

# Manifesto

FOR A

MOVEMENT FOR A REVOLUTIONARY  
SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL  
-THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL -



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The Trotskyist Fraction - Fourth International is composed of the: PTS (Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas), Argentina; LTS-CC (Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo), México; LOR-CI (Liga Obrera Revolucionaria por la Cuarta Internacional), Bolivia; LER-QI (Liga Estratégica Revolucionária), Brazil; PTR (Partido de Trabajadores Revolucionarios), Chile; LTS (Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo), Venezuela; LRS (Liga de la Revolución Socialista), Costa Rica; CcC (Clase Contra Clase), Spain; Grupo RIO (Revolutionäre Internationalistische Organisation), Germany; Militants of the FT-CI in Uruguay; Militants of the FT in the CCR/Platform Z in the NPA, France.

# Build a Movement for a Revolutionary Socialist International – The Fourth International!

The world capitalist system is going through the sixth year of an economic, political and social crisis of historic dimensions. Under the blows of the crisis and the attacks of the governments and the capitalists, the struggle of the exploited is returning to the political stage.

The 'Arab Spring' opened a new, upward cycle of the class struggle, after decades of retreat and a bourgeois offensive. The resistance of workers, young people and the poor is going through the centres of world capitalism, mainly in countries of the European Union subjected to austerity plans, like Greece, Spain or Portugal.

From the uprisings in the Arab world to the students' struggle in Chile, going through the 'Indignados' in Spain, the young people of the movement '#yosoy132 in Mexico', the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, the Taksim Square mobilisations in Turkey and the hundreds of thousands that flooded the cities of Brazil, young people are acting like a sounding board for the social contradictions, in many cases, anticipating class conflicts.

The workers have been exercising increasing leadership. Some examples of this growing working-class intervention are the work stoppages and general strikes in Greece and Portugal, the resistance against layoffs in France, the conflicts in big multinational corporations in China, the explosion of hatred by workers in Bangladesh and other Asian countries against brutal conditions of exploitation, and the big miners' strikes in South Africa, which are the beginning of the workers' movement breaking from the African National Congress and the leadership of COSATU.

Although the crisis has not yet fully struck in Latin America, the region has been transformed into a setting of big mobilisations, mainly of young people and

students, as we have seen in Brazil and Chile. In the workers' movement, we are witnessing the first stages of the development of trade-union and political phenomena, with a different rhythm and scope in various countries. This is taking place in the context of a progressive exhaustion of the 'post-neoliberal' governments, like that of Evo Morales, that of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, or of *Chavismo* without Chávez in Venezuela.

This new situation that is beginning highlights the crisis of leadership that the workers' movement is enduring, but, at the same time, it opens up big opportunities to begin to solve it, that is, to build strong revolutionary parties based on the working class and to advance in setting up an International of the social revolution, that, for us, entails the refoundation of the Fourth International, on revolutionary bases. This Manifesto is entirely at the service of this perspective.

## A historic crisis of capitalism

Unlike the 'spring of the peoples' of 1848, the current wave of struggles is not a result of the labour pains of capitalism, but a consequence of its decline. Despite the neoliberal offensive of the last three decades and the capitalist restoration in the former workers' states, capitalism has been unable to find the road to a new cycle of prolonged growth. The contradictions between the greater socialisation of production and the ever more concentrated appropriation of the social wealth produced, and between the internationalisation of the productive forces and the national borders, have erupted again, taking the system to a crisis of historic magnitude.

With its increasing militarism, systematic looting, anarchic utilisation of the natural resources, and environmental contamination, capitalism in its decline not only threatens the continuation of life on the planet, but subjects millions of workers to unbearable conditions of exploitation and precariousness, dragging to unemployment and poverty a large number of those who have only their labour power at their disposal in order to make a living.

The policy of the governments, both *neo-Keynesian* and those making adjustments, is to make the workers, the young people and the impoverished middle classes pay for the crisis, while the banks and the big businesses get billions of dollars to survive and continue making lucrative deals. The biggest groups of employers are taking advantage of the crisis to increase the rate of exploitation, benefitting from the creation of an enormous industrial reserve army of the unemployed.

With the government bailouts of the big banks and corporations, and the injection of money into the financial system, the capitalist governments and the central banks have been able to avert the perspective of a crash, after the fall of

Lehman Brothers. However, these mechanisms have not led to economic recovery, but to a recession or low growth in the central countries and a slowing down in the emerging countries, which, in turn, coexists with the creation of new time bombs: the enormous government debts that, on a recurring basis, seem to take the economy to the edge of the precipice. In the United States, the difficulties in removing the Federal Reserve's monetary stimuli, or the fear created by the recurring possibility that Congress will not manage to raise the government's debt ceiling, show that catastrophic scenarios have not disappeared from the horizon.

Neither China nor any country from the so-called emerging states, with an economic structure dependent on international capital, can act as an engine capable of pulling capitalism out of its crisis, when the crisis has its epicentre in the heart of the imperialist system.

Despite the disparities, the crisis has a truly global scope. The slowing down of growth in China can affect not only countries that depend on China's demand for raw materials, like a large part of Latin America, but it can cause the explosion of profound domestic social contradictions developed in the decades that the capitalist restoration has lasted, and bring the largest proletariat on earth to the centre of the stage.

There is not yet any traditional or 'emerging' power able to challenge the United States for international hegemony. Nor has the crisis led to big commercial wars or to the governments adopting openly protectionist policies. But that does not mean that there are no rivalries or competition.

We revolutionary Marxists are diametrically opposed to those who consider that the inter-imperialist disputes, that in the twentieth century led to two World Wars, are a thing of the past, and that the bourgeoisie will always find negotiated solutions to the crisis. Or that China can peacefully become an imperialist country and displace the United States, without the US trying to keep its great power privileges, or, on the contrary, China being colonised by the dominant imperialist countries without offering any resistance.

If what characterises the imperialist epoch is the struggle between different powers, the conditions created by the capitalist crisis, far from favouring harmonious solutions, are exacerbating the tendencies to interstate tensions and to militarism.

The United States, the main imperialist power, is continuing its decline, after the defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan, in the context of the emergence of regional powers – like Russia and China – that are pursuing their own aims. This loss of leadership was seen in the fact that the Obama administration had to back down from launching a unilateral military attack on Syria and accept the diplomatic solution proposed by Russia, and in the enormous political division that threatens to paralyse the Democratic administration.

But, despite its decline, the United States will attempt by every means to reassert its dominant role, by taking advantage of the strengths that it still keeps – like its military superiority and the dollar's strength as a reserve currency – by making use of the bigger difficulties that confront its competitors, especially Germany, that has to wrestle with the crisis of the EU. That supposes more aggressive imperialist policies – as is seen in the United States' attempt to recover ground in Latin

America or in its diplomatic and military turn towards the region of Pacific Asia, to contain the rise of China – which could result in regional conflicts, and, possibly, lead to wars between the powers, in case the economic crisis took a new leap.

# The Workers' Movement and Revolutionary Leadership

The return of the workers' movement to the scene and the continuation of the world crisis set out the perspective of bigger confrontations between classes. However, despite the willingness for struggle that the workers are showing around the world, at the head of their organisations they still have union bureaucracies, whose role is containing the workers' and people's anger against the capitalists and their governments. For this, they limit themselves to calling isolated mobilisations and actions, thus avoiding the perspective of real general strikes, capable of restraining the plans of the bourgeoisie, at the same time that they condemn the harsh struggles of the vanguard of the workers to ostracism. In this way, they allow the adjustments to happen and prepare the road for defeat.

The working class enters the fight carrying the consequences of a long stage of the bosses' offensive under the neoliberal program. The bourgeoisie has in its favour, the unprecedented internal fragmentation of the workers' ranks, to which is added the capitalist restoration in the former bureaucratised workers' states and the disappearance of the socialist revolution from the horizon of the exploited, a result of the identification of the Stalinist regimes with socialism in the minds of the workers.

This crisis of the workers' movement has deep roots in the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary processes of the twentieth century, among them, the bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union, the imposition of Stalinism as 'really existing socialism', and the preservation of the social democracy as a reformist leadership of the workers' movement in the West after the Second World War.

The reformist leaderships prevented partial victories – like the workers' states that emerged after the Second World War, the conquests of the welfare state and even the imperialist defeat in the war in Vietnam – from being put at the service of the strategic goal of the international proletarian revolution.

During the neoliberal offensive, the working class saw how its trade union and political organisations were collaborating with the bourgeois attack. Capital made use of this, while at the same time weakening the interventions that it had made in the past and therefore the material basis for reformism. The most important example of this collaboration was the passage of the Stalinist bureaucracy to the

camp of the capitalist restoration. Social democracy turned to social liberalism and became a direct agent of the bourgeois offensive, implementing the neoliberal counter-reforms. The communist parties followed a similar course, many times governing together with the social democracy.

The setback in the levels of consciousness and organisation in recent decades is a result of a prolonged crisis of revolutionary leadership. The accumulated experience of the workers' movement had its greatest expressions in the first four Congresses of the Third International, prior to its Stalinist degeneration, and afterwards, in the Fourth International founded by Trotsky.

However, the Fourth International, that represented the alternative to Stalinism and the continuation of revolutionary Marxism, did not become an organisation with mass influence. A combination of factors, among them, the murder of Trotsky, the contradictory outcome of the war, that ended up giving back prestige to the Stalinist bureaucracy because of the victory of the USSR over Nazism, the obstruction of the revolutionary dynamic in the central countries, and the strengthening of reformism on the basis of the partial development of the productive forces starting from the destruction of the war, meant that Trotskyism remained marginalised and faced pressures from the reformist, Stalinist, and Third-World tendencies.

In the period 1951-1953, Trotskyism became a centrist movement, and, instead of again updating the programmatic and strategic bases in the new conditions, it ended up adapting itself to Stalinist, nationalist or petit – bourgeois leaderships, from Tito, Mao, and Castro to the Algerian National Liberation Front. In this context, where what took precedence was the break with the revolutionary tradition, there were correct partial struggles and programmatic conquests that allowed preserving certain threads of continuity, although these were being weakened, up to practically being cut, after the neoliberal offensive and the capitalist restoration.

Paradoxically, today, when the working class has begun to intervene more clearly with its own methods of struggle in different regions of the world, in the context of the capitalist crisis, a big sector of the international left is deepening its scepticism concerning the revolutionary potential of the workers. This scepticism has led a large part of the organisations that claim to be Trotskyist to build broad anti-capitalist parties, without roots in the class struggle or a strategic setting of boundaries, or to adapt themselves to bourgeois nationalist and populist leaderships, like Chavismo or left-reformist variants, like the Front de Gauche and SYRIZA, replacing the strategy of proletarian revolution with that of 'anti-austerity' or 'anti-neoliberal' governments.

In this context of the crisis of revolutionary Marxism, and, facing the lack of workers' alternatives, in recent years, a variety of tendencies inspired by Mexican Zapatismo, influenced by autonomism and anarchism, that deny the necessity of building a revolutionary organisation and reject the perspective of the seizure of power by the proletariat, has developed. However, despite their rhetoric, these tendencies have mostly adapted themselves to bourgeois populist government variants.

The capitalist crisis gives us the opportunity to intervene boldly in the processes of class struggle and in the working-class phenomena of trade-union and political

reorganisation, to advance in building strong revolutionary and internationalist parties and to take steps towards setting up a workers' International. From our point of view, this World Party of the Social Revolution should be the Fourth International re-founded on revolutionary bases, with a program of transitional demands that will allow the proletariat to become a hegemonic force, capable of putting in place an alliance with the urban poor, the impoverished peasants, and all those who are exploited and oppressed, in order to defeat bourgeois power and give a truly progressive solution to the capitalist crisis. Failing that, it will be the ruling classes, that, in their own way, with poverty, wars and destruction, will find a solution, as they already did, with the two World Wars of the past century.

# For a fighting internationalism and for a Movement for a Revolutionary Socialist International – The Fourth International

The need for proletarian internationalism arises from the worldwide character of the productive forces and of the working class itself, that must put its common interests above the national borders and the divisions that the bourgeoisie imposes.

The experience of the social revolutions of the twentieth century showed in actions what Marx had already pointed out in the nineteenth century: that it is impossible to build socialism in just one country. In order to defeat imperialism, it is necessary that the national victories that the proletariat gets are put at the disposal of the world revolution, with the objective of conquering the 'realm of freedom', that is, a communist society based on rational, democratic and international planning of the economy, that will end the exploitation of wage labour and all oppression.

The different imperialisms, in addition to their national 'General Staffs', have put their international institutions at the service of maintaining the oppression of the people and preventing revolution. Historically, they have responded with all the means at their disposal – political, economic and military – to defeat the attempts of the workers to expropriate the capitalists and build a new state. As the Russian Revolution has already shown, planning the conquest of power in a country involves having the solidarity of the international workers' movement, that will allow



keeping the power and expanding the revolution. For that reason, internationalism is not an abstract principle, but a strategic necessity.

The stage that commenced when the capitalist world crisis and the new phenomena of the class struggle began sets out, with more urgency than ever before, the task of putting the Fourth International in place again as a fighting organisation of the workers' and young people's vanguard.

The Fracción Trotskista-Cuarta Internacional emerged at the end of the 1980s in a stage of setbacks, marked by the offensive of imperialism and the capitalist restoration in the former Workers' States, at a time when most of the organisations that were claiming Trotskyism, abandoned it. We established ourselves as a principled regrouping, with the objective of defending the theory, program and strategy of revolution, seeking to deepen our presence in the workers' movement and the vanguard of the young people, and develop an internationalist practice. We are aware that no organisation of those currently existing that claim to be revolutionary can by itself resolve this task of historic magnitude. Against all sectarian self-promotion, we maintain that the building of revolutionary workers' parties and the re-foundation of the Fourth International will not be a product of the evolutionary development of our organisations, nor of our international tendency, but a result of the fusion of the left wings of the Trotskyist organisations and groups of the workers' and young people's vanguard that are oriented towards the social revolution, that will tend to emerge and become widespread in the heat of the crisis and the class struggle.

However, it is not a matter of waiting passively for these events to take place, but of reaching them with the best theoretical, programmatic, strategic and organisational preparation possible. With this perspective, we are proposing to open a discussion on the need to promote a Movement for a Revolutionary Socialist International, as a step to advance towards the re-foundation of the Fourth International on revolutionary bases.

We are making this proposal especially to the comrades of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) of France, both to those who, with us, make up Platform Z, and to those who are grouped together in Platform Y, who see that it is necessary to confront the policy of the majority leadership of the NPA – which is to establish a permanent bloc with Mélenchon's reformist Front de Gauche – and to the comrades of the United Secretariat from other countries who are confronting the majority's orientation of reproducing this type of bloc with reformists, and those who are resisting the line of subordination to SYRIZA in Greece; to the leaders and workers who constitute the left wing of the miners of Huanuni in Bolivia<sup>1</sup>, with whom we have been carrying out a fight against the pressures from

1 On October 11th, 2013, there were early elections in the SMTMH mineworkers' union of Huanuni after three of its leaders who had been elected a few months earlier on an anti-government ticket were obliged to resign. The elections were won by the list backed by the section of the COB bureaucracy led by Pedro Montes, which is aligned to the governing MAS party. The result represented a set back not only for the Huanuni workers but for the initiative to form a Workers' Party. This situation is the product of the pressure brought to bear by the Morales government on the workers' vanguard, which includes the trial of 22 workers for incidents that took place during the COB strike in May 2013, and the prosecution of workers who attempted to organise cooperatives. The atmosphere of intimidation created by these attacks on workers' rights helped to facilitate the triumph of the official list.

Unfortunately, the trade union leaders who had won the elections at the beginning of 2013 on the slogan of the independence of the union from the government made the mistake of not standing in the October elections. Thus, the vanguard was left with no opposition candidate to vote for and this gave victory to the lists supported by the MAS.

the government and its allies in the COB bureaucracy to reverse the process of founding a Party of the Workers, based effectively on the unions, and independent of the employers' government, state and parties; to the comrades of the Partido Obrero of Argentina and to the Coordinating Committee for the Re-foundation of the Fourth International, with whom we make up, in Argentina, the Front of the Left and the Workers, and with whom we have agreed on different actions in the national and international class struggle; and to all those organisations of the revolutionary Left, or of the workers' and young people's vanguard, that seek a road towards the revolution.

The revolutionary re-grouping that we need now cannot be based only on general principles, but must proceed from agreements on the big strategic matters that the capitalist crisis has already put in debate on the worldwide left. This manifesto does not attempt to be a finished program, but to offer for consideration the main strategic and programmatic cores that, together with the test of political practice and the class struggle, define, from our point of view, a truly revolutionary strategy on the field of the left. On this basis, we are calling for debate and practical action in common, in the class struggle.

## The importance of the transitional demands to confront the capitalist crisis

The capitalist crisis makes transitional slogans more current than ever to prevent the employers and their governments from unloading the costs onto the workers. Facing the closures of companies and cuts that threaten to split the ranks of the working class, the policy of the bureaucratic and reformist leaderships is to accept layoffs and, at best, fight for getting more severance pay. We saw this, for instance, at Continental and other factories in France in 2009, where the workers led struggles with radical methods but with a minimum program. Unfortunately, none of the organisations of the French far left is consistently raising a perspective that goes beyond bourgeois legality or that calls private ownership and profit into question.

The capitalists offer bankruptcies or losses as justification for the layoffs and closures. To confront this blackmail, it is necessary to propose **the opening of the company accounts and the abolition of commercial secrecy.**

Against the policy of resignation in the face of the closures of factories, we raise **expropriation without compensation** of the enterprises that close or drastically

reduce their jobs and their operation under **workers' control**. No intervention of officials of the bourgeois state is going to look after the interests of the workers; only workers' control of production, as a school of economic planning, can prepare an alternative to capitalist anarchy.

The workers of Zanon in Argentina, who, during the 2001 crisis, seized the factory and put it to producing and have now had more than ten years of workers' management, are an example for all the workers that are now facing the crisis, and they have already inspired the workers of the Vio.me factory in Greece. Zanon was able to survive as a cooperative because there was growth of the Argentinian economy. But its strong point was that it always fought for a program for the whole working class, so that the exploiters would pay for the crisis, against establishing cooperatives as an end in itself, where the pressure of capitalist competition imposes self-exploitation of the working class. We revolutionaries fight for the nationalisation of entire branches of production and services under workers' control and for planning at the service of the interests of the workers and the groups of the poor. Experiences like those of Zanon, or like that of the workers of Phillips Dreux in France (although it was subsequently defeated) and Vio.me in Greece, have great educational value, because they show that the workers do not need the capitalists, at the same time that they are establishing positions from which to promote the struggle against bourgeois ownership.

These demands, together with **distribution of the hours of work among all the workers without affecting wages**, keep their total topicality, especially in the countries most affected by the crisis, like Greece, or in countries like France where the employers, with backing from the government, are resorting to layoffs and closures to recover their profitability.

The big banks have received billions of dollars from government bailouts, which they are using to continue speculating and increasing their profits. In view of this, the **nationalisation of banking and its unification in a single state-owned system of credit and investment**, corresponding to the interests of the **workers and the poor, that will protect the deposits of the small savers** who will be the first to be affected in the event of a banking crisis, is proposed.

In addition to defending the workers' standard of living, this program is aimed at the proletariat winning, as allies, the middle-class groups, ruined and dispossessed by capital, and the most submerged strata of the urban poor. In order to carry it out, the working class will have to take self-defence measures, which will include, eventually, the organisation of workers' militias to respond to the attack of the capitalists, whether from the repressive forces or from paramilitary bands like the shock troops of the European extreme right wing.

Although the liquidation of bourgeois ownership of the means of production will only be possible in the context of a widespread rising of the workers, the demands of expropriation without compensation of branches of production under workers' control have a transitional character, because they prepare the working class to resolve this task, so they are indissolubly linked and lead to the perspective of workers' power.

# The role of democratic demands in the struggle for hegemony and workers' power

Before the eyes of millions of workers and young people, it is becoming increasingly obvious that, above parliamentary forms, what takes precedence is the despotic character of the rule of capital. This is seen in the tendency to strengthen the power of the executive. In the European Union, the unelected bourgeois institutions, like the Brussels bureaucracy, under strong influence from Germany, or the European Central Bank, are acquiring greater influence. These institutions are liquidating aspects of 'national sovereignty' of the indebted states, by imposing economic programs of adjustment and auditing their budgets, as the IMF was doing in Latin America in the decade of the 1990s, and they are making decisions that condemn millions of people to suffer years of poverty. In turn, these plans of the Troika are being implemented with the endorsement of the national governments.

The crisis of the traditional parties and the tendencies to 'anti-politics' are part of a more general process of exhaustion of the bourgeois democratic regimes, that have endured a lot of discredit, as their servility towards the capitalists is practically naked.

One of the most acute expressions of this discontent is the crisis of the regime in Spain, which includes centrifugal tendencies that threaten the very continuity of the Spanish bourgeoisie's control. Another example is Italy, the third-largest economy of the Eurozone, that has been bearing a political crisis of huge proportions, which is far from over despite the formation of the national unity government between the centre-left and centre-right of Enrico Letta.

The deterioration of bourgeois democracy in the face of the crisis was also expressed in the embryonic Bonapartist tendencies, promoted by the leadership of the EU, that led to the formation of 'technocratic' or 'national unity' governments (like that of Papademos in Greece and Mario Monti and Letta in Italy) to try to implement the adjustment plans and the so-called 'structural reforms' at the service of capital.

In Latin America, we see the case of Chile, where the anachronistic regime, heir to the Pinochet transition, has given rise to the youth mobilisation that is currently combined with the revival of workers' struggles. In Brazil, governed by the PT of Lula and Dilma Rousseff, massive demonstrations have highlighted the exhaustion of a political regime divorced from the needs of the masses.

During the last 30 years, the geographic extension of bourgeois democracy to a large part of the semi-colonial world, as well as the broadening of formal political rights for 'citizens', particularly in the central countries (in contrast to the sustained persecution and xenophobia towards immigrants), was the cover for the offensive of capital that consisted of a sustained attack on the workers' and masses' living standards.

The alternation in power of the traditional parties does not include more than minimal variants of the same program of adjustment and diminishing of the social rights, as was seen, beginning with the neoliberal turn of all the social democratic and bourgeois nationalist parties in the recent decades, and as is seen again now, in the face of the crisis.

The ‘representatives of the people’ increasingly appear as what they are, an immense caste of bourgeois politicians and officials, with generous expenses, who use their positions to guarantee their personal businesses, while they demand of the masses, again and again, austerity measures for ‘the good of the nation’.

This is accompanied by the deepening of Bonapartist traits. Next to the greater pre-eminence of the individual executive power, mechanisms of social control are growing at unusual levels. Individual rights are being overpowered by appealing to the rhetoric of ‘security’ that has become the argument *par excellence* for criminalising poverty, persecuting immigrants, and financing enormous domestic intelligence apparatuses to keep an eye on the population. The revelations made by Edward Snowden have exposed not only the worldwide extension of the mechanisms of control and espionage, but also their vital character for capitalist domination, which was made clear by Obama’s resolute defence of the massive surveillance system.

In this context, it is not accidental that the caste of bourgeois politicians and officials that is imposing the structural adjustments stirs up the discontent of the broad masses and has become a symbol, on the level of the regime, of the increase of social inequality.

This criticism has been taken up by the *Indignados* in Spain, Occupy in the US, and ‘Yo soy 132’ in Mexico, although with autonomist illusions inherited from the neo-Zapatista ideologies, from theoreticians like Tony Negri, advocates of the slogan *Another world is possible*. These illusions marked the youth movements of the end of the 1990s and of the beginning of the twenty-first century, their weakness being that they didn’t attack the class character of the regimes and of the governing caste.

However, questioning these ‘democracies for the rich’ has coexisted and still coexists with the idea that bourgeois democracy is the only democracy possible, a vision strengthened by its extension to new countries and the bureaucratisation of the former workers’ states.

Facing this crisis, the populist variants of the right wing appeal to ‘anti-political’ feeling, in order to channel it and keep it within the limits of the capitalist state, while autonomist tendencies lead to the impotence of refusing to fight for the conquest of political power.

Big groups on the left that claim to be revolutionary have yielded to democratic illusions. Before dissolving itself in the NPA, the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire had taken the dictatorship of the proletariat out of its program, and the majority of the leadership had adopted as a strategy the struggle for ‘democracy to the end’.

For their part, the LIT-CI and the UIT-CI took as their own the theory-program of the ‘democratic revolution’ which separates democratic demands from the perspective of the struggle for workers’ power. Contrary to this separation, the struggle for the demands that question the bourgeois regime is indissolubly bound to

the struggle for the democratic-structural demands. In semi-colonial countries you cannot have a more generous democracy than that which pursues the agrarian revolution and national independence, and which puts forward a programme that doesn't confine itself within the limits of capitalist property.

We revolutionary Marxists raise radical democratic slogans and transitional democratic demands, handed down by the Paris Commune of 1871, among them, that all the officials and elected officers should earn a salary equal to that of an average worker; the ability immediately to revoke mandates for all elected officers; the elimination of the Bonapartist institution of the presidency of the republic, as well as the oligarchic Senate Chamber, and the formation of a single Chamber that will merge the executive and legislative powers, and that will be elected by truly universal suffrage, where all the residents older than 15 years will vote, without distinction of their nationality of origin; the election of all judges by universal suffrage and the establishment of trials by juries, the separation of the church from the state.

In Argentina, the PTS used part of this program not only in the election campaigns, but also when it occupied the parliamentary seat in the Province of Neuquén, as part of the Front of the Left, proposing that the Deputies should earn the same as a teacher, tying this slogan to the struggles of the workers to strengthen those struggles in the workers' confrontation with the regime.

This group of measures is oriented toward accelerating the experience of the masses with their democratic illusions and to facilitating the road to workers' power. The transitional character of these demands arises from the fact that their effective realisation would lead to confronting the regime and the capitalist state. But bourgeois hegemony is armoured by coercion, by a whole series of armed detachments and apparatuses of repression, that constitute its fundamental support. For that reason, we revolutionaries raise these democratic transitional slogans, with the perspective of the struggle to destroy the bourgeois state, its permanent army and its police forces and replace it by a workers' state, based on organisations of direct democracy and workers' and people's militias.

## Against the European Union of the capitalists! For the United Socialist States of Europe!

From the initial formation of the EU, we have pointed out the reactionary character of this imperialist and anti-worker bloc that was built to protect the interests

of its two main superpowers – Germany and France. The EU incorporated Eastern Europe as its backyard and transformed it into semi-colonies, as a reservoir of qualified cheap labour, above all for German capitalism. This contributed to the lowering of labour costs throughout Europe, attacking previous workers' victories, as shown by the labour flexibility imposed by Germany.

Against those who claimed that the union was progressive and that the adoption of the euro was the first step to more extended state unification, we maintained that this clashed with the separate national interests of the European imperialist bourgeoisie and that it would be impossible to transform the bloc into a supra-national state. The crisis clearly demonstrated the objective limitations of the creation of the EU, which are expressed in the centrifugal tendencies, with a strong nucleus around Germany and the northern economies and a weaker one around the Mediterranean and southern countries. For now, the European bourgeoisie, Germany in particular, has focused on maintaining the EU. The EU brings huge benefits to Germany's corporations and Europe continues to be the main destination for German exports. But the EU cannot continue like it has. There is already a dispute over redefining the role of its members in which Germany is pushing to impose its own terms to advance the semi-colonization of peripheral countries like Greece and Portugal.

Against this backdrop, two positions, equally reactionary and bourgeois, have emerged. On one side, there are those that reject the austerity plans and suggest the possibility of reform and democratising the EU. Most of the European left holds this position, which expresses an adaptation to a capitalist Europe. For example, this is the program of Syriza that transformed the defence of the EU and the euro into its main goal and generated illusions that it was possible to negotiate austerity plans with the Troika.

On the other side, the German imperialist offensive has encouraged the growth of nationalist and extreme right-wing tendencies that call for the abandonment of the euro and a return to national currencies, making a demagogic defence of their national states connected to their xenophobic, racist, and anti-immigrant policies. Some minor sectors of the left, such as the Greek Communist Party, take a similar stance, creating the illusion that a solution favourable for the workers within the framework of national capitalism is possible.

Against the utopia of democratising the EU that some so-called progressives advance, ignoring the EU's imperialist and reactionary character, and against the extreme right demagogy that stirs up chauvinist hatred with the objective of dividing the working class, not only in the EU countries, but also among native and immigrant workers to subordinate the working class to sectors of the national bourgeoisie, workers must have a clear program that is independent of the bosses so that the capitalists are the ones who pay for their crisis.

To take on the capitalist crisis in Europe and its pro-austerity governments and to overcome the fragmentation of the working class, to fight the xenophobia and anti-immigrant policies of the European governments, to win over the lower middle class hit by the crisis that otherwise could become the support base for the extreme right and eventually for fascism, it is necessary to fight

against the different austerity governments and against the Troika and other EU imperialist institutions, with the perspective of the Socialist United States of Europe. This is the only progressive solution for the workers.

# The Arab Spring, the struggle of the Palestinian people and the Permanent Revolution

The Arab Spring in the Middle East (and in Northern Africa ) became the highest point of the class struggle, engulfing revolutionary processes in Egypt and Tunisia, imperialist intervention in Libya and civil war in Syria. The contradiction between the democratic aspirations of the movements and the region's economic and geo-political importance for the United States, Israel and other imperialist powers, has led to a series of programmatic and strategic debates among the left internationally.

The struggle against Ghadafi's dictatorship and the imperialist intervention in Libya began an important debate within the international left in which those such as the LIT-CI and Izquierda Socialista in Argentina adopted a class-collaborationist strategy in the name of a 'democratic revolution' and supported NATO's military intervention under a humanitarian disguise.

Far from being democratic revolutions, these controlled transitions framed by the imperialist need to maintain the regional status quo and the greedy plundering of the region's countries denied the fulfilment of the profound demands of the exploited.

The Arab bourgeoisies are showing their historic incapacity to satisfy the demands for social and national liberation, which was reflected previously by Nasserism, Baathism and the National Liberation Front in Algeria.

In countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the working class has played an important role in the struggle against dictatorial regimes. In Egypt, the most advanced sectors, such as the workers of the Al Mahalla textile factory, were the vanguard of the opposition against Mubarak and later against the companies connected to the military and the anti-strike laws.

They also fought against the neoliberal policies of the moderate Islamic government led by the Muslim Brotherhood which started the historic massive mobilisations that flooded Egypt during July 2013, to which the army responded by trying to stop any revolutionary development and organising a preventive coup, erecting



a new bonapartist, anti-worker and pro-imperialist government, aided by figures from the opposition. It even co-opted a main leader of the independent unions that had been formed after Mubarak's fall.

The coup d'état in Egypt, which had the support of the liberal bourgeoisie and sectors that presented themselves as progressive like the Tamarod movement, shows that the democratic revolution failed because of class collaborationist policies that divided formal democratic demands from structural ones and from the struggle for worker's power.

All the Islamic organisations that reached power – such as Annahd Party in Tunisia and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt – are bourgeois forces that preach a mix of religious fanaticism, clientelistic populism and neoliberal economics. Revolutionaries combat these policies from a working class and anti-imperialist point of view and not by building alliances with the liberal and secular bourgeoisie or their representatives.

The dynamics of the movement in Egypt show that there cannot be a democratic revolution without giving permanent answers to demands related to the living conditions of the masses, and that these cannot be achieved without ending all imperialist oppression. This is the first structural democratic question that must be resolved by the revolution and that can only be guided to the end by the working class.

We took up the formal democratic demands that have been a driving force in the process of the Arab Spring, above all the struggle against the pro-imperialist dictatorship and for a free and sovereign Constituent Assembly, because of their contribution to the development of the experience of the masses with their illusions in a democratic bourgeoisie and because they can facilitate the emergence of organs of self-determination.

We do this within the framework of a transitional program that ties the most significant and immediate demands of the masses to structural democratic demands like the liberation from imperialist chains, thus presenting a perspective that entails the conquest of power by a government of the workers, the peasants and the poor masses.

In the case of open civil wars like Libya, one cannot separate the military struggle against the dictators from the struggle against imperialism, nor relegate to second place the question of which class is dominating the process and what is their social content. The subordination of the political to the military leads to interpreting the success of the NATO intervention in toppling Ghaddafi as a 'triumph' of the movement of the masses. This took place at a time when the United States and other powers were jumping on the anti-dictatorship bandwagon in order to win new allies following regime changes in order to prevent the democracy movements from taking on a 'permanent' dynamic. In other words, they aimed to keep the movements from transforming into a struggle against the bourgeois and imperialist state.

In Syria those who side with the 'rebels' without political reservation, or refuse to put forward a strategy independent of the pro-imperialist rebel leaderships maintained by the allies of the United States, are making the same mistakes. In

the western countries this policy has prevented an open struggle against the intervention, acceding to the imperialist propaganda that this was on humanitarian grounds.

In general, in the case of imperialist aggression or occupation of a semi-colonial country, as occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan, revolutionaries are for the defeat of the aggressors and take the military side of the oppressed nation, without politically subordinating ourselves to the leadership, whoever it turns out to be. We fight for the working class and the youth of the imperialist nations to oppose actively the bourgeoisie's military adventures. Any imperialist advance overseas reinforces the capacity of the governments of the aggressor countries to attack their own working classes.

We also denounce the converse position held by Chavist and other populist currents, which defends the Ghadafi and Assad dictatorships, presenting them as progressive 'anti-imperialist' regimes. In Libya, we supported the armed uprising against the Ghadafi dictatorship, a tyrannical and pro-imperialist regime that launched a civil war to crush the popular rebellion and maintain control of the state apparatus and the privileges that arose from the distribution of the petroleum earnings.

At the same time, we condemned the NATO intervention and the pro-imperialist politics of the National Transitional Council as well as the reactionary aspects of the Islamist organisations. In Syria, we are in favour of the revolutionary overthrow of the Assad regime and against any form of intervention by imperialist countries or their regional allies; this means that no support should be given to the pro-imperialist leaders of the 'rebel' groups, like the Free Syrian Army.

These events demonstrate that more than ever it is necessary to fight for the emergence of the proletariat as a social and political force that is capable of leading the masses of the oppressed and exploited, and that struggles against the dictatorships and towards the objective of taking political power.

The struggle of the Palestinian people against the oppression of the zionist state is inseparable from the uprisings in the Arab world. As revolutionaries, we defend the right of the Palestinian people to the national self-determination that they have been denied by imperialism and zionism. Israel treats the minority Arab-Israelis as second class citizens and strongly opposes the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their lands since these would objectively question the exclusively Jewish character of the state.

This is why we defend the right of return for all Palestinian refugees who were expelled from their land by the Zionist colonisation, and we condemn the military occupation in the West Bank and the expansion of Israeli settlements. We are against the false hope of the two-state solution and the reactionary strategy of the Islamic leaderships, who aim to establish a theocratic state. We're fighting for the dismantling of the Israeli state as a pro-imperialist and colonial enclave, and for a single Palestinian state that includes all of the historic territory, for a workers' and socialist Palestine where Arabs and Jews can live in peace.

The Arab revolution can only triumph as a permanent revolution, that is, by the workers taking power with the support of the poor masses through their organs

of struggle. Only this power (that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with the urban and rural oppressed masses) can guarantee and complete the structural democratic tasks of the revolution: the liberation from imperialism and the struggle against its regional agent, the colonialist Israeli state, with the objective of establishing a Federation of Socialist Republics throughout the region.

## The fight against imperialism and for the political independence of the working class in Latin America

Between the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century, Latin America experienced a period of social struggles, primarily conducted by the allies of the proletariat: the impoverished city and rural populations and the most exploited sectors of society like the unemployed in Argentina. The result of these mobilisations and uprisings was the fall of the neoliberal governments that supported the Washington consensus. In their place self-proclaimed 'progressive', popular or nationalist governments took power.

These governments benefited from a decade of exceptional economic growth. During this period they used their income (agricultural in Argentina, mining in Bolivia and from oil in Venezuela) to develop domestic business sectors through subsidies, low fares, devaluations, etc., but they didn't upgrade the industrial and transport infrastructure and the employers continued to accrue enormous profits. Furthermore, they used the state for their own benefit and to create a friendly business class, as the recent corruption scandals have shown.

Now that the effects of the financial crisis are slowing down the economy, these governments are showing their true anti-working class character. Cristina Kirchner in Argentina is confronting protests demanding an increase of salaries and against inflation and the tax on working class salaries. In Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro has completed a mega-devaluation and is negotiating with the leaders of the past coup. Evo Morales has unleashed an anti-worker offensive in Bolivia in order to defend the neoliberal pensions system. In Brazil, protests at fare increases, corruption and increasing inequality were met with repression by the government, with the result that hundreds of thousands more people took to the streets in the largest demonstrations of recent times.

With the post-neoliberal governments running out of steam, the working class has entered the scene, giving rise to trade union and political reorganisation. In

November 2012 Argentina was paralysed by the first general strike in ten years of the Kirchner governments. The general strike called by the CGT, the union that had been a pillar of the Kirchner government, and the opposition wing of the CTA was used by the workers to express their dissatisfaction. The anti-bureaucratic sectors of the unions and the left, including the PTS, participated in the main actions on the day of the strike. The divisions in the Peronist government, together with the beginning of a process of rupture between the working class and the government and the widespread dissatisfaction with the trade union bureaucracy, represents an opportunity to take steps towards the creation of a revolutionary workers' party in Argentina.

In May 2013 in Bolivia, there was a struggle against changes in the pension system initiated by the miners, a key sector of the workers' movement, that lasted over two weeks and represented an important political crisis for the Morales government. This high point of struggle coincided with the call for the creation of Bolivian Workers' Party. Sponsored primarily by the Huanuni miners, this project faces multiple obstacles. One section of the COB trade union federation bureaucracy connected to the Morales government is directly boycotting it, while another section is trying to prevent it from being linked to the processes of the class struggle, and therefore subject to workers' democracy and the control of the rank file.

In June 2013, after the wave of historic mobilisations that swept Brazil, the CUT trade union federation and other unions called for a national day of protests. Even though it didn't reach the dimensions of a national strike, it was the first action of a working class character in many decades. Although the leadership of the CUT attempted in every possible way to contain the protests, there were significant direct actions by the workers, for example the picketing of the General Motors plant.

In Chile, where the youth have spent years organising for the right to free education, there was a national strike on July 11, 2013. Despite the fact that the CUT's policies prevented private sector workers from joining the strike, it turned out to be the biggest mobilisation since the Pinochet dictatorship and forged a unity between students and workers on the streets. A vanguard of activists to the left of the CUT and Communist Party leaderships organised the barricades on the day of the strike.

In Uruguay, there was a historic 32-day strike led by the teachers in June-July 2013, demonstrating a change in sentiment within the workers' movement and growing discontent with the Frente Amplio government.

Faced with the constant attempts by 'progressive' governments to subordinate the trade unions, the fundamental issue is the fight for the total and unconditional independence of the organisations of struggle of the working class from the capitalist state. This fight is indissolubly linked to the struggle for union democracy and to throw out the union bureaucracy so that the unions can articulate the demands of the entire working class.

We uphold the importance of struggling for the complete political independence of workers from the regional and State governments as well as the parties of the bourgeoisie. Chavism (now in crisis since Chávez's death) was the 'leftist'

version of Latin American Populism. The Chávez regime took on characteristics that Trotsky defined as Bonapartism *sui generis*. In other words, it had elements of a nationalist regime based on the armed forces which serves as a referee between the working and popular masses and the weak national bourgeoisie and imperialism. Cardenism in Mexico and Peronism in Argentina were the most salient examples of this type of regime. However, Chavism was much more limited in scope, as demonstrated by the fact that there were no structural changes in the economy of the country to overcome its dependence of oil revenues.

Chávez made concessions to the poorest sectors of the population based on a redistribution of the income from oil, taking advantage of the increase in its price. The Chávez government's foreign policy was relatively independent of Washington, which was demonstrated in its opposition to the FTAA and its creation of ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas), its trade with Cuba, its close relationship with Iran, and its alignment with China and Russia. On the other hand, Chávez's regional policies during the last few years ended up serving US interests. This was played out in his close collaboration with the pro-imperialist Santos government in Colombia, which began with asking that the guerrillas surrender and ended up with providing intelligence that facilitated their capture. The regime also played an important role in legitimising and stabilising the regime that surfaced in Honduras after a US-backed coup d'état. The final touch was to enter the Mercosur trading bloc and abandon ALBA.

With backing from the United States, the Venezuelan business class unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow him with a coup in 2002 and tried to sabotage the oil industry with the lock-out at the PDVSA state oil company in 2003. Our group in Venezuela actively opposed the coup attempt and participated in the actions against it.

Despite its differences with the traditional business class and the United States, Chavismo didn't change the fundamental structure of the country. Even with its strong 'revolutionary' rhetoric, the Chavez project was still a mild bourgeois nationalism that aimed to increase the income from oil with the supposed objective of 'diversifying the national economy'. This was to be achieved through 'industrialising' the country by giving a helping hand to the national capitalists and to the imperialist companies associated with them, as demonstrated by the big joint venture oil and gas companies. Thus, the State was to be given a considerably greater role not only because it was an apparatus of political domination but also because it was the owner of the oil revenue.

These aspirations didn't amount to concrete plans and discussions. The country was dependent on the revenue of one industry and on imported goods, with a massive state debt. The decade and a half that Chávez maintained power demonstrated the limits of bourgeois nationalism and its incapacity to achieve real national independence with respect to imperialism. Although the nationalisations carried out by Chavez – and Morales in Bolivia – were a reversing of the privatisations in the 90s, these companies were repurchased from the big economic groups (like Techint that had bought Sidor) at market value and with generous compensation. At the same time, the businesses of the big capitalists were preserved

and a sector of new rich emerged, the so-called 'boli-bourgeoisie' who made their fortunes under the protection of the state.

Chavez's rise to power following the Caracazo and the collapse of the Punto Fijo regime stopped the development of a revolutionary dynamic. Ultimately, via a profound regime change and at the cost of giving concessions to the poor masses and politicising the armed forces, Chávez restored the capitalist state, co-opted popular movements and contained the class struggle during moments of tension, like in the defeat of the coup attempt in 2002 and during the petroleum lock-out in 2003. He also tried to discipline the working class by criminalising protests and co-opting the union leadership in order to form a trade union confederation associated with the government. Even though Chavism talked about 'socialism', it is clear that in Venezuela they haven't touched social organisation based on private property and capitalist exploitation. The left was divided in the face of populist governments in the region. There was a rise in left populism in the continent that took up Chavez's 'Socialism in the 21st Century' as a possible model. Many left currents that called themselves revolutionary or Marxist adapted to the Chávez or Morales models of Latin American populism, abandoning the fundamental struggle for the political independence of the working class.

There have even been political groups that have directly adhered to bourgeois political movements, to centre-left politics and to nationalism, and have practically ceased being independent tendencies. Among these are the DS (United Secretariat) which is inside the Brazilian PT and one of whose members held a ministerial post; and 'El Militante' whose Mexican group is inside the PRD and which supported the presidential candidacy of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, and whose sister organisation in Venezuela is in the Chavista PSUV.

Other political groups like the LIT and the UIT had oscillating views but were equally capitulatory. The UIT group went from subordinating itself to Chavism for many years, calling for a massive vote to Chavez in the 2006 presidential elections, to making alliances with trade union bureaucrats attached to right-wing political parties. Meanwhile the LIT, which had also called for a vote for Chavez in 2006, went on to vote 'No' with the bourgeois opposition in the 2007 constitutional referendum. Behind these zig-zags, that reveal a lack of a secure anchoring in anti-imperialist and independent working class politics, is the logic of the 'theory of democratic revolution', a logic that, in cases where the regime has a bonapartist *sui generis* character – like Chavism –, leads such groups to support the supposed 'democratic' banners of the right, without acknowledging that American imperialism is acting behind them.

For revolutionaries the struggle against imperialism is a question of principle. It is not possible to ensure national liberation or Latin American unity without breaking ties with imperialism. Land reform, the ending of the oppression of indigenous peoples, and ensuring food, work, education, health and housing for all cannot be resolved without affecting the interests of big capital and the big landowners.

The completion of the national and democratic tasks cannot be achieved by collaborating with the bourgeoisie, which is a servant of imperialism and is terrified

of the power of the masses. The ‘leftist’ representatives of bourgeois nationalism, whether ‘Bolivarian officials’ or progressive politicians, cannot go beyond their own class limitations.

The experience gathered from the past decade has only reinforced the fundamental lessons of the revolutionary process and political phenomena of every type that the continent has experienced over more than a century: the path of gradual reforms to achieve social and national liberation in Latin America is a dead end. It is the biggest of utopias believed by the so called ‘political realists’, if not the greatest of political frauds. Revolution is the only way. But it certainly is not the so-called ‘Bolivarian revolution’, and it cannot be understood as revolution in stages or democratic revolution – it can only be posed in terms of permanent revolution.

The structural democratic tasks lie entirely in the hands of the working class and its allies: the poor peasants, the indigenous people and the impoverished urban masses. Only by the taking of power by the working class will these tasks be fully completed, after which it will be necessary to take a series of measures, each time more profound, against private property and lay the foundation for the transition to socialism. Meanwhile, the strong ties between Latin American countries and the need to defeat imperialist reaction, will extend the revolution across the continent, towards the creation of a Federation of Socialist Republics of Latin America, in alliance with the North American and international proletariat.

## Against the imperialist blockade and capitalist restoration in Cuba

The question of Cuba divides opinion amongst both the Latin American and the international left. Those who surrender to the populist governments such as those of Chávez take a similar position towards Cuba. They mistake the defence of the gains of the revolution with the unconditional defence of the one-party system of the Cuban Communist Party and the Castros. This populist left uses the old argument that any criticism of Raul Castro’s government ‘helps the right wing and imperialism’; in doing this, they try to stop any serious discussion of the Cuban regime’s measures that are moving the country towards gradual capitalist restoration and that continue to undermine the socialised infrastructure of the country.

At the extreme opposite end of the argument, the LIT maintains that in Cuba capitalism has already been restored and that the struggle against the imperialist blockade is of no importance. They argue that the key is to carry out a ‘democratic revolution’ against the Cuban regime, which they consider to be a ‘capitalist

dictatorship' (comparable even to the dictatorships of the Southern Cone in the 1970s). This opportunistic policy that calls for the unity of everyone that opposes the dictatorship places the LIT in the same camp as the domestic pro-capitalist opposition, the *gusanos* of Miami, and the Obama government.

Against these two positions that lead to capitulating to different agents of the capitalist restoration, we present a program of political and social revolution that starts from the struggle against the imperialist blockade and the defence of the gains of the revolution. Although some gains have been undermined by the bureaucracy, some still remain. Moreover, we put forward a program that includes an end to the one-party system of the Cuban Communist Party and the bureaucratic privileged cast. We defend the right of workers to organise, hold meetings, and express themselves politically and through the formation of independent unions. Against the one-party regime and the imperialist policy of establishing a bourgeois parliamentary democracy, we fight for a revolutionary workers' state based on workers, farmers, and soldiers' councils, and for the complete legalisation of those parties that defend the conquests of the revolution and those that describe themselves as anti-capitalists.

We fight to reverse the austerity measures such as the sackings and the cuts in benefits, for example, the closure of workers' canteens, and to thoroughly revise the measures adopted during the 'special period' and under the Raul Castro government, including the concessions to foreign capital. We also fight for workers' control of production and of the companies that are currently in the hands of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (one of the internal agents for capitalist restoration); for reestablishing the monopoly of foreign trade; for reorienting the economy in the interest of the revolution and of the workers, small farmers and the poor masses, establishing democratic planning of the economy. The fight against capitalist restoration in Cuba is part of the fight for the social revolution in the whole of Latin America.

## For revolutionary and internationalist workers' parties

As Lenin said, a revolutionary workers' party should take on as its own all the injuries, the offences, and the abuses that the masses and oppressed suffer. This is the condition for a consistent struggle to enable the working class to win hegemony over the oppressed classes and the impoverished section of the middle class in order to defeat the bourgeoisie and take power.

Giving in to the 'reactionary spirit' of the epoch, a product of the phase of bourgeois restoration, a large number of left-wing currents of Trotskyist origin argued



that in order to get away from ‘trade union economism’ and to adopt a hegemonic strategy it was necessary to build broad parties, where they would water down the role of class in order to include the plurality of the new social movements. That is, a ‘party of the movements’ where the line between the reformist and the revolutionary is blurred through common organisations or permanent political blocs with minimum programs, whether they be anti-capitalist in general or merely anti-neoliberal.

Some examples of this opportunistic policy are the Respect coalition, which integrated the British SWP with petty-bourgeois sections of the Muslim community, and the NPA in France, a party without strategic delimitation, whose leadership is calling for a permanent bloc with the reformist Front de Gauche of Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

The idea that hegemony is expressed inside the apparatus of a party and, therefore, that the party should be composed of all of the movements struggling against oppression, with the working class as just another movement, is a falsehood that seeks to place the struggles of the oppressed classes and the ‘movements’ on the same plane, and also transforms hegemony into an abstraction outside the class struggle.

Today, in light of the increasing struggles of the working class, this lack of confidence in the working class and their hegemonic ability, which is reflected in opportunistic politics, is becoming ever more harmful. Those who dismiss the construction of revolutionary fractions, firstly in the unions and, in general, within the movements in which they are involved, are only able to reach the masses in a way that is restricted by their program of forming political blocs, and tends to be purely electoral with reformist groups and organisations.

Even on the electoral terrain in Argentina, the Left and Workers’ Front (FIT), in which the PTS united with the Workers’ Party (PO) and the Socialist Left (IS), demonstrates that it is not necessary to follow the centre-left parties to gain recognition among sections of workers and youth. Given the crisis of these broad parties that in many cases has led to demoralisation and impotence, we reaffirm the necessity to construct vanguard revolutionary workers’ parties on a national and international scale to intervene in working class struggles.

## Revolutionary fractions in the unions, the united front and self-organisation

During the last three decades there has been a restructuring of the working class around the world. The incorporation of hundreds of millions of new urban workers moving from rural areas along with an increase of payroll employment in new sectors, especially in the service sectors, has created, for the first time in history,

a situation in which the working class and their families make up the majority of the world population. However, this process has increased the fragmentation of the working class. Along with the traditional techniques imposed by capital to divide the working class in imperialist countries from those in the semi-colonies and colonies, new forms of division have emerged along with the proliferation of the permanently unemployed, such as the increase in contracted workers, workers without legal contracts, undocumented workers, or a combination of these.

This contradiction between, on the one hand, the great social weight of the proletariat, and, on the other hand, the internal fragmentation, makes the tactic of a united workers' front an essential weapon for the class struggle which is with each passing day feeling the increasing heat of the capitalist crisis and the interventions of the working class.

Revolutionaries push for the widest unity of the masses in struggle in order to resist the attacks of capital, and we demand that the bureaucratic leadership of the working class form a united front, especially when there are diverse fractions and union organisations.

In countries like Greece, where the working class led many general strikes, but its official leadership hindered the formation of unity in action, it is of the utmost urgency to create a united workers' front with the organisations of the masses in order to develop the struggle against the austerity measures and the attacks of the government of New Democracy and PASOK. Moreover, it is a critical step in order to confront and defeat the threat of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party as well as to accelerate the experience of the masses and fight within the united front to win the leadership from the reformists. It is necessary to fight for the unions to take up a transitional program that attacks the interests of the capitalists and rises above all of the trade union and economic politics. It is crucial to present a pro-worker solution for all the exploited and oppressed that must begin by rejecting the memorandum and demanding the nationalisation of the banks under workers' control, showing that there is a workers' answer to the crisis. Considered in this light, the politics of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) is criminal. They lead an important section of the proletariat, but they refuse to form a united front with the leaderships of the other main unions; instead, they organise their own actions, creating an obstacle for the possibility of a real general strike that would put an end to the 'troika' government.

Some leftist currents have an opportunistic interpretation of the united front tactic, transforming it into a passive adaptation to the bureaucratic and reformist union leaderships. On the contrary, the strategic objective of this tactic is the development of revolutionary fractions, capable of taking on the bureaucrats for leadership of the union. Revolutionaries struggle to win union democracy, to throw out the bureaucracy, and for complete independence of the union from the capitalist state. This is why we develop systematic work in the unions, the mass organisations of the working class.

However, even in countries with a high level of unionisation, like Argentina, the unions represent only one section of workers, usually those who receive higher salaries, while the unemployed and workers without contracts, who are becoming

more prevalent, are excluded. For these reasons, in the conditions of the current capitalist crisis, when the most vulnerable and oppressed sectors of the working class move into conflict, it is necessary to build united fronts that include all of the sectors in struggle.

It is of vital importance to create bodies of coordination and self-organisation of the masses that are prepared for combat, because at any time that there could be a change in the relation of forces, and the defensive united front could be transformed into an offensive that implies breaking with bourgeois legality and opening up a struggle for power.

In revolutionary situations these bodies, if they are properly prepared, can be transformed into the expression of the power of the workers and the oppressed in the struggle to defeat the capitalist state; after the revolution they can become the essential foundation of the future proletarian state.

## The struggle against oppression: 'Social movements' and revolutionary parties

During the decades of the neoliberal offensive, the state, particularly in the 'advanced' nations, began to integrate the civil rights movements, which had originally developed with a more radical perspective during the sixties and seventies. Although these nations gave certain limited concessions, ultimately they did not change the conditions of oppression. Currently, while in some countries the governments are giving limited democratic concessions, such as the passing of same sex marriage laws, in other countries, right-wing parties and the church threaten these advancements, like the threat to abortion rights in Spain.

The battle against gender oppression, homophobia, racism, xenophobia, and against all forms of oppression and discrimination is inseparable from the working class struggle for hegemony in the battle against the ruling bourgeoisie. In the current capitalist crisis, women, who are the majority of the world's population, face an unprecedented situation: they represent 40% of the global working population and 50.5% are in precarious employment.

In the last few decades, the incorporation of the feminist agenda and sexual rights by international bodies and some states, has contributed to many social movements aligning with governments. This phenomenon is contrasted with an unprecedented growth in social inequality, creating conditions in which millions

of humans are condemned to marginalisation and the worst forms of humiliation, while the ‘business’ of human trafficking, sexual exploitation and violence against women, as well as other forms of abuse, develops on an industrial scale.

Racism is a similar case. While ethnic minority elites have been integrated to different degrees in countries such as the United States, South Africa and Brazil – the United States going as far as having an African-American president for the first time in history – the majority of the imprisoned and poor population are black or Latino. Meanwhile, racism is reinforced by institutions, as is displayed in the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin.

In many imperialist nations, the Muslim communities represent an important fraction of the working class. These communities are systematically stigmatised with the consent of governments, especially after the Twin Towers attacks, and as part of the ‘war on terror’. In many cases, discrimination is used in the name of the separation of church and state, or in the defence of women’s or LGBT rights. Apart from falsely justifying discrimination in the name of democracy, the goal of these measures is to increase the divisions in the working class.

Xenophobia and racism are fundamental tools for class domination that the bourgeoisie use to direct the anger of workers over such issues as unemployment towards immigrants. They are seeking to create a reactionary national unity by dividing the working ranks between ‘natives’ and ‘immigrants’.

In imperialist countries, this racism that is encouraged by the state, with its anti-immigrant policies and its concentration camps for ‘illegals’, is on the rise. It is fuelled by the capitalist crisis and has strengthened the extreme right parties that exacerbate these prejudices. In South Africa the living conditions of the majority of the black population has not changed since the end of Apartheid, and the police continue to repress and murder workers, as they did in the massacre at Mari-kana. In Brazil, which has a popular black judge in the Supreme Tribunal, and where the bourgeoisie present a narrative of a country without racism, the black population are in precarious employment, lack housing, suffer police harassment, and are victims of murder and disappearance.

From the struggle of the exploited and the battles against the multiple forms of oppression in capitalist society will emerge the necessary forces to defeat bourgeois domination. The condition is that this plurality of forces is not just a summation of disagreements but that it possesses at its centre the social force capable of shacking the pillars of capitalist society. This force is none other than the working class.

However, the strategic position the working class holds within capitalism, which in turn transforms it into the essential social subject of the revolution, doesn’t automatically arm it with a hegemonic strategy. In fact, the proletariat forced into conditions of exploitation by capital is the primary target of bourgeois propaganda that is filled with sexist, misogynist, homophobic, racist, and xenophobic prejudices. In many cases this propaganda shapes the minds and consciousness of the average worker. Parties like the Northern League in Italy and the National Front in France take advantage of this.

The women’s liberation and civil rights movements are multi-class, making them susceptible to bourgeois ideology, the dominant ideology which ‘naturally’

imposes itself in capitalist society. However, at the same time, when class struggle increases these movements can be radicalised and give rise to the formation of anti-capitalist wings like in the 1970's. On the other hand, the lack of radicalisation of these movements in the last decades has coincided with a decline in class consciousness in the working class.

For revolutionaries it is a question of principle to confront any type of oppression, and to battle against the prejudices that the bourgeoisie try to instil into the working class via the state, their parties and institutions like the Church, in order to extend their exploitation. However, this doesn't mean that revolutionaries have to adapt themselves to, for example, petty-bourgeois feminism in its multiple forms, or to abandon the proletarian strategy and put their hopes in the creation of broad parties based on multiple social movements.

The revolutionary party fights so that the working class takes into its own hands the struggle against all sorts of oppression. At the same time, it participates in and helps to develop anti-racist campaigns and movements for women's liberation and sexual liberation, and seeks to create revolutionary wings in them which have the aim of linking to the struggle of the working class for socialist revolution.

## The question of power and the revolution: left government versus workers' government

The adaptation of a large part of the left to neo-reformist variants is expressed in the substitution of the slogan 'workers' government' (which in revolutionary Marxism refers to the insurrectional strategy for seizing power) with 'left government' or anti-austerity government. In other words, these currents are seeking to form a government that aims to manage capitalism within the framework of a bourgeois state.

These politics were expressed when the majority of left currents which claim to be Trotskyist supported Syriza's call for a 'left government', even though their program included class collaboration as well as conciliation with imperialist Europe.

There is no relation between these opportunistic politics, which create illusions in class collaborative governments, and the 'workers' government' tactic (the greatest expression of the workers' united front), which was discussed by the Third International in the 1920s and later incorporated by Trotsky in the Transitional Program as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan.

The conditions for raising the demand for a ‘workers’ government’ – a tactic aimed at workers’ organisations even if they are reformist – are, firstly, the existence of a revolutionary situation, and, secondly, that the policy accelerates the preparations for taking power, principally the arming of the working class for the insurrection and the development of a revolutionary party capable of challenging the traditional leadership of the workers’ movement.

The revolutionary concept of the united front posed to mass organisations of the working class in order to develop the struggle doesn’t have anything to do with participating in elections nor with uncritically adopting the minimum program of leftist electoral reformists like Syriza. These are in no way leaderships with decisive weight in the workers’ movement – they are essentially electoral apparatuses constructed around political figures that appear frequently in the media. The united front is about winning the majority of the working class for the revolution through their experiences.

An insurrection capable of imposing workers’ power cannot be accomplished by a minority nor can it be produced by a spontaneous uprising of the masses; it is an art that involves a leadership that is capable of consciously directing the action of the masses towards the seizing of power. The ‘workers’ government’ tactic aims to create circumstances in which the great majority of workers confront the entirety of the bourgeois regime. In affect, the tactic aims to accelerate the experience of the masses with the reformist leaderships, and, in doing so, increase the influence of the revolutionaries.

The objective and subjective conditions generated by the capitalist crisis present us with the necessity to apply audacious politics and tactics, like the ‘workers’ government’. However, in order to preserve its revolutionary nature, it should not be transformed into an end in itself; rather it should be inseparable from our strategic objective: the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a transitional regime, based on workers’ democracy.

## The soviets, the workers and socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the working class

The working class will only be able to overthrow capitalism by means of a violent insurrection that divides and defeats the army and the police, destroys the bourgeois state and from its ruins establishes its own political power, a transitional workers’

state based on the self-organisation of the working class and the exploited masses along with the general arming of the population.

In revolutionary situations these bodies of self-organisation, if they develop, tend to constitute themselves as the expression of the struggle for power of the working class and the exploited against the capitalist state. The 20th century has had many examples of this, starting with the Russian soviets that began in the 1905 revolution and became the pillars of working class power in the 1917 revolution, the workers' factory councils of Germany in 1919, the workers' councils of the Hungarian revolution of 1956, or the tendencies towards these forms of organisation in the 1970s in Latin America with the Bolivian Popular Assembly of 1971, the 'Cordones Industriales' in Chile, among others.

The soviets, councils or whatever name the bodies of self-organisation adopt in each situation, are an expression of the united front of the masses. Through their unity in action and the political struggle of the different tendencies within them, they prepare the masses for the conquest of power, and under a revolutionary organisation they become an instrument for carrying out the insurrection. Once power has been conquered the soviets become the basis of a new state and a new working class democracy.

The Stalinist experience absolutely distorted the relationship between the masses' united front, the soviets and the party, transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat into a single party dictatorship. Trotskyism was the only revolutionary tendency that consistently confronted Stalinism.

For revolutionary Marxists the dictatorship of the proletariat is the equivalent of a new type of democracy, a proletarian democracy based on the bodies of self-organisation of the masses – the soviets or councils of workers and of the soviet multi-party system. In other words, it is the freedom of the parties recognised by the soviet, where the revolutionary party struggles for its leadership and is the most consistent organisation in the defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat faced with possible civil war and threats from the local bourgeoisie and foreign imperialism. This is the most democratic form of political domination by the working class, who will need a transitional workers' government while imperialism and other class enemies continue to exist, forcing the working class to be prepared to defend the revolution against bourgeois reaction, internal as well as external.

This workers' state bases itself on the establishment of new social relations derived from the expropriation and nationalisation of the strategic means of production, the monopoly of the international trade and the democratic planning of the economy. Moreover, it is on a path towards a transition to socialism by extending its functions to the whole of the population organised in the soviets, thus generating the bases of its own extinction.

The seizing of power by the proletariat is just the beginning of a process of transformation of all aspects of the economic, political and social realities of a country. At the same time it becomes a stepping-stone for the extension of the socialist revolution throughout the entire world. It is only by defeating capitalism in its centres of power that the idea of moving towards communism as a project

of emancipating humanity from exploitation and oppression can become a reality. This is one of the greatest lessons that the history of the 20th century has given to revolutionaries, and from this, an international that fights for the socialist revolution needs to arise.

## Our objective is to achieve communism

In the hands of Stalinism, the word *communism* has been corrupted during a great part of the 20th century. It has been associated with parasitic bureaucratic dictatorships of the workers' states and untrustworthy leaderships that ended up supporting the restoration of capitalism.

For those who endorse this manifesto, communism, means the conquest of a society without state and without social classes, free of exploitation and every type of oppression. This is the ultimate 'political objective' that we aim to incorporate in all the battles and partial conquests. We fight for a new society: "An association of free men who work under collective means of production and consciously employ their many individual labour forces as one social labour force" (Marx).

Like Marx and Engels, "We call communism the real movement that abolishes the present state of things." The premises of this movement are found in capitalist society.

In its origins, driven by competition, capitalism set itself the task of shortening the socially necessary labour time required to produce goods. Even though this was a gain for society as a whole, for the worker it was quite the contrary. For the owners of the means of production, the bourgeoisie, which is a minority, this means more and more earnings. For the majority, the workers, it implies the definitive separation from those means of production, the ever increasing appropriation of their work, and a widening gap between their conditions of life and those of the privileged capitalist minority.

With the current developments in science and technology, and the advancements in work productivity, it would be possible to greatly reduce the time that society dedicates to the production and reproduction of the materials necessary for human existence. However, capitalism is incapable of sharing the technical advancements – that are limited to a select group of countries and to particular sectors of production. Meanwhile, the majority of the great masses of labourers are working with levels of technology and production similar to those from the 19th century. There are entire sectors of industry where intensive labour is used; these sweatshops and *maquilas* continue to proliferate.



Communism as an aim of revolution differs from that of all revolutions prior to the development of the working class. It is not limited to a new distribution of work between individuals. It also proposes, through the development of science and technology, to minimise the necessary labour time. People can then dedicate their energy to the sciences, arts and culture, and, in turn, release human capacity and establish a harmonious relationship with nature. Nothing could be further from the Stakhanovist movement, which the Stalinist leaders used to distort communism.

Communism has deep roots. Part of the constant struggle of the working class is to end the exploitation of labour, which manifests itself spontaneously in the display of silent protests every day: for example, the stealing of minutes from the bosses and the machine, or absenteeism. The same tendencies expressed themselves in the historic struggles for the reduction of the working day and the working week, for paid vacations, for slowing down the speed of production, for organising in the work place against the dictatorship of the bosses, and for workers' control of production.

In light of the irrational existence of millions of unemployed and of the workers subjected to the slavery of 14- and 16-hour workdays, including working at speeds that quickly destroy the muscles, nerves and the mind, a key measure will be the redistribution of working hours among a larger workforce with a salary that covers workers' necessities. This will not only be fundamental for the survival of the working class; it would be a first logical step in the reduction of the working day.

But capitalists combat this tendency by every means at their disposal. They continue to develop the apparatus of the state: with their laws, their class justice, their armies, their police, and their intelligence agencies, they perfect their social control mechanisms. Wars, exploitation, state repression, reactionary religious institutions, the oppression of women, racism, xenophobia, the millions of unemployed and workers without contracts – all these are instruments used by the bourgeoisie in its quest to keep workers subjugated as the source of capitalist profit.

The sole function of 'Globalization' was to maintain the status quo. For us, as for the founders of Marxism, communism is not an abstract idea to which reality is attached in order to proclaim as the autonomist do, 'communism here and now'. It is not only about creating awareness of the existing state but of destroying it.

For this reason, the Theory of the Permanent Revolution developed by Leon Trotsky holds great significance: a global strategy that utilises each partial gain, including the seizure of power in one country, to build towards the final goal of the world revolution and towards the process of social, political and cultural change that after the seizure of power will focus on the liberation of work, the withering away of the state, the end of classes, exploitation and oppression.

The struggle for communism necessarily implies the destruction of the bourgeois state machine, the principal guarantor of exploitation and oppression. In addition, it involves the workers exercising their own power through the expropriation of the means of production. This is the only way that the productive forces can stop functioning as the enslaver of labour and become a means of liberation. But this is only the beginning of the process.

Communism does not arise fully-formed within the womb of capitalism; on the contrary, the new society would still contain economic, intellectual and moral elements of the previous system. Besides, the revolution is not an event that emerges simultaneously on an international level; it begins in one country or a series of countries that are born into a capitalist world.

The proletarian dictatorship is a necessary transitional period between capitalism and communism, under which processes of transformation of all aspects of the economic, political and social life of a country begin. At the same time, it is the stepping-stone to the extension of the revolution to the entire world.

Communism is not a state that can be imposed coercively by a bureaucracy. In fact, contrary to what all the different variants of Stalinism attempted to pass off as the truth, it is not designed to work with any form of state or with the existence of any social classes. The construction of communism can only be the outcome of conscious work. The development of the broadest working class democracy based on forms of self-organisation like the Soviets is the only means to advance towards communism and the absence of any form of state.

The great revolutions that have triumphed in the 20th century, beginning with the Russian revolution of 1917, have taken place in underdeveloped, colonial or semi-colonial countries.

However, these revolutions could only have meant the first step of the world revolution. Communism cannot emerge within the boundaries of underdeveloped countries since communism does not mean a more equal distribution of scarce resources. The shortage of goods only reignites the struggle for survival, and with it all the evils of the old society. The bureaucracy that established itself over the working class in those deformed and degenerated workers' states ultimately faced the contradiction of having to struggle for its survival in the face of their underdevelopment and isolation. The 20th century has demonstrated how impossible the Stalinist utopia of 'socialism in one country' really is.

If even under the control of a parasitic bureaucracy, the social basis of the Soviet State – nationalised property and a planned economy instead of the anarchic capitalist mode of production – enabled the Soviet Union to go from being an immature capitalist state with semi-feudal traits to the world's second most powerful nation, imagine how much greater the possibilities of building communism would be if all the technical apparatuses and the enormous wealth of countries like the United States, Germany, or Japan were to fall into the hands of the working class.

The dictatorship of the proletariat doesn't have as a goal the development of the national productive forces as an end in itself – this is even more true in the 21st century with its high level of interdependency of production and international trade. Only by defeating capitalism in its imperialist centres will it become possible to appropriate for the revolution the most advanced techniques of production and put them to work in the service of the liberation of labour. When we state that communism is our most advanced 'political objective' and that it guides the whole of our strategy, we don't say it in an abstract way. Rather, it is an affirmation of a revolutionary strategy based on the lessons learned from class struggle

throughout the entire 20th century, when the dictatorship of the proletariat was proposed as a goal in itself and not as the strategic means to achieve communism. This approach was taken not only by Stalinism but also by the majority of the Trotskyist tendencies.

Only the theory and program of the Permanent Revolution challenges the idea of socialism in one country in all its variants. The theory not only deals with the mechanics of the revolution in nations with a belated bourgeois development and the relationship between the democratic and socialist revolutions, but also proposes a global strategy that links the beginning of the revolution at the national level with the development of the international revolution, and its culmination on a world scale, as well as the conquest of power and the transformations of the economy, science and culture that lead towards our fundamental goal of achieving a society of freely associated producers – communism.