin. We lived this text as a true breath of freedom (...). It was thus that the circle Petőfi³ was born in March 1955... It organized debates on all the questions of social and political life: economics, Marxist philosophy, the fate of the volunteers in the Spanish War... everything was passionately discussed.

The 18 June, there was a debate on the press: the rehabilitation of Laszlo Rajk was at the center of the debates and the participants made a warm ovation to his widow when she addressed the government: ‘Not only have you killed my husband, but you have killed all decency in this country. You have destroyed from base to summit the political, economic and moral life of this country. We can’t rehabilitate murderers: they must be punished! (...)’

The workers’ riot of Poznan and the situation in Poland sparked a passionate debate in the Petőfi circle, bringing together several thousand people.

It was in this atmosphere and in the context of these discussions that the entirety of my cellule decided to demission from the Party in 1956.”

Gerő replaced Rakosi at the head of the government. This veteran of the secret police had illustrated himself in Spain in 1937-1938 by the repression of militant revolutionaries. He was constrained to rehabilitated Rajk and to give him a public funeral which became a powerful demonstration of 300,000 participants against the regime, but which he still succeeded to contain.

It was the 23 October that everything would change.

Extracts (p. 110-111):

“I was a member of the student revolutionary committee. The unfolding of that day is still clear in my memory. The sixteen points of the students were already known in town: people talked about it, telephoned each other, pinned Hungarian roundels on their clothes.

The demonstration was supposed to start at 10 in the morning. We were ready to go when we learned that the government had prohibited it. Again, at 12:53, a communication of the Minister of the Interior was read on the radio, maintaining the prohibition. Then, at 2:30, we learned, still by radio, that the demonstration was finally authorized. In the end, leadership the Party and of the government had given in. At 3:00, the demonstration commenced from the Statue of Petőfi, where we had gathered. The initial prohibition, so many times repeated by the radio, had produced an opposite effect of that which was intended. The population had been able to observe the hesitations, and the final decision of the leaders was seen as a capitulation to the force of the movement, as a victory for us.

All of Budapest was in the street, since the workers left the factories at 3:00; they worked around the clock in three shifts (...) the nature of the demonstration had changed. It had become more serious, riper, and more determinant. I felt that it was a major failure for those in power.”

A discourse of Gérou on the radio that night ignited the powder keg: he spoke of the demonstrations as chauvinistic and thuggish. A massive crowd formed in front of the Parliament and demanded Imre Nagy. Workers came to the square where the statue of Stalin was enthroned and started to rock it. It fell at 9:30.

In front of the radio building, police fired on the crowd. The soldiers, however, refused to fire. Marika participated in the student revolutionary councils: she was charged to write tracts intended for the Russian troops, as she knew the language.

The 24 October, Russian troops entered Budapest. Combats unfolded in working class neighborhoods. The Stalinist apparatus decided to name Nagy as head of the government, while keeping Gérou as Party secretary.

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³ Circle under the direction of the Youth Organization of the Communist Party. It was a tribune of opponents to the Stalinist leadership of which the size of meetings increased progressively to the point of bringing together 7,000 participants.
The Russian troops fraternized with the protesters who had invaded the streets. The political police fired to impede the fraternizations: 200 people were killed in front of the Minister of Agriculture.

**Extracts (p. 119-121)**

“The protesters carried the bodies of their comrades on their shoulders, brandishing their flags, spreading cries of “They murder the workers” throughout the city. During shooting, I stood petrified, but then I crossed the square, running towards the Lenin institute, ducking and weaving, pursued by bullets which struck the walls (...). After this shooting, the workers returned to their factories. They decided a general strike. They came together and put into place provisional workers’ councils... In the countryside, the first councils appeared on the 25 October. On the 26, it was in the majority of the Factories of Budapest and of the countryside where they formed, and soon after in all businesses, mines, State farms, administrations, hospitals...

The 31 October a workers’ meeting took place where the delegates of 24 large Hungarian companies were present. This meeting adopted a declaration in 9 points. The first point declared that ‘the factory belongs to the workers’ and the second, that ‘the supreme organ of the company is the Workers’ Council, elected by the workers.’

The first Soviet intervention and the mass shooting by the political police (AHV) had unleashed the general strike. At the same time, the traditions of the workers’ movement resurfaced. To face Stalinism, the workers’ councils of 1918-1918 had been put into place. In their platforms, which were distributed from day to day, the following points always come back: “For a free Hungary, sovereign, independent, democratic and socialist... We don’t want the return of the old capitalist system.”

**Extracts (p. 124-125):**

“All demand a government containing their representatives and which declares with force: ‘We will give back neither the factories and nor the land...’ At Gyor, all the councils of the Dunantul (Transdanubia) region were centralized in one regional council.

In parallel, the students and intellectuals pursued their movement: the armed student revolutionary committee to which I belonged had an interview with Nagy. Its president, Ferenc Mórey, defended the program, which we had written... Its conclusion sums up all the aspirations of the population: ‘We didn’t rise up to change the basis of Hungarian society, but we want the sort of socialism and communism which corresponds to that which Hungary wants.’

The revolutionary wave, which had been contained in 1945-1947 by bureaucratic repression, reconnected with workers’ democracy. Consequently, the Kremlin maneuvered to prepare its revenge. While the Stalinist leadership let the people believe that negotiations could lead to a withdrawal of Russian troops, who were effectively pulled back into their barracks, the preparations of a second intervention accelerated. Troops were brought in from Asia, who didn’t speak Russian, and a team of bureaucrats was formed around Kadar to demand Russian aid; Nagy was left to work on the state of affairs with the Russians. The population, ignorant of these maneuvers, thought that it had won victory.

Then, the 2 November, Kadar announced from Moscow the constitution of a new bureaucratic party. Already, the 29 October, Russian tanks and 120,000 new troops had passed the frontier.

In their platforms...
looking at the Suez Canal where, with the soviet army, he had been called to fight the French and English imperialists. When I told him that the river was the Danube and that we were in Hungary, he looked at me, without hostility, perplexed."

The central workers' council of greater Budapest constituted itself the 14 November. It brought together the delegates mandated by all the factories. The general strike continued. Marika Kovács relates in detail the vagaries of the combat of this council, which became a double power. Kadar was obliged to negotiate, all while searching everywhere for the means to finish with the council by menaces, attempts to cause division and corruption, arrests, police interventions to prohibit the gathering of a national council of workers' councils.

The fierce struggle lasted 2 months. Despite the arrest of the two principal workers' leaders, the strike was total the 11 and 12 December. Again, the 10 January, a powerful strike and demonstration at Csespez. Everywhere the councils fall under the blows of arrests. The repression would be terrible. Less known than the combats in the streets, it would hit an entire generation of young workers.

**Extract (p 164-165):**

"Tibor Tardos tells us in one of his books, L’eau de la mer est salée (Sea Water is Salty), an anecdote which is significant of the atmosphere of the end of 1956: constantly watched, he hears a light noise at his door... A young blond man gives him a sac filled with crumpled letters... These letters were the words of young Hungarians, imprisoned and sent to the USSR. They had thrown them from the windows of the trains and the rail workers had gathered them and addressed the to this ambassador, who made sure that they reached Tardos: 'We are being brought across Romania, Ukraine, we are 400 in this train, tell our parents...' As with the populations deported by the Nazis, these young people didn't have another means to make their fate known than to throw pieces of paper on the railway tracks!"

The story of Marika Kovács finishes with some reflections on the lessons learned from this revolution.

**Concerning the hesitations of Nagy and the question of the revolutionary leadership**

**Extracts (p 165-167)**

"The Hungarian workers threw themselves into the revolution without a revolutionary leadership. He intellectuals, and among them managers from the Communist Party, who moderated the first demonstrations of the end of October were incapable of having a clear vision of the political objectives to attain. Things went even farther.

The case of Imre Nagy is particularly significant: Béla Király, in a testimony written thirty years after 1956 (Budapest, thirty years later), writes:

'Imre Nagy, all the way to his tragic end, was a convinced communist. He believed in the communist ideal and the possibility to reform it. For or against all, he had confidence in the Soviet Union. He was persuaded that the Soviet Union would not act as a typical colonial power in a period of great historical upheaval. This is why Imre Nagy forced himself to not provoke the Soviets. He hoped that this conduct could prevent a Soviet aggression.'

Up until 28 October, Nagy kept a position of temporization, of possible compromise with the Stalinist bureaucracy. But he had the immense merit to have broken with this orientation by choosing the camp of class, that of the Hungarian workers who fought for the councils and who confronted the tanks at the AVH. He conserved this attitude all the way to in front of his judges and executioners. The 17 June 1958, after a secret trial, Imre Nagy, Pal Maléter, Miklos Gimes and Joszef Szilagyi were executed. Sandor Kopacsi was condemned to prison for life. Gera Losonczy died during his detention (...).

(...) The workers in the councils had surely sensed the fundamental immensity of the stakes, which their revolution had placed before them. Their
combat to centralize all the councils in a national council was committed. It would have inevitable posed the question not of turning back towards the government, but of taking the power into one's own hands (...) They had formulated the necessity for the councils of an independent newspaper and of workers' militias. How would it be possible to maintain the social property of the factories and lands if defeated by Stalinism? The council of Veszprém demanded to 'clean the State apparatus of its Stalinist elements' (...).

The requirements of the revolution, of the unions, was clearly formulated. But he (Sándor Bali) adds: 'But as we, for the moment, do not have the technical possibility of establishing these organizations (...), we are obliged to concentrate our forces on a single point while waiting for the outcome of events.'

A sharp consciousness of what would be necessary, but also of the difficulties and obstacles to overcome, aren't they concentrated in these words?

Effectively, the situation was very difficult in Hungary and on the international scale. They were faced with an immense coalition. Khrushcheyv had obtained from American imperialism all the latitude to crush the Revolution of the Councils, and that with the help of Tito, Mao Zedong, of all the leaders of the Communist Parties of Europe. And remember that the only proposition of the Socialist International was to appeal to the UN.”

Concerning her joining the IV International, she reminds us first of the crisis of 1953.

Extracts (p. 167-168)

"...Those who would have been able to help us, the IV International and its sections, were cut across by a violent crisis. Indeed, in 1953 a current broke away from the IV International. It's head, Michel Pablo, criticized the 'sectarian and mechanical anti-Stalinism' of certain members and affirmed that 'for our movement, the objective social reality is essentially composed of the capitalist regime and the Stalinist world.'

This clearly signified that as soon as we fought against the Stalinist world, we effectively joined that of capitalism. Wasn’t this a condemnation in advance of the workers’ insurrection of East Berlin as well as the Polish and Hungarian revolutions? And in 1956, the Pabloist current dared to declare: 'In Hungary, the absence of all centralized political leadership and an otherwise a clear lack thereof provoked, on the contrary, after a certain time, exactly its faults and dangers (...). Overwhelmed, the government Nagy started maneuvering outside of the camp of class...’

Any activity of the workers’ councils was condemned and the hanging of Imre Nagy and his comrades was justified. The whole program of the IV International was brought into question.”

"In full general strike, the revolutionary council of Veszprém had formulated the demand that: 'the government brings its attention to Hungarian minorities on its frontiers... and that the idea of a Danubian Federation would be reconsidered.'

The perspective of a Confederation of the peoples of the Balkans and the Danube was put on the agenda. And aren’t these problems still today of a burning relevance?

History is never finished and it often picks up there where we had believed that it had stopped. The experience of the Revolution of the Councils inscribes itself as an essential moment in the combat of humanity for its emancipation.”
Then, she relates thus her first contacts with the IV International and its French section

Extracts (p. 172-174)

“In the beginning of the 70s, I met a university professor (at Toulouse) who loaned me The Revolution Betrayed. Reading this book was for me, as I’ve already said, like a revelation, a real liberation. This work gave me the first elements of comprehension of what I had lived in 1956. The treason of communism in the name of communism could be characterized politically and had a name: Stalinism. With the political reflection, which was provoked, I could find balance. Literally, I was no longer the same. I had in front of me my own responsibility and I could translate into action the overview of my experience (…).”

“I remember that in 1972 I had started an organized discussion with militant Trotskyists in Paris. It was at that time that I read the Program of Transition, the founding act of the IV International, and I decided to join. As well, it was the only organization that had at once stood up for the workers’ councils (…).”

The best homage that we can give to Marika is recall this revolution in which she participated without understanding the reasons of the Stalinist treason, which she defended against all the falsifications and the attempts to make it disappear from memory, and which she then understood and analyzed in the light of the lessons of the history of the workers’ movement, in relation with the combat for the Workers’ International.

Like the Commune of Paris, it was victim of a merciless combat led by the counter-revolution to break and eradicate the hope of a workers’ government.

In the years that followed, Kadar and his bureaucracy led a vicious combat to forbid all workers’ organization and erase the memory of 1956. Hungary was one of the countries with the highest rates of suicide in the world. At the same time, in an attempt to push down the tensions in the country, the bureaucracy engaged in “reforms” in direct collaboration with the IMF and financial capital. Accordingly, this bloody bureaucracy was often presented in the French press as a model of “reformism”. While the Stalinist regime collapsed after the fall of the Berlin wall, the bureaucracy threw itself into privatization and the pillaging of social property, strictly following the recommendations of American financial capital, provoking a decline in quality of life at the same well as skyrocketing unemployment and inequality.

The IV International, since 1956, has supported the revolution of workers and students against Stalinism, political revolution against bureaucracy and social revolution against capitalism as the foundation of its program. The French section of the IV International (then the OCI) published and made known the texts of the Hungarian workers’ councils in 1966.

This revolution wasn’t an accident of history without consequences. It tried to give a response to the problems, which hadn’t been resolved in 1918-1919 and 1945-1947. In the context profound crisis of capitalism and of the dismemberment of the European Union, these questions are still pertinent for us today: end capitalist exploitation, build a government of workers’ democracy, a
TRIBUTE TO THE REVOLUTIONARY MILITANT MARIKA KOVACS

republic of councils, realize a free Union of the peoples of Europe based on equality of rights for all nations, which the workers' movement has called the 'United Socialist States of Europe'."

Extracts (p 174)

“The crisis of humanity is the crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat’. It took me a certain time to understand that this theoretical affirmation was the exact and correct response to my own interrogations since 1956. And it was also the practical response to the central question of the absence of revolutionary leadership during the Hungarian October. This absence which had weighed so heavily and which had expressed itself notably by the fact that the workers’ councils hadn’t managed to centralize themselves in a national workers’ council.

From this point, I arrived at the comprehension that in a period where the working class and its conquests suffer grave attacks, revolutionary militants must strengthen their party in order to organize all the means to defend what they’ve won. And I take for my own the words of Trotsky: ‘It is the duty of revolutionaries to defend tooth and nail all the positions conquered by the working class, be they democratic rights, salary scales or a conquest as colossal as the nationalization of the means of production and planned economy. Those who aren’t capable of defending the conquests already taken will not be able to fight for new ones’.”
Documents of La Vérité
“The IV International and the Palestinian question”

A special issue of La Vérité – The Truth has come out at the end of August, 2016: it’s part of a new collection edited by our review entitled Documents of La Vérité. In effect, we publish collections of documents of the IV International on a chosen theme. Most of these documents have been published in the review La Vérité, which was for many years the review of the French section of the IV International before becoming the IV International’s the theoretical organ in 1990. It is therefore under the title of “The IV International and the Palestinian question” that we have assembled, in 192 pages, a collection of documents, which were hitherto little accessible, sometimes out of stock, and most often scattered. Let us specify that this special issue isn’t covered by the subscription. We publish below the presentation and summary of this little brochure. We’re sure that the readers of our review will give it a warm welcome by ordering it from our distributors (5€).

La Vérité – The Truth

Presentation

For a Single Palestinian State, Lay and Democratic,
on all the Historical Territory of Palestine

The creation of the Israeli state in 1948 corresponds with the beginning of what Palestinians call the “Nabka”, the catastrophe. The Nabka is the very negation of the elementary right of the Palestinian people to live on the land of Palestine. Many of the articles published in this brochure revisit the history of the creation of the Israeli state, the real motivations and the consequences for all the peoples of the region, starting with the Palestinian people.

Since 1948, the major fact of the entire situation in the Middle East is the Palestinian people’s resistance to its destruction. Destruction wanted as much by Zionist expropriators as by the majority of Arab leaders, frightened by the contagious example, for their own peoples, of the fierce resistance of the Palestinians, of the Palestinian revolution.

For decades, despite the massacres, the deportations, the acts of collective punishment, this people is still standing. It has been expelled from its lands. It is dispersed in several countries. And yet, it only asks for one thing: the return of the refugees, the return to the historic territory of Palestine of all those who live in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and throughout the world, of all those who live in the camps in Gaza, in the West Bank, of all those who have been expelled since 1948.

This brochure presents several historical texts of the IV International who, since its foundation in 1938, defends the solution of a single state, lay and democratic, where all the populations of the region would live in equality. In 1947, the IV International said: non, we will not partake in the partition of Palestine. With each movement, with each war, we have said: one Palestine, on all the historical territory of Palestine. The do-gooders and the upholders of international order told us: it’s a utopia, such a proposition isn’t realistic. As is seen in the following texts, for 60 years, this “realism” has only led to more wars, poverty and destruction.

Today, after having suffered dozens of peace plans ending each time in new land expropriation, increased oppression, after having lived through thousands of hours of vain negotiations, the great majority of Palestinians
considers that there is nothing more to expect from any negotiation at all.

The need for a single Palestine enters people’s minds. Sometimes with hesitation, sometimes as an obvious fact, simply because there is no other democratic outcome. The two-state perspective amounts to a continuation of what has existed since the application of the Oslo accords, founders of the Palestinian Authority. It is a perspective of endless confinement, of a death by a thousand cuts, of the official constitution, with the full approval of the UNO and the European Union, of an open-air prison taking the name of “Palestinian State” by pure derision.

**The Positions of the IV International**

You will read the declaration of the IV International of 26 August 2014. We remind therein of our position. Since 1993, with the signing of the Oslo accords – supposed peace accords, which sought to install a Palestinian authority whose principal duty was maintaining order on behalf of the Zionist occupation –, in a declaration by the IV International, we denounced these “peace” accords which prepared new massacres. The result of the Oslo accords, as we’ve written since 1993, has been the creation of a Bantustan for Palestinians submitted to the oppression by the Zionist leaders of Israel and in which the combatants, the Fedayins who had fought the Israeli army for decades, transformed themselves into the police of the Palestinian people.

At every stage, throughout the years, during the 1950’s and 1960’s, in 1967 and 1973, then again up to 1993 and up to today, the IV International has reaffirmed that the solution to the Palestinian question is a single state, on all the Palestinian territory, with all its constituents, Jewish and Arab, in a free state, lay and democratic, based on the equal rights of all its citizens.

The objective of this work is to present the positions and analyses of the IV International. These aren’t to take it or leave it positions. The documents presented establish the facts and, based on the facts and the method of historical materialism, propose a political appreciation of the situation and perspectives.

This appreciation, today confirmed by the work of numerous historians, shows that the partition of Palestine, an act inseparable from the very history of the UNO, opened a period of warfare marked by the mass expulsion of two-thirds of the Palestinian population of the time, an essential condition for the establishment of the Zionist state.

Numerous documents published here also revisit the character of the imperialist domination of Palestine at the time of the British mandate and look back at the role of the Zionist movement.

These documents, in addition to their inherent historical interest, appear useful in the current debates. Indeed, while wars and massacres arise from the partition of Palestine, isn’t it necessary to look back to the very conditions of this partition? We will see that it was in no way unavoidable, and above all that it in no way corresponded to the interests of the populations then found on the Palestinian territory: of the Palestinian population, as of the Jewish population.

For sixty years, the path has been long, complicated, but the analysis and formulation of the IV International, corresponding to the very movement of the revolution, of the combat for the emancipation of the Palestinian people, haven’t they kept their pertinence? Lenin said: “the theory isn’t a dogma, but a guide to action”. In this continuity, the objective of this brochure, by furnishing the elements of analysis, is to contribute to forging or reinforcing the instruments of action. Its content is proposed as a necessary contribution to militant action and to the reinforcement of the sections of the IV International.

The Documents of *La Vérité* on “The IV International and the Palestinian Question” have been grouped into four large parts.

- **A first part brings together**
  "Resolutions and declarations of the IV International".

It’s a selection of nine texts of the IV International from 1947-2014. It’s not an exhaustive survey of all the positions of our current, but simply a few documents (editorials, resolutions, theses...) chosen to bring the permanence and continuity of the IV International’s political positions on Palestine to light. These “raw” materials are published without commentary and thus permit the reader to find here assembled a series of documents
difficultly accessed today. The source of each document will be indicated, permitting easy access.

1 - The Partition of Palestine (editorial in the review Quatrième Internationale) (November-December 1947).

2 - Theses of the Palestinian Trotskyist Group (January 1948).

3 - The War in the Middle East and the Palestinian Constituent (resolution of the international bureau of the organizational Committee for the reconstruction of the IV International) (December 1973).

4 - The Palestinian Question – A declaration of the IV International (International Centre of Reconstruction) (May 1982)

5 - A Declaration of the IV International (International Centre of Reconstruction) (September 1982).

6 - Resolution on the Palestinian Revolution Adopted by the World Conference of the Sections of the IV International-CIR (January 1988)

7 - Declaration of the International Secretariat of the IV International on the Washington Accords (September 1993).

8 - Declaration of the International Secretariat of the IV International after the Boarding of the Flotilla on its Way to Gaza by Israeli Commandos (4 June 2010).

9 - Palestine – Declaration of the International Secretary of the IV International (26 August 2014).

• The second part concerns “Theoretical Contributions and Critical Analyses”.

We have brought together theoretical contributions and critical analyses, which mark important moments in the collective elaboration of the IV International. One will read, notably, several contributions by Pierre Lambert (1970, 1982, 2000, 2004). These consist of session reports of Circles of Marxist Studies (CEM) convoked by the French section of the IV International, of theoretical contributions dating from 2000, 2004 and 2013. We have followed these contributions with three short excerpts by Leon Trotsky dating from 1934, 1937 and 1938 wherein he tackles the “Jewish question”.

1 - Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the Middle East, speech by Pierre Lambert, Circle of Marxist Studies (30 October 1970).

2 - Discourse by Pierre Lambert at the meeting of convoked by the PCI (16 June 1982).

3 - Pierre Lambert – Palestine: Where is the American Protectorate Leading the World? (October 2000).


5 - Pierre Lambert – A Few Reflections for a Marxist Approach to the Palestinian Question (September 2004).

6 - Contribution to the VIII World Congress proposed by two members of the Middle East Commission of the International secretariat (March 2013).

7 - Leon Trotsky – On the “Jewish Problem” (February 1934).

8 - Leon Trotsky – The Jewish Question (18 January 1937).

9 - Leon Trotsky – The Importance of the Jewish Question (4 February 1938)

• The third part concerns “Historical Articles Relating to Events”.

It is composed of six articles concerning particular historical events (1946, 1956, 1958, 1970, 2012, 2014) and which have brought a specific expression of the IV International. For reasons of space, we haven’t published articles concerning the year 1967, since they are essentially repeated in the session reports of the different CEM, which are found in the second part.

1 – The Partition of Palestine (1946).

2 – The International Committee of the IV International Salutes the Hungarian Proletariat... and Condemns the Imperialist Aggression in Egypt (October-November 1956).

3 – Imperialism and Revolution in the Near and Middle East, article by Pierre Lambert, (September 1958).

4 – War and Class Struggle in the Near Orient (La Vérité, n° 548) (June 1970).
5 – Thirty Years Ago, the Sabra and Chatila Massacre Took Place (La Vérité, n° 76) (December 2012).

6 – Gaza Under the Bombs (Letter of the IV International) (15 July 2014).

The fourth and last part brings together “Articles Treating the History of Palestine”.

Published in the theoretical review of the IV International, they provide precise and detailed elements, giving thus an indispensable compliment for understanding the Palestinian question today.

1 – At the Origin of the Partition of Palestine (La Vérité, n° 8[614]) (November 1993).

2 – Notes on the Agrarian and National Question in Palestine (La Vérité, n° 52) (October 2006).

3 – 1947-2007: Sixty Years of the Partition of Palestine (La Vérité, n° 56-57) (September 2007)

4 – Middle East: the Pax Americana, 35 Years After Camp David and 20 Years After Oslo (La Vérité, n° 80) (December 2013).

5 – The Oslo Accords, 21 Years Later (La Vérité, n° 83) (September 2014).

Finally, we have established a critical apparatus permitting easy orientation in this multi-entry work: a chronology, maps, an indicative bibliography, an index of cited names, a summary of each of the parts and a detailed summary of the brochure as a whole.