

International *Correspondence*

No 45 • July • November 2020 • IWU-FI

**Coronavirus
and social
debacle**

**THE WORST
CRISIS OF
CAPITALISM
IN HISTORY**



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No 45 • July • November 2020

Magazine of the UIT–FI

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International

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Argentina: Ar\$ 100
Brazil: R\$ 5
Rest of Latin America: US\$2
USA: US\$5
Europe: €5
Rest of the World: US\$3

Signed articles do not
necessarily reflect the
position of the leadership of
the IWU-FI but that of their
authors.

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Millions join the rallies in the US

Foreword

For the first time, we publish International Correspondence in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese, as usual, but this time in digital form because of the Covid-19 pandemic. What is happening is something unprecedented. The world is suffering a calamity. There are millions of infected and hundreds of thousands of dead. Coronavirus can affect anyone. But those who suffer the most, and will suffer the consequences of the pandemic, are the workers, the popular, exploited and oppressed sectors of the world.

There are two pandemics in the world: of the coronavirus and hunger and poverty. The health crisis is combined with the worst economic crisis of capitalism. Capitalist governments and the multinational unload the crisis on the masses. Mass layoffs, salary cuts, company closings, more misery and poverty.

What really matters is that the mobilisations and strikes begin to resume. The fear of contagion begins to break in the face of the tremendous attack against the working class and the peoples. The big impact has been the anti-racist

rebellion of the United States that has struck the nefarious Trump in the bowels of imperialism. The police murder of George Floyd sparked a mass mobilisation not seen since the anti-Vietnam war marches. It is estimated that, since May, between 15 and 20 million people have participated in the marches called by the Black Lives Matter movement. It unleashed a global mobilisation. Hundreds of thousands protested in Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Brazil, South Korea, India, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria and South Africa, and in dozens of other countries. In Canada, there were thousands of protesters in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa. In Austria, 50,000 protesters gathered.

This special issue dedicates pages to this popular rebellion in the United States and its global importance. And we also dedicate pages to highlight the fight against the two pandemics in the world with notes about Chile, Brazil, Spanish State, China, and Lebanon.

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Coronavirus and social debacle

The worst crisis of capitalism in history

Miguel Sorans

Everything that can be written about the impact of the crisis experienced by the world since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic is never enough. It is unprecedented and will remain so in history. To make matters worse, at the time of closing this note, the pandemic has not ended nor does it appear to have an end in sight. The coronavirus has opened all kinds of debates, especially about what the future of humanity will be. Three issues are certain: 1)

Capitalism is experiencing the worst economic crisis in its history. 2) Multinationals want to save their losses at the expense of the working class. 3) Those most affected by Covid-19, and who will suffer the consequences the worst, are the peoples of the world.

Everything written today must have its date of the issue because, day by day, the numbers of the pandemic are left behind. Our first article was on 14 February. Back then there were 60,000 infections in China and it was just

beginning to spread to other countries.

In the first week of March, 110,000 infected and 3,800 deaths were reported worldwide. At the time of writing this note, in early July, there were over 10 million cases of coronavirus and 500,000 deaths. And the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed that the end of the pandemic would not be near. The United States is the country most affected, with 2.5 million cases and 125,000 deaths. The second is Brazil, with 1.3 million and more than 60,000 deaths. It extends



Coronavirus accelerates across Latin America, India, Pakistan

through Mexico and South America. In India, there were 500,000 infections. Japan and South Korea reported fresh outbreaks. In China, restrictive measures were reintroduced in response to the advance of the virus in Beijing.

Why is it taking so long to end the pandemic? Why are there fresh outbreaks where it seemed to be overcome?

There is a combination of causes. First, science does not yet know how to combat it. Not only because of the novelty and changing nature of the virus but also because epidemiological research by governments and private institutions is conditioned by profits. The vaccine is not delayed because of lack of global scientific coordination but because of a fight between private laboratories, endorsed by their governments, to see who gets the business.

But there are also other causes related to the criminal and irresponsible actions of capitalist governments and their multinationals. And this is not a rhetorical phrase. From coronavirus

deniers, such as Trump and Bolsonaro, to the European Union and China itself, through all capitalist governments, with their unevenness, they all operate under the logic of capitalist profit. None puts the financial resources possible to combat the pandemic. Governments were destroying state public health systems to favour private health and now they do not put enough money to recover them. To improve wages, protect health workers, for more respirators and test kits. They do not put the money necessary to cover the needs of the workers who do not carry out essential tasks, of the small merchants or self-employed tradesmen, or for the billions of unemployed or casual workers. "Aid" is mostly to save companies. This is why quarantines are carried out halfway, or directly are not implemented, as Trump and Bolsonaro do. For them "the economy" is first. For this reason, pressure from multinational companies, entrepreneurs and banks to resume activities has prevailed in all countries, leading to billions of people to move around again. In Europe, everything opens to favour tourism and

the bosses in this field, with the risk of causing new infections.

What world are we going to?

Amid the Covid-19 tragedy, the world to come is also debated. Economists, commentators, and politicians express their view and write on everything.

A leading global figure said there is a need to "gear up for a more inclusive recovery" (...) "scaling up public investment in health care to protect the most vulnerable and minimise the risks from future epidemics" to lead to a "greener, smarter and fairer world in the future". Unusually, this was stated by Kristalina Georgieva, the head of the IMF, during her participation in a videoconference that she held with Prince Charles of Wales, at the launch of the initiative The Great Reset (3 June 2020, *Telam*, Argentina). Such is the crisis of the system that their bosses already say anything to cover up the disaster they have caused. On top of that, the head of world austerity measures says we are going to "a greener" and "fairer world".

An editorial in the British newspaper *Financial Times* stated: “Redistribution will be on the agenda again... radical reforms are required to forge a society that works for all” (quoted by *BAE Negocios*, 5 April 2020). The President of Argentina, Alberto Fernandez, said that “capitalism that is not fairer is not a good capitalism” and proposed going towards “capitalism where everyone wins” (*Telam*, 4 June 2020).

Beyond the striking coincidence between the head of the IMF, the *Financial Times* and the Peronist Alberto Fernandez, to ask for “fairer” capitalism, such a project is a “double discourse”, in other words, simple lies. There is no possibility of “progressive” reform or restructuring of capitalism. The capitalist-imperialist system is unfair, irrational and for the rich. Its *raison d'être* is based on exploiting the working class and plundering the peoples and their wealth for super-profits. The growth of poverty, overcrowding and environmental changes was the propitious terrain for the emergence and development of Covid-19.

For example, they tell us to wash our hands and there are 2.1 billion people in the world who do not have access to clean water. This is capitalism. Before the coronavirus, 1.3 billion people were already in poverty, 172 million without jobs and 1.4 billion with casual jobs. And now the ILO report announced that 480 million jobs were lost in the second quarter of the year (*Clarín*, 1 July 2020). In turn, the head of the IMF announced there will be 300 million new unemployed after the pandemic. A catastrophe. Nothing to do with the “greener” and “fairer world” she spoke of in her press conference.

Unfortunately, we are going to a worse world for the working class and the popular sectors. We are already transiting it. The great problem for humanity is that, amid the pandemic, imperialism, multinationals and their governments are deepening their austerity plans. They want to charge the people for the coronavirus crisis, closing companies, massively firing and cutting wages.



France: Thousands demonstrate against the dismissals in Renault

Therefore, for the revolutionary socialists, the task of fighting to end the capitalist-imperialist system remains posed. There will be a just world by imposing workers’ governments that start the construction of a socialist society.

The most serious capitalist economic crisis in history

All the data shows that capitalism is experiencing its most acute crisis. Superior to all known. There are already coincidences, even among bourgeois economists, that it is worse than the famous crisis of 1929, and also than the most recent one of 2007–2008.

“At the end of 2021, the loss of income will exceed that of any previous recession in the last 100 years outside wartime, with dire and lasting consequences for people, companies and governments”, said Laurence Boone, of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (*Clarín*, Argentina, 11 June 2020).

The speakers for imperialism and the multinationals attribute the crisis to the appearance of the pandemic. They want to hide their debacle and responsibility. But the world capitalist economic crisis already came from before. The coronavirus added more fuel to the fire and caused it to deepen to unprecedented levels.

At the end of 2019, only the US had grown, but very slightly. “Since 2009, US per capita GDP annual growth has

averaged just 1.6 per cent. So at the end of 2019, per capita GDP was 13 per cent below trend growth prior to 2008. That gap was now equal to \$ 10,200 per person—a permanent loss of income.” (Michael Roberts, “The scarring”, 2 May 2020, <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2020/05/02/the-scarring/>) Europe was on the brink of recession, Latin America was stagnant. China grew 6.2 per cent, the lowest figure since 1992, when recently it had been growing at between 12 per cent and 14 per cent annually. Capitalism could never recover from the acute economic crisis that opened in 2007. It is debated whether it was equal to or greater than the one of 1929.

Never in human history have there been such high levels of indebtedness. In absolute terms, global debt reached US\$ 253 trillion in the last quarter of 2019, equivalent to 322 per cent of world GDP. The crisis has been going on for 12 years. Bourgeois economist Larry Summers defined it as “secular stagnation”.

Now both the IMF and OECD are forecasting the world economy will collapse in 2020. According to the OECD, the recession will be 7.6 per cent. The IMF assured that “for the first time all regions are projected to experience negative growth in 2020.” (*Clarín*, 25 June 2020). Europe would drop 10.7 per cent, the US 8 per cent, Latin America and the Caribbean 9.4 per cent and China would only grow 1 per cent.

The consequence of this debacle is the wave of massive layoffs, suspensions, wage cuts and the growth of levels of poverty and hunger in the world.

The masses take centre-stage to face the crisis

The important thing is that the mobilisations and strikes against this attack by multinationals and capitalist governments are beginning to resume. The 2019 wave of struggles suffered an impasse in the first months of the pandemic. But the fear of contagion is beginning to lessen in the face of the tremendous attack against the working class and the peoples. The struggles take place to demand security measures against the coronavirus, for the demands of health workers, and against layoffs, wage cuts or company closings. Also against repression and racism with the massive mobilisations that sparked a worldwide rebellion in the United States. In Lebanon, they

again marched against hunger. In Hong Kong, for democratic rights. The health sector made protests and strikes in France, the Spanish State, Italy, Tunisia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Panama, among others. There were major union strikes demanding security, for example, in the USA and northern Italy. Thousands mobilised in Paris against the Renault layoffs. There was an indefinite strike at Nissan Barcelona in the face of its closure. A one-day strike by Italian metalworkers against layoffs at the Mittal steel multinational. Big protests in popular neighbourhoods of Santiago Chile for food. *Cacerolazos* (pots and pans rattling) and mobilisations for “out with Bolsonaro” in Brazil. In Argentina, there were company strikes against dismissals and stoppages in public transport because of unpaid wages. Even on Curaçao, the Dutch island in the Caribbean, there were street protests over mass layoffs.

We are confident this process of mass layoffs and wage cuts will increase the worker and popular mobilisation that will question the austerity measures and also the governments applying them. Every day it becomes clearer that to face the current coronavirus crisis, just like the one that will come after the pandemic, we need to advance in unified actions at the international level.

From the IWU–FI we promote these struggles by demanding the coronavirus crisis be paid by capitalists. We propose to fight for a workers’ and popular emergency plan in each country and internationally. Throughout the world, money is needed for health, wages, jobs and food. For high progressive taxes on multinationals, big businessmen, landowners and banks, for the non-payment of foreign debts and against all forms of repression and for the right to protest. The coronavirus pandemic is not over.

We fight against two pandemics

In each country and the world, the working class and the popular sectors are facing two pandemics: of the coronavirus and hunger and increasing poverty. Not all countries are in the same phase of Covid-19. Despite unevenness, all peoples are being affected by the health crisis and the social “pandemic” that produces more misery among the masses.

From the IWU–FI we have been calling for the coordination of an international struggle movement to face the current coronavirus crisis and the one that will come after the pandemic. We call on the widest unity of action of the workers’, popular, youth organisations, women’s movement, the movement in defence of the environment, as well as the anti-capitalist and socialist left, to fight for this program:

* That funds be urgently dedicated to health budgets and that they be substantially increased to attend to the

health emergency. Funds to, among other measures, expand and improve health facilities, give a salary increase to all health professionals, make new hires, provide free medicines and have sanitary and cleaning supplies for all.

★ That the funds for the health emergency come out of high progressive taxes on large business groups, multinationals, financial capital, and to cease the payment of foreign debts. For a non-payment front of debtor countries.

★ For a single national and state health system, with free consultations, treatments and medications paid by the State and administered by users, physicians, workers and professionals in the sector. For the nationalisation of private healthcare, of medical specialty laboratories and that they come under the control of health and medical workers and scientists.

★ Setting up of hygiene and sanitation committees in all

workplaces, with power to implement the suspension of tasks in all those activities that are non-essential or do not have the necessary biosecurity measures. Control of prices of medicines and all essential products to avoid speculation.

★ General reorganisation of production according to the needs of the health emergency under workers’ control.

★ No to the use of the coronavirus and quarantines to apply militarisation measures or to restrict freedoms and the right to protest. Unrestricted defence of democratic rights.

★ Prohibition of dismissals and suspensions. Distribution of available working hours among all workers with the same salary. No to salary cuts. Implementation of unemployment insurance for the unemployed, the self-employed and the millions who work without contracts or labour rights.



Jeff Bezos

Warren Buffett

Mark Zuckerberg

The fortune of eight billionaires equals what 3.7 billion people have

Miguel Lamas

The Covid-19 pandemic and the social disaster uncover the huge inequality generated by the world capitalist system. For the few, living off others, it means enormous profits. For the many, living on personal effort, it means lay-offs, hunger and very frequently, to suffer lockdown on poor housing conditions, unemployment, or dreadful working conditions where they risk their lives as in healthcare, cleaning, mining and a lot of others for whom production never stopped.

A recent Oxfam research shows the eight richest people in the world have

net assets of about US\$736 billion. The same amount as 3.7 billion people, half of humanity, possess.

Only Jeff Bezos, the richest, Amazon founder and CEO, has a fortune worth US\$131.7 billion; he owns 12 per cent of Amazon, the electronic commerce giant and cloud computing services. In 2013, he bought *The Washington Post* in US\$250 million.

Similarly, Bill Gates, Microsoft founder, has US\$113.1 billion in assets. He also invested in Canadian National Railway, AutoNation and other companies.

There are also 2,050 rich people who own one billion dollars or more,

and a few thousand who “only” possess some hundreds of millions, involved as shareholders of transnational companies. So, to keep track of these fortunes, we should check what those transnational companies have.

According to a report from the European Business School, the 15 largest multinational companies have assets for over US\$6 billion. Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, JP Morgan, Facebook, Visa, Exxon, Mobil, Walmart, Pfizer are some of those on the list.

Only 15 transnational pile up nine times what 3.7 billion people, the poorest half of the world, have.

With the pandemic, some people increased their wealth enormously

The worst part of this is, despite the crisis destroying the economy, a bunch of capitalists kept on increasing their fortunes.

In the period from 18 March to 14 May, the Amazon founder and CEO, Jeff Bezos, earned US\$ 30 billion to add to his fortune. Mark Zuckerberg, the Facebook founder, got US\$ 21 billion in the same period. Elon Musk, the physicist owner of Tesla and SpaceX who recently sent a spacecraft to the International Space Station, earned US\$ 11,3 billion. And Michael Bloomberg, businessman and former Mayor of New York City and candidate in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, US\$ 10 billion.

According to a report published by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), in two months, the American billionaires, globally, got richer by US\$ 565 billion while 42 million people lost their jobs. Furthermore, Trump, with the support of both Republicans and Democrats, lowered their taxes for US\$ 82 billion.

The Institute adds: “The three wealthiest people in the United States — Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, and Warren Buffett — now own more wealth than the entire bottom half of the American population combined” (<https://ips-dc.org/report-billionaire-bonanza-2017/>)

A bit more “modest”, the 23 Spanish billionaires have increased the value of their wealth in € 19.2 billion in 79 days from 18 March to 4 June, according to Oxfam.

Where do those gigantic fortunes come from?

The ideologues of capitalism say these gigantic fortunes are for the “hard work”, or the “great ability, initiative and intelligence” of these gentlemen.

But the reality is their wealth comes from the work of billions of people around the world, from the IT company workers, the Amazon casual street deliverers who continue working

and getting sick during the pandemic, to the Bangladesh textile workers, who earn US\$ 80 making luxury clothing for European brands, like the Spanish Zara, poor farmers in India or Bolivia, and farmworkers who produce food often in semi-slavery conditions, the bricklayers who build buildings and luxury mansions, or the Chinese workers that produce millions of mobiles and computers.

All the workers in the world are paid a small fraction of the value of what they produce; the rest goes to the capitalists. This is what Marx called “surplus value”, the basis of capitalism’s operation.

Almost all of these wealthy people earn by selling the product of the work of young workers who have casual and without rights jobs, stripped of the labour gains obtained during a century and a half of enormous workers’ struggles. This is the case of the home delivery workers of Amazon and other companies, who went on strike in dozens of countries.

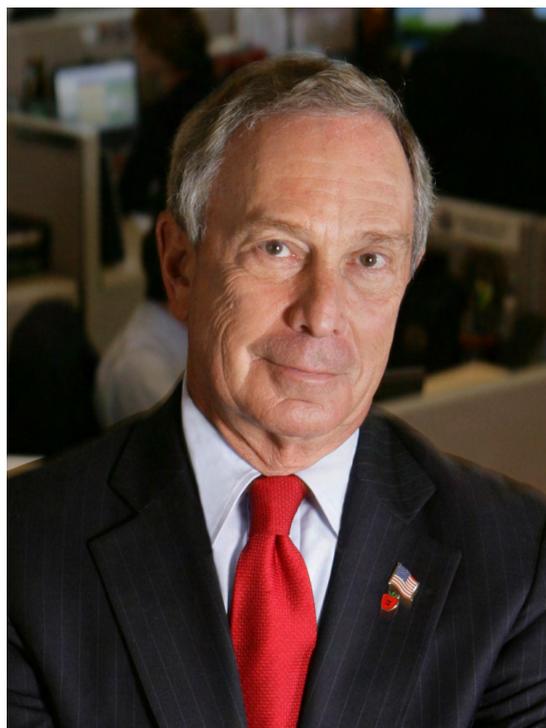
And they also win, directly or indirectly, with the plundering of nature, with the destruction of forests for capitalist agribusiness, with highly polluting open-pit mining, with preventing a decisive energy shift to stop global warming. This destruction of nature is the other source of enormous profits for capitalism.

In other words, this gigantic accumulation of wealth not only does not benefit humanity but it is also causing ruin, hunger, even the current plague and its consequences on health (see articles in this issue).

Worse than Covid-19

The present pandemic and its consequences are only “a detail” of the disaster world capitalism can cause.

Crises, like the one we are experiencing, are occasions to



Former Mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg owns a fortune of US\$ 10 billion

“reshuffle”, i.e., for new commercial and financial conditions within the framework of capitalism. Some capitalists win and others lose. But in these cases, those who always lose are the workers and the poor.

Now they are taking advantage of the pandemic to make jobs even more precarious, to fire workers with rights and to hire young people without rights, to move their factories to China, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan or Vietnam, where they pay miserable wages. Also, to sell drugs and vaccines (see the article in this issue). And for the capitalist states to help them with immense public funds to “save” them from the crisis. These funds are often acquired, in turn, with financial debts from the states that they will intend we all pay.

Expropriating their gigantic fortunes and those of the transnationals and banks as a whole, the product of the work of billions and the plundering of nature, with workers’ governments establishing a planned economy, food production, protecting the health and the ecosystem, is the only way out that can prevent a human and ecological catastrophe.

The Chinaman owner of Zoom

Someone else who made his fortune with the pandemic is Eric Yuan, founder and CEO of Zoom, the video-conferencing platform that was spreading at the same time the world was collapsing because of the virus and social distancing was forcing the virtual link. He is a Chinese engineer who settled in the United States in 1997. By December 2019 he had 10 million users and by April of this year, he had grown to 300 million users. It is believed he earned US\$2.5 billion during the pandemic. According to Forbes magazine, Yuan would have a fortune of US\$7.8 billion.



Eric Yuan, founder and CEO of Zoom

The philanthropist billionaires

Some of these super-wealthy do charitable works, support some causes that may be just, or be seen as such. The best known are Bill Gates and George Soros.

Soros promotes the Open Society Foundation and says that since 1984 he has donated US\$32 billion of his personal fortune forged in the financial markets. Open Society says it has supported individuals and organisations around the world that fight for freedom of expression, transparency, justice and equality.

Bill and Melinda Gates gave US\$1.9 billion in 2012 to fight polio and malaria through their foundation, making them the largest philanthropists in the United States, according to Forbes, which measures the “generosity of millionaires. They are now contributing to the fight against Covid-19.

But these and other super-rich people, who donate, either for their image or to gain political influence, are earning ten or twenty times as much as they donate, at the cost of poverty, death, and disease. In many cases, they are “helped” by the national states. What they donate with one hand, they recover and multiply on the other.



George Soros (above), Bill and Melinda Gates (below)





Germany: Lufthansa received €9 billion and dismissed 22,000 workers

A trillion-dollar bailout of the multinationals

Jose Castillo

While the crisis of imperialist capitalism, exacerbated to the extreme by the Covid-19 pandemic, hits the working class squarely, large multinational companies receive all kinds of support from governments.

Both the Trump and European Union governments have released trillions of dollars and euros to try to alleviate the crisis. The amounts directly involved are estimated to total US\$6 trillion, doubling what was used at the peak of the 2008–2009 crisis. Although the rhetoric of all governments is to “take care of the jobs” and “help the sectors with the least resources”, the reality is the vast majority of this money is being used to save large multinational

companies. For this, governments appeal to a variety of measures, which include direct subsidies, loans at “zero rates”, wages of thousands of companies paid by the State, cuts in taxes or social charges, capital injections, and even “nationalisations” where, however, control of the company is left to private shareholders.

All this does not prevent the very same companies that receive these funds from continuing with the dismissal of tens of thousands of workers and salary reductions.

In the United States of Trump

The first two measures taken in March totalled US\$4.3 trillion in transfers from the state. Only

2.3 per cent of this money went to strengthening the health system, collapsed by Covid-19. And most went into the hands of owners of hospitals and private medical services. Aid to people was only US\$1,200 per month, added to US\$600 a week in unemployment insurance.

The vast majority of the US\$4.3 trillion ended up, then, in the pockets of large corporations. The Federal Reserve released US\$2.3 trillion that went to shore up the Wall Street Stock Exchange as prices had started to drop violently at the start of the pandemic. This rain of money, directed towards the big stock market speculators, was what made the New York Stock Exchange resume its bullish rhythm as of 23

March and once again generate super-profits for those who “play” on it.

Of the remaining US\$2 trillion, almost everything is aimed at corporate bailouts; US\$500 million are explicitly destined to rescue the largest corporations in the country. The bailout includes US\$58 billion for airlines (passenger and cargo) and another US\$17 billion for defence contractors and those deemed “critical to national security”. Billions more will go to cruise, hotel and tourism companies.

In the case of the airlines, those that benefited are American Airlines, the company with the most aircraft in the world, which is cutting 5,100 jobs and proposing 34,500 voluntary retirements; Delta, the second-largest, which gave “leave” to 13,000 employees and announces thousands of “voluntary retirements”; and United Airlines, the third-largest, which has said it will reduce its workforce by 30 per cent. To this, we add that US\$16 billion will go exclusively to the rescue of Boeing, the aircraft factory.

The US\$367 billion supposedly destined for small and medium-sized companies deserves its paragraph. There are reports that, while many of these firms have not accessed the benefit, millions of dollars of this program are being appropriated by large companies, such as the Potbelly snack chain, with 400 stores, or the Ruth’s Chris Steak House Group, with 150 restaurants. It is estimated that 71 large companies that appear in the *Forbes* magazine list have received aid from this fund (*Business Insider*, April 2020).

Let’s add to all this that while in the crisis of 2008 the bulk of the amount of that bailout went directly to rescue bankrupt banks, now this sector did not stop taking part in the feast. Large financial entities were designated “managers” to help companies with loans, keeping juicy commissions and interests. Thus, one of the great administrators of the resources launched by the Federal Reserve is the largest investment fund in the world, BlackRock (today the main creditor

of Argentina’s foreign debt).

In the United States, while 45 million people are forced to apply for unemployment insurance, billions of dollars are turned to support large corporations. This reaches such a point that a report by Deutsche Securities assures that 18 per cent of Yankee companies already qualify as “zombie companies”, thus referring to firms that only survive on the amounts of state aid that are drawn to them (*Financial Times*, 25 June).

The bailouts of the European Union

European governments, resorting to all the community tools, have not lagged in favouring the rescue of their large companies. The total amount adds to €2 trillion.

At the forefront, just like in the United States, are the large airlines. Likewise, this has not prevented the airlines from firing tens of thousands of workers. Germany’s Lufthansa received €9 billion, despite announcing the layoff of 22,000 employees. The French state gave Air France a direct loan for €300 billion and guarantees for private banks to give it another €4 billion credit, while it announces plans to cut 8,000 to 10,000 jobs and, contradictorily, it buys 60 aircraft from Airbus, thus “saving” the leading European aircraft manufacturer. KLM is negotiating aid from the government of the Netherlands of between €2 billion and €4 billion. Alitalia, in the framework of a process of “nationalisation” (the State takes over to clean it up and then re-privatise it), receives €500 million, Norwegian got €270 million from the Norwegian government, Finland granted €600 million to Finnair, and between Sweden and Denmark contributed €300 million to SAS. There are also advanced conversations to assist the IAG Group,



Ceconomy, the company that owns MediaMarktSaturn retail stores received €2 billion from the German government

made up of British Airways (which announced a reduction of 10,000 jobs), Iberia, Vueling and Air Europa (*Bloomberg Business*, June 2020).

Outside the airlines, there is also a multimillion bailout in progress for Renault, with a loan guaranteed by the French state for €5 billion.

Germany, for its part, made available to its large companies €200 billion from the state bank KfW. The two biggest German sportswear brands have resorted to this rescue. Adidas received €1 billion and Puma, without the amount it received being disclosed. It also received €2 billion. Ceconomy, the company that owns the MediaMarktSaturn network of stores.

Who should pay for the crisis?

Imperialism plans to save the multinationals and, once again, as in previous occasions, to unload the crisis on the workers and other popular sectors.

The trillions of dollars and euros at stake prove the money exists, it is simply being used to save the rich (who shamefully continue to increase their fortunes) while sending hundreds of millions of workers around the world into misery and social marginalisation.

We, revolutionary socialists, say the capitalists and not the workers should pay for the crisis. We must impose in all countries a strong tax on large fortunes and stop paying foreign debts, which only fill the pockets of the vultures of finance, and to place all that money into an emergency fund to deal with the health and social crisis generated by the pandemic.

The pharmaceutical industry

The businesses of the pandemic

Reynaldo Saccone

Former president of Cicop (Union of Health Professionals of the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina)



There are over 60 teams in the world working to create a coronavirus vaccine, but they are moving too slowly.¹ A Bill Gates statement for the *New England Journal of Medicine* explains the delay. “Government funding is needed because pandemic products are extraordinarily high-risk investments; public funding will minimise risk for pharmaceutical companies and get them to jump in with both feet.”² Capitalists want the State to put the money and the companies to collect the earnings. To make the business complete, Gates finishes it off: “Finally, governments will need to finance the procurement and distribution

of vaccines to the populations that need them.” The state finances the production and then buys the products to the company. Gates’ proposal lays bare the truth: no progress is made on vaccines if there is no guaranteed profit.

The good businesses of the pandemic

The pharmaceutical and medical supply industry is experiencing a moment of splendour. In mid-March 2020, while the world’s stock markets were falling, the shares of Alpha Pro Tech, a manufacturer of facemasks, shot up 232 per cent.³ Co-Diagnostics was up 1370 per cent thanks to its diagnostic kit for the virus responsible for the pandemic.⁴ The shares of the

Californian laboratory Gilead climbed 20 per cent because of the prospects of the drug remdesivir against Covid-19, research, in turn, subsidised by the American government.⁵ The stock market value of Inovio Pharmaceuticals, supported by Bill Gates, climbed 200 per cent for its experimental vaccine INO-4800.⁶

Another way to benefit is through public investment. “Every molecule approved by the FDA (the federal body that authorises drugs and medical supplies in the United States) between 2010 and 2016 was the subject of state-funded scientific research through the NIH (the federal body that regulates health activity),”⁷ according to the Patient Advocacy for Accessible Drugs

1 World Health Organisation (2020), reported in Infobae 11 April 2020.
2 Bill Gates, “A Once-in-a-Century Pandemic?”, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 28 February 2020, (<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmp2003762>).

3 Luisa Corradini, “Coronavirus: the debate for the links between governments and big pharmaceutical labs grows”, *La Nación*, 3 May 2020

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Patients for Affordable Drugs, quoted by Luisa Corradini, op cit.

group. The US government spent over US\$ 100 billion during that period, also making it easier for companies to enjoy a monopoly on production through the enforcement of patents.¹

Patents: a hindrance to development

Patents, which guarantee the ownership of products and their production mechanisms for each company, are at the same time a hindrance because they prevent their diffusion. The well-known capitalist economist Joseph Stiglitz acknowledges that “monopoly control over the technology used in testing for the virus has hampered the rapid rollout of more testing kits, just as 3M’s 441 patents mentioning ‘respirator’ or ‘N95’ have made it more difficult for new producers to manufacture medical-grade face masks at scale.”² He also gives the example of PCV13, a vaccine for pneumonia, which, being a monopoly property of Pfizer, is unattainable by its cost, for a large part of the world’s population. In India, for example, over 100,000 preventable child deaths from pneumonia occur each year, while the vaccine generates Pfizer revenues of about US\$ 5 billion annually.³

In the last decades, the pharmaceutical multinationals managed, through patents, to extend their monopoly on the production of medicines to almost all countries, although with great contradictions. In 1997 the South African government, in its need to confront the AIDS epidemic, passed a law that allowed the suspension of the patents necessary to provide the required medicines, despite the closed opposition of the United States and the multinationals.⁴ In 2001, during the so-called anthrax crisis, the United

States and Canada did the same: they suspended the patent on ciprofloxacin that Bayer held for the whole world.⁵ In the case of the United States, the threat was enough; they did not even suspend it.⁶ The paradox is that the country that has taken the lead in defending the monopoly patents of the pharmaceutical industry, appealed to the sovereign resource which was fighting in the rest of the world.

A world without patents is only possible without bourgeois property

“For too long, we have bought into the myth that today’s IP regime is necessary,” Stiglitz recently wrote. “Imagine a world in which a global network of medical professionals monitored for emerging strains of a contagious virus, periodically updated an established formula for vaccinating against it, and then made that information available to companies and countries around the world. Moreover, imagine if this work were done without any intellectual-property (IP) considerations, and without pharmaceutical monopolies...”⁷



Capitalism is the stumbling block to defeat the pandemic in one fell swoop

But the norm is the reality that he denounces: the laws of capitalism seeking to increase the profits of capital and which can only disappear with the disappearance of these property relations.

Capitalism is the stumbling block that prevents the defeat of the pandemic in one fell swoop. We have seen the imperialist world bourgeoisie implement the adjustment plans that destroyed the health systems, even in their own countries of origin; we have witnessed their struggle against quarantines as in the United States, Italy, Brazil and other countries without regard to the deaths and the spread of the virus; we are now seeing how they make huge profits at the expense of the people’s needs and at the same time continue to receive subsidies and privileges from the State with funds that should go to the people in quarantine. The workers and the people have to move towards the nationalisation of health services and the production of supplies, medicines and vaccines. Under workers’ control, they must be put to the service of the fight against the pandemic. These measures, accompanied by the suspension of payments of the foreign debt and the tax on large fortunes, would make it possible to accelerate the overcoming of the pandemic and free humanity from the extension of these horrors and sacrifice of lives.

patent-reform-by-joseph-e-stiglitz-et-al-2020-04?barrier=accesspaylog).

1 Luisa Corradini, op. cit.

2 Joseph Stiglitz, Arjun Jayadev and Achal Prabala, “Patents vs. the Pandemic (Profits vs Humanity?)”, *Mostly Economics*, 23 April 2020 (<https://mostlyeconomics.wordpress.com/2020/04/23/>).

3 Joseph Stiglitz, *Clarín*, 3 May 2020.

4 Medicines and Related Substances Control Amendment Act 90 of 1997: <https://www.gov.za/documents/medicines-and-related-substances-control-amendment-act>.

5 Harmon, Amy; Pear, Robert: “A Nation Challenged: The Treatment; Canada Overrides Patent for Cipro to Treat Anthrax”, *The New York Times*, 19 October 2001, (<https://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/19/business/nation-challenged-treatment-canada-overrides-patent-for-cipro-treat-anthrax.html#:~:text=Canada%2C%20taking%20an%20unusual%20step,version%20from%20a%20Canadian%20company.>)

6 Fred Charatan: “Bayer cuts price of ciprofloxacin after Bush threatens to buy generics”, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1121539/>.

7 Joseph Stiglitz, Arjun Jayadev and Achal Prabala, “Patents vs. the Pandemic”, Project Syndicate, 23 April 2020 (<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/covid19-drugs-and-vaccine-demand>



Devastating fires a consequence of capitalist deforestation

Coronavirus and the capitalist environmental disaster

Carlos Rodríguez

Agricultural engineer, member of the Venezuelan PSL

In 1989, in the tropical forests of Costa Rica, an event took place that went unnoticed by much of the population. The Golden Toad, also known as “Monteverde Toad”, was last observed in this Central American country and later declared an extinct species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Many will wonder what is new about the extinction of a species, when for centuries the disappearance of animals and plants has been the common denominator in the process of capitalist economic development of nations, with its multiple negative impacts on nature. The importance of this new extinction in the name of development lies in the fact this amphibian is considered

by ecologists to be the first victim of global warming, which has led in the last 50 years to a 60 per cent reduction in the size of all populations of plants and animals in the planet’s ecosystems.

Since the extinction of the Golden Toad, the bad news has not stopped happening. After the devastating fires in the Amazon rainforests (2019) and in the forests of Australia (2019-2020), the year 2020 brought behind it the Covid-19 pandemic, which is still in full development and remains to be seen what will be all its consequences in the different aspects of life on Earth. This pandemic, most likely caused by ecological imbalances, is a window into the future of what awaits humanity with the environmental problems

caused by climate change and other macro problems such as rampant deforestation; both disasters sustained by a global capitalist economic model that makes life on Earth unfeasible in the medium term.

According to studies and proposals made by the scientific community, it is estimated that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, generated by the burning of fossil fuels, should fall 7.6 per cent each year in this decade, to limit the global warming to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures.¹ However, this is not happening, quite the opposite. Even this year, despite the drop in

¹ International studies warn that an increase of one degree in average global temperature can destroy 25 per cent of all food crops in the world.

emissions caused by the paralysis of much of the world economy because of the pandemic, it is expected that CO₂ levels (main GHG) will continue to rise again after the world quarantine, as it happened in the 2008 crisis. Regarding the latter, the Carbon Brief (2020) website says: “After saving 440 million tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere in one year, 1,600 million tons were emitted thanks to the economic incentives offered by governments to help large companies.”

Coronavirus: the protagonist of the global crisis

The world’s fauna is moving. Extensive areas of the planet that have been affected by the increase in temperature and humidity have created favourable conditions for their colonisation by wildlife species, including insects. Other species, with little or no capacity to move or adapt to these climatic changes, are simply disappearing, generating disturbances in all the food chains of ecosystems with unimaginable consequences. The disappearance of species is faster than science’s ability to study the negative consequences of these mass extinctions on ecosystems and, of course, also their consequences on society and the world economy.

The species that transmit parasitic diseases to people and animals are also colonising new areas. The zoologist Eduardo Galante (*La Opinión*, Spain, 10 May 2020., pp. 28–29) of the University of Alicante in Spain, asserts: “The increase in temperature shortens the biological cycle and accelerates the multiplication of vector insects of diseases such as malaria, dengue or yellow fever.” It is worth adding that 70 per cent of all human diseases have a zoonotic origin, i.e., they are produced by pathogenic microorganisms that are transmitted to humans through an animal species.

To the colonisation of new spaces by pathogens, we must add the trafficking of wild animals (which moves US\$ 20 billion per year), their consumption and the direct contact with animal



Earth is fast approaching the point of no return

remains. The Asian food market, closely linked to the consumption of pangolin, bats, rodents, among other animals, is possibly the first cause of the appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic. Epidemics such as Hendra (1994) in Australia and SARS (2003) were related to bat consumption, and more recently the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome epidemic (MERS–2012), was linked to the contact and consumption of camels in Middle Eastern countries.

There is a direct relationship between climate change, with its consequent loss of biodiversity on the planet, and the increase in epidemics and pandemics such as the current Covid-19. A healthy and balanced environment, with its stable biodiversity, is the best buffer for pandemics. However, the reality is again tragically different: the unlimited exploitation of natural resources in the five continents have “significantly altered 75 per cent of the earth’s surface and 66 per cent of the global ocean” (IPBES 2020).¹

The fight for life on the planet

The history of other world economic crises, such as the one started in 2007–2008, have put on the table that the world capitalist economy, every time it needs to emerge from a crisis, increases exploitation of natural resources and of the human species itself, especially the workers. The best example of this we have in the US, where to get out of the aforementioned crisis, the Obama and Trump governments resorted to oil

¹ It is believed that 1.7 million still unidentified viruses exist worldwide. Any of these could be the next disease, potentially even more damaging and deadly than Covid-19 (IPBES 2020).

technology of fracking, deepened oil and gas exploitation projects in Alaska, and torpedoed all international agreements regarding restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions, such as the “Paris Agreement” (2015).

In the same way that all the consequences of the pandemic remain to be seen, it also remains to be known what the reaction of the peoples and workers will be to the current global tragedy, especially in the large cities of industrialised countries, where the dead are counted by the thousands. British historian Adam Tooze (2020)² predicts: “... we will get out of this poorer, more indebted, more scared, and in conditions of radical uncertainty, social and political earthquakes are more likely.”

It will be the peoples in their different forms of organisation, opinion, pressure and protest, who will have the last word on the fundamental change required to save life on Earth. The revolutionary socialists, we will continue to hold that change can only come with the end of the capitalist exploitation system which destroys the environment and brings life on Earth to a dead end, with the logic of the big capitalists to deny climate change, being responsible for it. Only with a socialist society, ruled by the working class and based on planning the economy to benefit the needs of the peoples, can we save the planet and, consequently, avoid new pandemics such as the deadly Covid-19.

² If everything continues as up to now, it is estimated that, by the end of the 21st century, the increase in the average temperature of the planet will be around 3°C. (Adam Tooze in *El País*, 10 May 2020, pp 50-51.)



China: 3000 members of the National People's Congress, with facemasks, vote the repressive Hong Kong national security law

China: A “moderately prosperous society”?

Miguel Sorans

At the end of May, the 15th National People's Congress of China took place, convened and controlled by the Chinese CP regime. They gathered after they curbed the Covid-19 outbreak, but in the middle of the new “outbreak” of unemployment and economic crisis. For the first time in 30 years, they did not set growth goals and ratified “the building of a moderately prosperous society”.

The National People's Congress is like a national parliament of almost three thousand members. It is a component of the dictatorial regime of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Its members are completely manipulated by the party. Debates are few and votes are rarely dissenting.

The Congress voted, for example, 2878 votes in favour, one against and 6 abstentions, the project of the “national security law” that seeks to criminalise, in Hong Kong, all dissident voice and demonstrations against the government.

But the most striking thing is they could not vote on any economic growth targets and that their goal is to be “a moderately prosperous society” by the end of 2020.

What does this definition mean? They no longer talk about great power or socialism. It is a definition so vague that it can be anything. What it reflects is the fear of Xi Jinping's leadership of the arrival of the global capitalist crisis in China. The fear of new economic

or political setbacks that will generate social instability leading to the questioning of the regime. The regime has already suffered a mini political crisis for the delay in responding to the emergence of the coronavirus in the city of Wuhan. There were many protests in the social media when it became known the government had not listened to the warnings several doctors gave. The high point, which triggered the growth of the Chinese people's protests, was the case of censorship and repression of ophthalmologist Li Wenliang. This 34-year-old doctor, who worked in Wuhan hospitals, was the first to warn of the seriousness of the virus as early as December. He contracted the virus and ended up dying in mid-January.



80 million Chinese may already be out of work

The progress of unemployment in China

Even before the pandemic, China's capitalist economy had reduced its growth to the slowest since 1992, as part of the global crisis.

The economic paralysis that China suffered, for almost three months, has only encouraged this trend. Industry and the economy have only just begun to move. But China will also suffer from the global slowdown and the greatest crisis in the history of capitalism. World trade is affected. Besides, in China, there are over 70 thousand multinationals that will also want to unload the crisis on their local factories.

The first symptom is that unemployment is growing. In April the official estimate was 6 per cent. Few people believe this is real since it does not take into account the rural areas and the millions who migrated from the cities to their provinces during the pandemic and have not returned. Nor can the pandemic be ended. There have already been outbreaks, for example, in Beijing. This is why the government is concerned with providing subsidies to "stabilise and expand employment"

and "lower the tax burden on Small and Medium Businesses" (*Clarín* data, Argentina, 21 May 2020).

Far from "moderately prosperous"

Everything indicates that the Chinese working class is far from the so-called "moderately prosperous society". In a country with 1.4 billion people, there are 1 billion people with a very low standard of living. The minimum industrial wage is estimated at US\$ 300. In rural areas, the wage is even lower and it is estimated that 82 million people live below the poverty line (World Bank data 2018). Lay-offs and wage cuts are now on the rise.

The experience of garment workers in one factory, located in the Pearl River Delta, is an indication of the critical situation.

This story from the China Labour Bulletin (CLB)¹ is interesting:

¹ China Labour Bulletin (www.clb.org.hk) is a group defending labour rights in China, founded in 1994 in Hong Kong by Han Dongfeng and Robin Munro. Han Dongfeng, a railway worker, was the main organiser during the Tiananmen Days of the Beijing Autonomous Workers Federation.

"According to Guangdong provincial government regulations, staff were supposed to go back to work on 10 February but with the risk of Covid-19 infection still high, the boss asked all employees to make a 'sacrifice for the sake of the company' and agree to take unpaid leave until the end of that month.

"Once the factory did resume production in March, the spread of the pandemic to Europe and the United States meant that orders were abruptly cancelled and production line workers had little or no work. The boss initially cancelled all overtime and then started asking staff to 'resign'.

"Those workers who remained saw their salaries drop dramatically. Prior to the pandemic, staff usually worked six days per week, doing enough overtime to earn over 5,000 yuan in a busy month [about US\$ 715]. Now, with no overtime and only their basic salary, the workers earn 2,000 yuan a month [US\$ 286], not even a living wage in Pearl River Delta towns" ("As NPC opens in Beijing, China's workers don't feel even moderately prosperous", 21 May

2020, <https://clb.org.hk/content/npc-opens-beijing-china%E2%80%99s-workers-don%E2%80%99t-feel-even-moderately-prosperous>).

The strikes have not yet increased because of the risk of coronavirus infection and also because of the

pressure for lay-offs. According to CLB, 142 protests have been registered in the first four months of the year. There is a possibility that with the return to work and the resumption of greater economic activity, the Chinese working class, together with the continuity of youth

and popular protests in Hong Kong, will unleash new strikes and protests that will question the capitalist austerity plans of the Chinese dictatorship and the multinationals.

Before the coronavirus

China managed another epidemic under complete secrecy

Today it is known that, during 2019, the Chinese regime tried for months to hide, in their country and the world, the existence of the so-called African swine fever (ASF). The secret hindered the health response to swine fever (for now harmless to humans but fatal to pigs), an epidemic that has killed millions of pigs.

“When the deadly virus was first discovered in China, authorities told the people in the know to keep quiet or else. Fearing reprisal from Beijing, local officials failed to order tests to confirm outbreaks and didn’t properly warn the public as the pathogen spread death around the country” (Dominique Patton, “Special Report: Before coronavirus, China bungled swine epidemic with secrecy”, Reuters, 5 March 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-swinefever-china-epidemic-specialrepo/special-report-before-coronavirus-china-bungled-swine-epidemic-with-secrecy-idUSKBN20S189>).

China lost 50 per cent of their pig stock, the equivalent of 200 million heads. It was not the first crisis facing the meat industry in the Asian country. The latest crisis, in 2011, caused thousands of poisonings from the use of clenbuterol (a steroid) to accelerate the growth of animals. Vietnam (also a major consumer of pork), Cambodia and Mongolia were among those affected in East Asia.



African swine fever killed almost 200 million pigs

In China, the capitalist mode of production in the countryside highlights these extreme policies of environmental destruction in the quest for profits. It is not by chance that it is the capitalist country where conditions that favour the development of new viruses and increase the risk of jumping between species (zoonosis) are most present, as has been shown with the avian and swine flu that preceded the Covid-19 debacle. In June, Chinese scientists warned that pigs are carriers of a new virus, G4-EA-H1N1, which has already infected humans and that “has all the components of a possible catastrophe if it is not studied quickly and accurately” (*Clarín*, 1 July 2020).

Capitalist environmental predation fosters zoonosis. It is estimated over 60 per cent of infectious diseases affecting humans are caused by viruses and bacteria whose original hosts were animals of other species.

The cover-up, repressive censorship, and health disinformation, first with the swine fever and then with coronavirus, of the Chinese capitalist dictatorship, endorsed by the American and European multinationals, is a clear risk factor for the peoples of the world and for humanity itself. The task of ending this criminal dictatorship and imposing a government of the working class and the people is essential.

MS



Demonstration in New York demanding justice for George Floyd

United States: A summer of antiracist rebellion

Simon Rodriguez

The murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police in late May sparked a popular rebellion against racism and police brutality. Six weeks have elapsed and still, there is not a day without marches in the main cities; another rebellious summer is shaping up like the one in 1967. These are the largest demonstrations since the mobilisations against the invasion of Vietnam; millions took to the streets of over 600 American cities.

The United States is the country most affected by the pandemic, with

2.7 million cases and 130,000 deaths, rising at a rate of around one thousand deaths and 50 thousand cases per day because the lockdown was applied late and in a limited way. In the second quarter, capitalists and the government effected 42 million layoffs and the fall in GDP was 11 per cent. In the face of the disaster caused by the government itself, the response was to favour the bailouts of the great billionaires. The anti-racist rebellion channels the great discontent existing in this situation.

The parallels with the second half of the 1960s, a time whose influence is

recognised by much of young activism, do not end with the massive and radical nature of the anti-racist struggle. Or with the intensity of the repression, with at least 15 people killed, hundreds of wounded, and over 10 thousand arrests in the protests. There is also the absence of political organisations that coordinate and unify the demands of the movement. The masses produced an overflow that the old political and union apparatuses cannot stop. One example is that on Sunday 7 June there were 30 different calls in New York City for mobilisations, which shows the

extent and vitality of the movement but also its lack of coordination.

Despite this, after six weeks of protests, concessions have been made by the authorities, including some that would have been unthinkable a few months ago. The charge against Floyd's killer, police officer Derek Chauvin, was changed from involuntary manslaughter to second-degree manslaughter and the three officers who were with him were also charged. Thousands of police officers across the country have resigned or requested early retirements, chastened by the mobilisation.

By the action of the people, or of the authorities, dozens of statues of racist soldiers, slavers or representatives of colonialism were removed. The state of Mississippi decided to remove from its flag the Confederate emblem, used by the pro-slave side during the American Civil War.

The rebellion hits Trump

The power of the mobilisation also sparked divisions among the military, shattering Trump's intentions to turn to the military to crush the protests. The curfews and deployments of the National Guard failed in their purpose to end the mobilisations and were lifted. Trump's attempts to show himself as an uncompromising defender of bourgeois order and law turned against him. When he quoted the racist Miami chief of police Walter E. Headley, who in 1967 said that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts" there was great rejection. Meanwhile, some policemen knelt to try to appease the angry masses and wash their image a little.

"They have to take revenge. They have to dominate. They have to arrest people and put them on trial and make them go to jail for a long time", Trump desperately demanded from the governors. Fleeing forward, he decided to criminalise anti-fascism and classify it as a form of terrorism, while ignoring true far-right racist terrorism and tolerating its armed rallies. But in his despair, he deepens the crisis of his party.



Trump overwhelmed after the failure of the Tulsa rally

Today polls show the president at his lowest levels of popular support since the beginning of his government, below 40 per cent. His attempt to carry out a massive rally in Tulsa in June was a resounding failure, over a million young people reserved seats but did not attend and left the magnate-president speaking before a half-empty auditorium.

The Democratic Party, the other pillar of the capitalist order, has helped the government by promoting small concessions to protesters and abiding, to a certain extent, with Trump's repressive demands. It guaranteed large deployments of police and the National Guard in the states where it is in government. Obama issued ambiguous messages praising the protests but criticising its violent elements while defending police forces and exonerating most of its members from brutality and racism. Sanders called for reforms to police protocols and increased wages to "professionalise" police forces. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, for his part, although he condemned racism, also made the unique proposal that the police shoot the legs and not the torso of the criminals. The divorce with the protesters is abysmal.

Against the police

The demands to defund or even abolish the police reflect the deep hatred of this fundamental institution of bourgeois repression in a country spending over US\$ 115 billion annually on its police forces. In some cities, spending on the police represents around half of the municipal budget, much more than what they invest in public services. Congress has already begun discussion of measures to limit access to weapons and military equipment by the police. The Minneapolis City Council agreed to dissolve the police and replace it with a "community" force. Los Angeles police suffered a US\$ 150 million cut to their US\$ 1.8 billion budget but the movement calls for a reduction of over 85 per cent. Authorities are proposing a US\$ 1 billion cut to New York Police, out of a US\$ 6 billion budget; protesters are asking for more. In New York, moreover, police disciplinary files were opened for public consultation and a notoriously racist undercover police department was eliminated. The police have also been expelled from numerous schools. These are all achievements of the struggle.

The prison system, which ranges from concentration camps for immigrants to privatised prisons and where forced labour is imposed on those held for the benefit of prison companies, is also denounced in the protests. The US prison population is the highest in the world, with over two million prisoners; 655 inmates per 100,000 people.

More than 50 per cent of Americans agreed to the burning of the Minneapolis police station, according to different surveys. A few permanent camps emerged in Seattle, New York, and other cities. The dynamism of the workers' movement, incorporated into the struggle, is visible. Transport unions refused to move repressors and detainees. In many restaurants, the workers refused to prepare food for the police and there were port strikes in solidarity with the anti-racist struggle.



Policemen kneeling in solidarity with the demonstrators

Justice for George Floyd and punishment for his murderers

We, revolutionary socialists, take part in the struggle by demanding jail and exemplary punishment for the police officers who killed George Floyd and all other racist and murderous police officers. Freedom for all those imprisoned for protesting in this rebellion becomes another fundamental demand. Questioning the repressive bodies and the prison system is fundamental. The bourgeois state will always be repressive and it is not a matter of changing the name of the police by adding the term “community”. It is very important to raise demands to dismantle the lucrative prison business and its most brutal practices, such as forced labour, eliminating privatisation, as well as significantly reducing the number of people incarcerated, without thereby ceasing to demand jail for racists and repressors, the corrupt and white-collar thieves. Demand the closure of all immigrant concentration camps

in which people who did not commit any crime are held, just because they do not have documentation or seek refuge. Drastically cut, as required by Black Lives Matter in Los Angeles and other cities, the police budget, which would allow, along with taxes on large fortunes, to provide free and quality public health money in the framework of the pandemic, as well as social assistance for those who need it. To reduce prison overcrowding, we demand amnesty from victims of the criminalisation of poverty, including hundreds of thousands of poor people imprisoned for crimes related to drug possession, most of them racially discriminated minorities.

Structural racism

The IWU–FI statement of 30 May points to some of the symptoms that reveal the class and racist nature of the US imperialist state: “The US rose as a power based on hundreds of years of slavery and maintained apartheid-like laws of racist segregation until the 1960s. Several states apply policies

designed to deny the right to vote to the black population. Until 2000, interracial marriage was illegal in the state of Alabama. One-third of black children live in poverty, and the per capita income of blacks is one-tenth than that of whites. Twenty-seven per cent of Black people live below the poverty line. Unemployment, at over 10 per cent among Black people, is more than twice as high as among whites. A 2017 study showed that a third of the over two million prisoners in the US are Black. There are proportionally six times as many black prisoners as white prisoners and twice as many Latino prisoners. The probability of a low-income black man being incarcerated at some point in his life is greater than 50 per cent. Convictions for drug use are six times more frequent against blacks than whites, although the rate of use is the same in both groups. In 2016 the murder rate at the hands of the repressive bodies was 10.13 per million among the indigenous population, 6.6 per million among blacks, 3.23 among Latinos, 2.9 among whites.”



In Bristol, UK, a huge crowd dumped the statue of Edward Colston, 17th-century African slave dealer, into the waters of the Avon River

The phenomenon of racism, inherent to capitalism and part of its history since the so-called original accumulation at the time of colonialism, through the slave trade and over-exploitation of slave labour,

is a phenomenon unfortunately widespread throughout the world. Thus, American anti-racist protests resonated internationally. Hundreds of thousands of workers and youth protested on all continents and in most countries. The IWU–FI participated in rallies in Buenos Aires, Barcelona, Istanbul, Santo Domingo, and Rio de Janeiro, among other cities. This is another dimension of the struggle that is of crucial importance as we go through a global recession and the widespread application of austerity measures to safeguard capitalist interests at the cost of the increasing misery of the popular and working-class majorities throughout the world. As in the United States, the fights for democratic rights will have their underlying causes in the unrest generated by the crisis of world capitalism.

The black movement and anti-racist rebellions in the United States

With a long history of racist state repression and paramilitary violence, large expressions of anti-racist resistance have also developed in the United States. In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, there were leaders like Martin Delany and Marcus Garvey who promoted the return to Africa convinced that the Yankee bourgeois and racist society was irreformable. With these ideas, organisations of Black Nationalism, such as the Nation of Islam, arose in the first half of the 20th century, advocating the economic self-sufficiency of the African-American community. Malcolm X, the greatest African-American political orator and agitator of the 1950s and 1960s, emerged from the ranks of this religious group. He later broke with the organisation by coming into contact with anti-colonial African and Muslim non-separatist movements, advancing towards anti-imperialist positions.

At the same time, a movement for equal rights developed, against segregationist laws and racist state policies, for civil rights and democratic reforms, whose main leader was Martin Luther King. Faced with increasing repression, in 1966 a sector of the black movement began to use the slogan “black power”, described by Stokely Carmichael as the exercise of recovering black history and identity in the face of the cultural terrorism and self-justification of white oppression. Also in 1966, the Black Panther Party emerged, under Maoist influence and of anti-colonial thinkers like Frantz Fanon. Likewise, numerous organisations appeared in favour of black pride, black nationalism and separatism, among other tendencies, expressing the same process of resistance to oppression and the systematic attempts of the structurally racist US bourgeois state to subdue a community with a significant fighting tradition.

There were selective repression programs, such as Cointelpro, whose purpose was to infiltrate black organisations to destroy them. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Fred Hampton were killed as part of state and parastatal repression. Others, like Mumia Abu Jamal, have spent decades behind bars, and others, like Assata Shakur, had to go into exile to flee repression and prison.

Expressing radicalised middle sectors more rooted in a community sense than of class, intellectuals and organisations of the black movement made deep criticisms of the limitations of Yankee bourgeois democracy and its imperialist policies of aggression against Vietnam and other peoples, and also of the racist ideological and cultural expressions and their link with capitalism. These are some of the historical antecedents of the Black Lives Matter movement, which vindicates the struggle of the 1960s and feeds on that anti-racist tradition.

SR



Picket in the General Motors strike of 2019

Working-class struggles grow in the United States

Francisco Retama

The dominant imperialist country is not capable of guaranteeing the well-being of its population. Four out of ten Americans live in poverty or on the edge of it, according to data from the United States Census Bureau. By 2018, 11.8 per cent of the population lived in poverty, 38.1 million Americans.¹ But since 2016, the percentage of the population living on the edge of poverty was 29.8 per cent, around 95 million people.²

This is explained by the precarisation of the life of the working class, the reduction of wages, the lack of benefits and collective contracts and the impossibility of having social insurance.

It is a long process, even before the 2008 crisis, which has caused large mobilisations of the working class, women and youth, among which stand out the strike by migrant workers on 16 February 2017 and, more recently, the strikes at General Motors, as well as the strike of teachers in various states of the country. Closer in time, the actions of resistance to exposure to the risk of contagion and death by Covid-19 were added. Finally, the murder of George Floyd and the national revolt against racist repression also became the ferment for the mobilisation of the working class.

The struggles against precarisation

Just a few days ago, on June 23, around 4,300 workers at the shipbuilding company General

Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, went on strike against the company's intention to expand areas for subcontracting personnel, as well as to demand a three per cent salary increase.

Of the workers with the right to vote represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), local S6, 87 per cent voted for the strike, arguing it is an insufficient increase since the cost of living rises well above; for example, health insurance will be 11 per cent more expensive.

It is not far off that 16 September 2019, when more than 50,000 General Motors workers in the United States went on strike for the signing of a collective agreement with greater benefits for members of the numerous United Auto Workers locals. They were on strike for 50 days, which have

1 Data from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2019/income-poverty.html>.

2 Data from <https://www.povertyusa.org/facts>.

gone down in history for the long duration and such large participation, something that had not happened in the entire United States in the last decades.

The GM strike had a great impact and was an inspiration for workers from other companies and branches, who since then have continued to stage strikes, work stoppages and demonstrations of various kinds to fight against the precarisation of jobs. In reality, fighting against the crisis being paid for by the working class.

Another example of a long-term struggle was that of the 1,800 copper miners who work for the Asarco company, a subsidiary of Grupo Mexico in Texas and Arizona, who rejected the signing of an agreement proposed by the company in which the salary of 70 per cent of the workforce was to remain unchanged for four years.

They fight in defence of their lives

The interactive map of struggles prepared by the webpage Payday Report¹ was widely publicized. It documents hundreds of strikes in numerous localities and work centres that have taken place since the start of the pandemic. Until 31 May there were 240 strikes, and during June they added over 500 actions that ranged from spontaneous stoppages (wild strikes) to marches or caravans of cars and other forms of public protest.

Hundreds of women and men, employees of various apple packing companies in Washington state, supplying virtually the entire northern United States, went on strike demanding protection for safe work, as basic as facemasks, disinfectant gel, soap and water. They also demanded an additional extraordinary payment of US\$ 2 per hour to take the hourly charge to US\$ 15.85 for working amid the pandemic.

Many other mobilisations achieved

1 See <https://paydayreport.com/covid-19-strike-wave-interactive-map/>.



Longshoremen for Justice to George Floyd

extraordinary payments, increased equipment for protection at work and even the extension of the quarantine until mid-June. Health, cleaning, fast food, hotel and technology workers have carried out some of the largest and most media screened protests, as happened with Amazon workers.

The working class mobilises against racist violence

Of course, the city of Minneapolis, where the murder of George Floyd took place, was one of the epicentres of the mobilisation of sectors of the working class that, summoned by their union organisations, were present in the massive protests that repudiated racist violence by the police.

But they also did it with actions like the one that spread throughout the country and inspired similar measures in other cities where there were also massive protests. We are talking about those workers who are part of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), who refused to transport police officers on their way to suppress the protests, or to transfer detainees.

The Minnesota Workers Unite, a coalition of independent unions and grassroots activists, mobilised with hundreds of workers and representatives of several dozen unions to demand the arrest and punishment of the four police officers involved in the Floyd murder. Workers from the University of Minnesota and those

from the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers also mobilised.

In Seattle, the Black Lives Matter movement called for a general strike on 12 June, causing dozens of establishments to close that day; in many cases, it was the employers themselves who closed ahead of the strike. Within this context, over 60,000 people marched.

Port workers affiliated with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) on 9 June halted activities for nine minutes at all workplaces, as a tribute to George Floyd and to join the demand for justice. In turn, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) announced that same day the one-hour paralysis of all the ports where they have a presence.

Academics and researchers from universities, institutes and research centres in the country joined the international strike for racial justice.

Hundreds of Facebook workers went on virtual strike against the company's racist policies as part of yet another national mobilisation day demanding justice for George Floyd and against racist violence in the United States.

The US is living a new situation of encouragement of the struggle of the American working class, which is an eloquent sample of what is about to happen in the world.



Pedro Sanchez (PSOE) and Pablo Iglesias (Podemos): Another failure of the reformist “left”

Grim management of the pandemic by the “progressive” government of PSOE–UnidasPodemos

Josep Lluís Alcazar

On 13 January, the PSOE-Unidas Podemos (UP) took office. This is a government with Pablo Iglesias as vice-president and a PCE (Spanish Communist Party) minister, for Izquierda Unida (IU). For many, it was a possibility of a shift to the left of government policies, although soon it was ruined by the disastrous management of the health crisis, declaring a state of alarm between 14 March and 21 June.

The first thing to identify is that this “leftist” coalition government was not born from a rise in its components but their weakening. Sanchez refused to form a government with UP six months earlier when between the two they had 11.2 million votes and 165 deputies. He decided to repeat elections to make a clean sweep and now, with 9.85 million votes and 155 deputies, they resolved to form a government. The coalition was presented as a lifeline—and at the same time as a flight

forward—from both the PSOE and UP. Especially for Podemos, faced with the worst electoral result in the general elections and coming from a crisis with a split on the right, although the entry into government accelerated the split on the left of another sector. This is why the formation of the coalition government did not raise great enthusiasm in the working class but rather scepticism.

The management of the coronavirus health crisis has been instrumental to confirm this lack of expectations. The Spanish State has had three world records in proportion to its population: of the dead, of infected health workers and fines. The government reacted late and badly to the spread of the pandemic, seeing what was already happening in Italy. The brutal cuts and privatisation of public health in the last decade were completed with the non-participation of the private sector, putting all the effort on the reduced public health. To this reality, it was

added that there was no immediate reaction for the purchase and extension of the tests to determine the sources of infection, for the purchase of protective material and respirators, without forcing their production to companies and laboratories and, finally, faced with these two weaknesses, it came late, still faced with the demands coming from the most affected areas, such as Catalonia, in the name of “unity of the fatherland”, the last resort: confinement, because of business pressure not to stop the non-essential sectors of the economy. The combination of these three factors was lethal, and those who paid the most were the older people who lived in old people’s homes.

The second aspect of this management was the economic one. The government shielded big companies and secured the banking business. On the other hand, it made the working population pay for most of the crisis and charged the bill in the public



The government militarised the health response; the enemy became the population itself, instead of the virus

coffers. And under the false speech of the Minister of Labour of Podemos, that there would be no layoffs, they did not prohibit them but instead took on the payment with public money of the payrolls —70 per cent— of every company that wanted, including those that had benefits and those that are taxed in tax havens. Millions of workers were left without a job, some because they were fired, others temporarily, others saw their contracts run out without renewal; two million workers in the informal economy with no resources risked being fined for looking for work during confinement. Nor was the regularisation of the immigrant population, essential to face the health emergency, carried out, despite the lack of labour in the countryside. Precisely, a large part of the latest outbreaks has affected these groups.

While some did a great business, misery grew among the working population. The result was explained by Oxfam Intermon: the 23 ultra-wealthy in Spain have earned €19.2 billion while 700,000 people have been added to those who are at risk of exclusion, during the pandemic alone, since March. A definitive assessment of “left” policy.

To complete the deficiencies, the

government tried to cover everything with the declaration of the state of alarm. With this exceptional measure, it used a law from the right (denounced by the entire left and by social movements), called the “gag law”, which it had promised to repeal as arbitrary and oppressive of fundamental rights, to apply it in three months more than the previous right-wing government of the Popular Party (PP) did in three years. A million fines and over seven thousand arrests, demonstrations banned, networks intercepted, a whole repressive arsenal to silence the protest. They militarised the health response by putting every day military, police and civil guards on television instead of doctors and investigators. The enemy became the population itself, instead of the virus.

There are many reasons for the anger against and rejection of the government. The virus, like repression, does know of social classes. Death and pain have been primed in popular classes, as well as fines and arrests. The coronavirus accelerated the world capitalist economic crisis that had been brewing. The right and extreme right initially supported the government in militarisation but today they separate from it, waiting for it to weaken and

fall sooner rather than later.

Now, the so-called reconstruction plan comes. The bosses have already announced their demands: public money to guarantee their profits, tax cuts, pension cuts, ease to lay-off and, especially, that the latest PP labour reform, which has brought such good benefits to the bosses and has spread so much precariousness among the working class, be not touched. The European Union has also warned the government against any fickleness in meeting popular demands. More cuts are coming. The question is whether the workers’ and people’s movement will allow these plans to be applied after the disaster of the cuts in health and public services. How the situation is resolved depends on the ability to build the mobilisation. The alternative is the extra time in which the government has placed us towards another of the right and extreme right (PP-Vox).

As the numbers of dead and infected grew, scandals dotted the royal family: illegal commissions, sumptuous travel. For the first time in decades, the latest polls gave a majority rejection of the crown. Also for the first time, and on the occasion of the King’s speech faced with the coronavirus crisis, pot-banging sounded in many cities and

towns, not just in Catalonia where the rejection of the King is massive after he supported the repression against the Self-determination referendum of 1 October 2017.

Podemos has quickly depleted all expectations of change for a large part of the working population. It has rapidly repeated the balance and disappointment with Syriza in

Greece. Meanwhile, the prolonged decline of Izquierda Unida (United Left) continues. It is urgent to build an alternative to the left of UP, an alternative that must take the form of a front of workers' organisations, with a necessary double rupture: with the monarchy and for the right to self-determination of the peoples and with capitalism, for a plan of urgent

measures so it is not the working population who pays for the crisis, a plan financed by taxes on large bosses and the non-payment of public debt. Building this alternative goes hand in hand with the support of mobilisations for 100 per cent public health, against layoffs and company closings, in defence of decent pensions.

Indefinite strike against the closure of Nissan in Catalunya

On 14 April, an indefinite strike was declared in the Nissan factories threatened with closure, which would affect 25,000 workers, including staff, subcontractors and suppliers. Two of the factories carried out the strike and, in a few days, the main plant stopped for lack of parts. The strike was called unitarily by all the unions present in the committee.

At the end of May, the Renault-Nissan Group announced that it was definitely closing its plants in Catalonia. On 30 June, the mandatory negotiations established by law began. If there is no agreement, from 30 July the company can unilaterally apply its plan with no need for any government authorisation. The fact the bosses can so easily close companies and dismiss the workers is a consequence of the labour reform imposed by the Popular Party in 2012, which the PSOE-UP government had promised to repeal but it has not done.

The Nissan closure is not a consequence of the coronavirus. It was previously foreseen but it is the start of a new industrial relocation with terrible consequences for the working class. It is the start of the new capitalist crisis that the virus has only accelerated. With more to come. This is why it is so important to stop the first hit. But with the policy of the leaders of Workers Commissions and UGT (General Union of Workers), which with USO (Workers Syndical Union) are the majority in the committee, the



Workers fight against the closure of Nissan factories

closure will not stop. The bosses are waiting for the time to expire to layoff and dismantle the company. Without the occupation of the facilities, this process will not be stopped.

The closure of the Nissan plants results from a concentration of the production of the parent group, with Renault keeping the production for Europe. It is also the political and industrial determination to concentrate automobile technology of the future in the Franco-German agreement. Multinationals do have a homeland because there is no multinational that can do without the services of "their" State to open markets and curb competition. And it is clear the Spanish State, being the eighth world producer and the second in Europe, does not produce any Spanish brand. This brings the fear that Nissan is

just the start of the relocation of the automotive industry in the Spanish State.

There is no turning back from the French-Japanese company. There is no other possibility to avoid the closure of Nissan and the terrible consequences than to nationalise the multinational without compensation and the prohibition of layoffs. In recent years, €170 million of subsidies in public money in exchange for plans that have not materialised. But this demands a political battle with the central, regional and local governments for the company to be nationalised and to invest in a public solution. And, we add, under the control of the workers, because it is the only guarantee the necessary reconversion of production is to put it at the service of public and non-polluting transport needs.



Since May, protests demanding food have grown in the neighbourhoods

The struggle against hunger in Chile

Rainer “Oso” [“Bear”] Rios, leader of MST

Chile is one of the countries with the highest number of infections per million inhabitants in the world. The number of deceased so far (early July) amounts to approximately 10,000. The collapse of the health system and the criminal handling of the pandemic by Piñera are not the only dangers for the people and the working class. The government is unloading the brutal economic crisis on the backs of millions of people and hundreds of thousands are already starving.

The economic and health debacle

When we speak of suffering, we must add which of the two Chile we are referring to: the Chile of the large economic groups or Chile of the people and the working class. It sounds tragic, but so it is. The rate of coronavirus infection and mortality is dramatically higher in popular neighbourhoods. The reason is not difficult to identify. Despite their quarantine boasts,

millions of workers have to continue attending their workplaces with no proper mitigation measures for the virus and 2.6 million informal workers who must leave their homes to try to get work to eat.

Inequality is not limited to this alone. If a businessman or someone from the wealthy neighbourhoods becomes ill, they will access private clinics with a first-world health standard. They are guaranteed, or more guaranteed than a worker, a respirator and critical beds. For the people, the only way out is to resort to a public health system that has been dismantled for decades, with budget cuts and privatisations. Before the coronavirus, Chile already had a public health system that held the sad record of being one of the worst on the continent.

On an economic level, the picture is Dantesque. The number of layoffs has been rising to catastrophic levels. The

Chilean economy is preparing for its worst decline since the crisis of the early 1980s. The IMF forecasts a drop of 7.5 per cent, which could be worse if there is a second wave. For working-class families, this one piece of information turns into an unbearable calamity.

Almost two million workers have lost their jobs, over half a million have been suspended and 2.6 million informal workers have nowhere to find a livelihood because of the quarantine. ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) estimates that over a million people will fall into starvation conditions because of the economic crisis, together with millions who will border the poverty line.

Piñera, in agreement with part of the opposition, seeks to deepen this attack. Saving big business is the actual goal of an economic emergency plan that reduces the aid to millions of desperate



Popular protests grow at the beat of the great discontent

families to paltry crumbs. For the first time in decades, the government is preparing the conditions for a historical indebtedness in the country, advised by the big business community and the bankers who have already committed to keeping in their fortunes the bulk of this “aid”. As always, it will be the people and the working class who pay for the “investment push”.

Piñera’s terror

This dark panorama has the Piñera government sleepless. During the pandemic, it has been combining the attempt to pass ultra-repressive laws with meagre aid to the poorest families. His “fair-weather” discourse diluted; he had to remove his Health Minister and forced to seek an agreement with the opposition. The deep social discontent that caused the greatest outbreak in recent decades has been a forced topic in La Moneda [presidential palace] and the media.

The vertiginous multiplication of “common pots” (soup kitchens financed by the own neighbourhoods) grows at the beat of the great discontent. The anti-hunger demonstrations took a significant leap during May. Terrified, Piñera had to deliver 2.5 million boxes of goods and commit to social aid bonds. However, the State pay box is reaching the limit of deciding whether to save companies or families. And Piñera has already made his decision.

“Not one more peso for aid than what we are giving, we cannot be irresponsible with the country”, he said at a press conference. Days later, war broke out within the coalition of

right-wing parties. Mario Desbordes, president of the major party, Renovacion Nacional (RN), told the media that if more aid was not delivered, the government and the country could deeply regret it.

From the opposition, hysterical screams of fear have broken any diplomatic composure. “Only the president seems not to understand this country is going through a political crisis that hunger and deaths will be exacerbated”, important leaders replied. The distracting effects of “Guillotining” ministers to save Piñera and blaming them for everything begin to dissipate.

Although March and April were months of successful euphoria for the government, which believed it had reversed the political crisis with the triumphalist discourse on its handling of the pandemic, May and June did away with such delirium. The erratic government has returned, which heats the broth of a fresh outbreak at every step it takes, or a word it utters.

Since 18 October 2019, the only lifeline keeping Piñera afloat is the false opposition and a detachment of corrupt union, student and social leaders who refuse to confront him. The big problem is that this bureaucracy and the opposition have been hit as hard as or harder than the president and his government since the massive October days.

For an emergency economic program and a national plan of struggle

There are no two ways, either business or the people are saved.

Therefore, from the MST in Chile, we have been demanding a worker and popular economic emergency plan that prohibits dismissals and provides a subsidy equal to the actual cost of living for families who cannot work. Also the cancellation of all debts, the ban on cuts in basic services, among other measures.

Can we drive such a plan? Of course, we can. Nationalising all basic and strategic services companies and all the natural resources, under workers’ and popular administration, imposing a tax on the wealthiest and removing state subsidies to the big companies.

Can we save the lives of our infected with coronavirus? It is essential to do so, and for this we demand that all hospitals and private clinics pass into the hands of the State and multiply the health budget, putting it as a priority.

Is it possible to do it with Piñera in power? If this criminal government continues in La Moneda, it will continue to run the country at the service of big business. The task set out since 18 October is still there, waiting to be solved to help millions of working families today. Piñera must fall through the mobilisation. For this, we need a national plan of struggle that goes from the territorial assemblies to the unions, passing through the student, feminist and popular organisations.

A plan that must also demand, and as a fundamental measure, the departure of the military from the streets, the rejection of all repressive laws and the release of political prisoners.



Even the soccer fans ask for “Out with Bolsonaro”

Brazil: The struggle not to die of “virus, gunshots or hunger”

Claudia Gonzales and Michel Tunes, leaders of CST

Not to “die of the virus, gunshots or hunger” is what the anti-racist black youth and the organised anti-fascist soccer fans who took to the streets repudiating Bolsonaro sang. The government of Jair Bolsonaro and General Mourão placed Brazil at the top of the world pandemic and increased poverty and unemployment.

The denialist policy, which describes Covid-19 as a “little flu”, explains why there are one million people infected and 60,000 dead. At the same time, it is reaching over 40 million the number of people without formal work, who

are currently trying to survive in the informal sector with BRL\$ 600 (US\$ 113) of basic emergency income.

The far-right government is corrupt and gangster-like. Bolsonaro closed deals with corrupt right-wing deputies to build an allied base in the National Congress. Fabricio Queiroz, a friend of the President and former adviser to his son, Flavio Bolsonaro, was arrested in an investigation looking for the Bolsonaro family’s ties to organised crime in Rio de Janeiro.

Bolsonaro has lost a part of his political strength. Ministers of the extreme right left his government, such

as the former judge of the Lava Jato operation, Sergio Moro. Many workers who voted for Bolsonaro are reflecting and no longer trust the president. After 16 months in office, his popularity is around 30 per cent in polls.

The traditional right and the PT and PCdoB governors adjust and relax the measures of social isolation

At the beginning of the pandemic, while Bolsonaro was organising protests to call for the closure of the National Congress, another bourgeois sector focused on approving the fiscal

adjustment. The current president of the Chamber of Deputies, Rodrigo Maia, leads this sector of the traditional right (PSDB, Brazilian Social Democracy Party and DEM, Democrats, who ruled in the 1990s). Maia negotiates and agrees on the fiscal adjustment measures with the PT (Workers Party) and the PCdoB (Communist Party of Brazil), which lead the CUT (Unified Workers' Central) and UNE (National Union of Students). Therefore, Congress passed laws that allocated BRL\$ 1 trillion (US\$ 187 billion) to banks for the purchase of bad debt in the financial system and provisional measures that authorise negotiations aimed at reducing wages and suspending employment contracts.

In recent weeks, governors and mayors have decided to loosen the few measures of social isolation that still exist, which was a point of friction with the extreme right. The governments of the PT and the PCdoB in the states of Ceará, Bahia and Maranhão (in the northeast region of the country), in alliance with the traditional bourgeois parties, continue this trend. Some governors, like the one in Rio de Janeiro, carry out police assassinations in the favelas (slums).

The struggles in defence of life, wages, social rights and for “Out with Bolsonaro!”

Strong feminist protests marked Bolsonaro's election, in what became known as the #EleNão (Portuguese for “not him”) movement. This wave of opposition was later expressed in the so-called “education tsunami”, with huge street protests and a national strike against the Bolsonaro government in his first months in office. In early 2020, this process was manifested again in the oil workers' strike and the feminist mobilisations on 8 March. The coronavirus pandemic cut this process of strong street mobilisation and strikes and generated a virtual movement of questioning expressed in the *cacerolazos* (pot banging) for “Out with Bolsonaro!” Little by little the movement was recomposed with



For Bolsonaro, Covid-19 is a “little flu”

the struggles of the health workers with symbolic actions in front of the hospitals.

In this context, the most exploited and oppressed sectors resumed the protests. Not to “die from the virus, gunshots or hunger”, as the anti-racist black youth said. Thus, there were two unified days at the national level. These rallies by the soccer fans and the black youth for “Out with Bolsonaro” helped the mobilisation to penetrate some sectors of the working class, such as the strikes of the metro workers in the state of Minas Gerais, those of public transport in various cities and the struggle of the cooks and kitchen helpers outsourced in Rio de Janeiro schools. They are battles for wages, rights and an effective quarantine.

App workers show the way

A national day of strikes and protests by young app workers (Food, Rappi, Uber Eats, 99Foods and Logg) was established on 1 July with a powerful demonstration in São Paulo as the epicentre. They carry out an essential service delivering food to people amid a pandemic but they suffer from over-exploitation by the app networks and with the effects of easing social isolation measures. This is why a national protest of the category was called and the support of the app users was requested. Undoubtedly, the example of the struggle of these workers is what would mark the wage campaigns for the mail, oil, and bank workers categories that

took place amid the pandemic. Those who are in the process of mobilisation are the workers of the San Pablo metro for their collective agreement, today attacked by the Dória government of the PSDB.

The PT, CUT and UNE leaders block the struggles and help Bolsonaro

PT and the CUT union bureaucracy, PCdoB and the UNE student bureaucracy try to channel popular dissatisfaction through institutional means. They do not build an effective movement of protests or street strikes for “Out with Bolsonaro!” They give the president a break and have agreements with Rodrigo Maia. They didn't use the app workers' 1 July date to conduct a national day of struggles. They are negotiating the terms for the complete reopening of cities with governors such as João Doria, of the PSDB, in the industrial state of São Paulo, in addition to not fighting against the Bolsonaro mayors, such as Crivela in Rio de Janeiro, who persecutes the combative unionism of the street sweepers. The whole movement has the aim of preparing the municipal electoral process and trying to form a broad electoral front that forecasts alliances with traditional oligarchic parties.

Instead of promoting demonstrations and strikes, PT and PCdoB recently called a virtual demonstration “in defence of democracy” with former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso, of PSDB, and Michel Temer, of MDB, who took over the government after



Youth on the streets against racism and repression

Dilma's dismissal; General Santos Cruz of the Superior Army and the Setúbal family, owner of the Itaú Bank. The PSOL leadership also took part in this initiative, through Guilherme Boulos, the deputies Marcelo Freixo and even members of MES (Movement of Socialist Left), through the deputy David Miranda, making a serious mistake.

We need unity for the protests

To guarantee the effective containment of the pandemic, keeping labour rights, for the defence of workers' wages and the emergency basic income for the unemployed, we need to fight together. Without strong struggles, the bosses' regime will keep its privileges, save the Bolsonaro family and accelerate fiscal adjustment. Strikes and work stoppages, combined with the actions of soccer fans and black youth, are the only effective way to stop these attacks by the government, Congress and Bolsonaro's governors.

This is why CUT, CTB, Força Sindical (Union Power), UGT and UNE should organise a great day of work stoppages, shift delays and strikes unifying the struggles. They must organise, on the same day, street events that channel popular dissatisfaction. In this sense, it is essential that CSP-Conlutas assume this battle and effectively call for demonstrations and fight for this policy

in all activities where it operates with the grassroots.

In this way, we fight to finish with Bolsonaro and for quarantine with wages and basic income, against the fiscal adjustment and loss of rights, and for a program that begins by suspending the payment of public debt so the millionaires, the bankers and the multinationals pay for the crisis.

For a left and socialist front

The PSOL leadership, unfortunately, continues to be linked to Lulaism and takes part in virtual meetings with bourgeois leaders. Organisations like Resistencia / PSOL, PCR and PCB, which criticised the virtual public rally with Cardoso and Temer, end up supporting electoral alliances with the PT and not betting on the development of the struggles. What we need is to build an alternative

with sectors of the left, without the class conciliation of the PT and the PCdoB. Lula's goal is the old class conciliation with the bourgeoisie project that seeks municipal coalition governments. Only a leftist and socialist front that struggles to remove Bolsonaro and Mourão and achieve a workers' government can apply a workers' and popular emergency plan.



In April, thousands returned to the streets

The Lebanese revolutionary process and its possibilities

Görkem Duru

Amid the pandemic, mobilisations returned in Lebanon. At the end of April, in the capital Beirut and Tripoli, thousands came out to protest again against the fall in the standard of living. The regime could not close the political crisis opened in last October.

The revolutionary process in Lebanon started in October 2019 when the masses rose against the capitalist exploitation policies and the regime of agreement with religious sects and their bourgeois parties. This agreement establishes that the president must Maronite Catholic while the prime

minister must be Sunni Muslim and the speaker of National Assembly Shi'a Muslim (Hezbollah). Since April the process continues as the economic crisis deepens because of Covid-19. Following the outbreak of the revolutionary uprising of the Lebanese workers, Saad Hariri had resigned as Prime Minister, and a new government was established on 21 January under the leadership of the former Minister of Education, Hassan Diab.

The false “democratic” promises

Although the new government tried to establish some prestige by hiding

behind adjectives such as “independent” and “technocrat”, it did not take long for the Lebanese workers to realise that this discourse was just a mask. On the one hand, there are Lebanese capitalists, whose interests are linked to the continuation of neoliberal capitalist exploitation and who know they secure such continuation through the sectarian regime existing in the country, established after the civil war by imperialism (1975). On the other hand, some Lebanese workers rise so as not to pay the price of unemployment and poverty caused

by capitalist exploitation and who target the regime's oppressive policies, sectarian favouritism and corruption.

The Diab government, comprising technocrat representatives of the regime, came to power having two main tasks to accomplish: to keep the regime afloat and to maintain the system of exploitation; and to do so by soothing the masses through a democratic discourse and partial democratic concessions. The new government was established with the claim that it will prepare a more "democratic" election law to address people's dissatisfaction with the regime.

However, the workers and young people who rebelled against injustices in income distribution, the inability to access public resources, corruption and unemployment weren't fooled by Diab's hypocrisy and continued with their mobilisation with a new slogan against the new government: "Let them all go!"

The pandemic and the deepening economic crisis

The economic crisis deepened with the outbreak of the pandemic in Lebanon, which has already been going through the biggest economic crisis in its history even before the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the entire world had hit the country. When the amount of the country's foreign debt hit US\$92 billion, corresponding to 170 per cent of its GDP, the government announced its default in March and declared it was ready to negotiate with the IMF for new debt-restructuring plans.

Like all capitalist governments, the Diab government tried to make the workers pay the price of the crisis so the bosses could preserve their wealth and profits during the pandemic instead of implementing policies in favour of public health. This resulted in the deepening of the social crisis in the country. The government responded with implementing a curfew to paralyse the mobilisations on the streets and to secure the continuation of the class it represents.

The larger picture of the social collapse that has deepened with the pandemic is that youth unemployment rose above 30 per cent in the country and the total unemployment hit almost 55 per cent. Approximately 60 per cent of the Lebanese population are living below the poverty line. Since March, the local currency depreciation has reached 150 per cent (US\$1 used to be 1500 Lebanese lira, now it is 4000 Lebanese lira). The purchasing power of the workers has collapsed in the face of the rapidly increasing inflation. Considering the fact the country has an economic model based on exports and not production, the problems in accessing basic goods such as wheat and medicines, amid such a crisis and pandemic environment, ring the alarm bell of a food and health crisis.

In such an atmosphere, the government announced it would design a new economic plan and start negotiations with the IMF. The fundamental aspect of this plan, which includes no policy in favour of the workers, consists of offering alternative sources of exploitation to domestic and foreign capitalists through the privatisation of natural resources such as hydrocarbons. Recognising that the outcome of any agreement with the IMF would make them pay the price of the crisis through imposing further austerity measures, the Lebanese workers again mobilised against the economic and social crisis, the corrupt sectarian regime and its representative, the Diab government.

Mass mobilisation and possibilities

The struggle of the masses that took to the streets during the pandemic spread to many cities of the country on 27 April when the police and armed forces killed 26-year-old Fouad Samman in Tripoli during a street demonstration.

Two main axes shape the revolutionary uprising of the oppressed and exploited in Lebanon since October 2019. Not paying the price of the



Clashes over price hikes

capitalist crisis and getting rid of the corrupt sectarian regime. Today, the target of this struggle has become banks. The fact the majority of the leaders of the sectarian regime are shareholders of the country's banks and the fact the banks had prevented workers from accessing their own money in this process of struggle have made the banks targets that stand at the intersection of the masses' economic and democratic demands.

However, through the revolutionary process has been spontaneously progressing for nine months, no political alternative has emerged that could combine the economic, social and democratic demands of the masses with the perspective of breaking away from capitalism and of building a workers' government. As a result, the forces of the current order are constantly seeking ways to divide and defeat the mass movement and to keep the regime afloat. In this oppressive regime built on sectarian foundations, those who are in power have many tools to use towards these ends: to resort to the Army and police forces, to turn to democratic reactionary tactics such as the Diab government, and to divide the masses through Hezbollah-like counter-revolutionary, sectarian structures.

So far, Lebanese workers have been able to keep their determination in their struggle and unity against all these threats coming from the regime. The most urgent need remains the building of leadership amongst the mobilising masses that could break away from capitalism and the regime.



Trotsky at his home in Coyoacan, Mexico

Eighty years after his murder, our tribute

Why did Stalin kill Trotsky?

Gabriel Schwerdt

Eighty years ago, on 21 August 1940, Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary whose name is associated with socialism and workers' democracy, was assassinated in Coyoacan, Mexico, where he lived in exile. Trotsky, together with Lenin, headed the Russian Revolution of October 1917.

Ramon Mercader¹ (aka Jacson or

¹ Ramon Mercader (1913-1978). Militant of the Stalinist Spanish CP. He never acknowledged he was sent by Stalin. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. In May 1960, he finished his sentence and could travel to Moscow on a Czechoslovak passport. He was secretly decorated as a

Mornard), an agent of the GPU, the Soviet secret police, could perpetrate the crime after several attempts. The murder was the end of relentless persecution. In 1927, Trotsky and his partner, Natalia, were deported to Alma Ata, in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The GPU relocated him to Turkey, where

hero of the Soviet Union with the Order of Lenin and the Gold Medal. He then settled in Havana, Cuba, where he died. He was protected by Fidel and Raul Castro's regime. He is buried in the Moscow cemetery of Kuntsevo, reserved for heroes of the Soviet Union, under a false name, Ramon Ivanovich Lopez.

the nationalist leader Kemal Atatürk granted asylum and authorised him to settle in Prinkipo (Büyükkada) Island. Thanks to his insistent requests and the attempts of his followers to allow him to go into exile in one of the central European countries, he had a brief stay in France but was again extradited, this time to Norway. Then, Stalinism pressed constantly for the Norwegian Social Democratic government to kick him out. Finally, in 1937, he settled in Mexico City, thanks to the permit from President Lazaro Cardenas, obtained by members of the American SWP and the

painter Diego Rivera.

Pursue the Trotskyists!

Stalinist persecution of Trotsky and his followers was ruthless. The GPU devoted most of its activity in Europe to the espionage, persecution and assassination of Trotskyist leaders. They had a section just for those services. Trotsky's top secretaries were killed, Irwin Wolf was captured in Spain (where Andres Nin, among others, was also murdered), Leon Sedov, Trotsky's eldest son and closest collaborator, was murdered in Paris, and Rudolf Klement was killed shortly before the founding of the Fourth International in 1938. In Switzerland, Ignace Reis, a GPU official who escaped from the USSR and joined the Fourth International, was murdered. Two other Trotsky's sons were also killed and a daughter committed suicide.

Meanwhile, in the Siberian concentration camps, thousands of prisoners died of exhaustion from forced labour, cold, or direct firing squads. Leopold Trepper,¹ in his exciting book *The Great Game*, relates in detail the great viciousness against the Trotskyists, who were shot by the thousands: "They carried a T on their backs set by their jailers, and refused to make any confession. They were the only ones who faced Stalinism to the end."

The Moscow trials

The brutal repression unleashed by Stalin to exterminate the old Bolshevik guard needed a judicial process. Otherwise, how could he explain that the prominent leaders of the revolution wanted to conspire against the Soviet state? Therefore, Stalin mounted four key trials between 1936 and 1938. The first was the "trial of the sixteen", with Zinoviev,

¹ Leopold Trepper (1904-1982). Polish communist militant of Jewish origin. He was the leader of the "Red Orchestra", a pro-Soviet spy network active in Berlin under the Nazis. His "pianists" or radio transmitters sent important dispatches to Moscow. Trepper and his "orchestra" anticipated the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. But Stalin did not take this into account. After the war, Trepper was imprisoned in the former Soviet Union.

Kamenev, Smirnov, Mrachkovsky and others as defendants; the second, "the trial of the seventeen", which included Pyatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Muralov, Serebryakov and others, took place in January 1937. Then followed the secret trial of Marshal Tukhachevsky and a group of high-ranking Red Army generals in June 1937. And finally, "the trial of the twenty-one" against Rikov, Bukharin, Krestinky,

Rakovsky, Yagoda and others in March 1938. The men on the accused bench were all members of Lenin's politburo, except Stalin himself. Trotsky, in exile, was the main defendant in these trials. He and the old Bolshevik guard were accused of plotting to assassinate Stalin and other Soviet leaders, of conspiring to disrupt the economic and military power of the country, and of killing masses of Russian workers. They were

The Dewey Commission: The truth about Stalin's accusations

Goldman: What country are you a citizen of, Mr Trotsky?

Trotsky: They took away my citizenship of the Soviet Union. I am not a citizen of any country.

The question was asked in 1937 by Albert Goldman, a labour lawyer who served as Trotsky's counsel at the Dewey Commission hearings. This commission was composed of prominent independent personalities, none of whom were followers of Trotsky, such as its chairman John Dewey, hence the name of the commission, a leading liberal American philosopher.

As soon as he was granted asylum in Mexico, Trotsky publicly demanded the creation of an international commission of inquiry, since he

had been denied any opportunity to respond to the allegations before a legally constituted court. In a speech prepared to be broadcast by telephone from Mexico City, before a large gathering at the New York racetrack on 9 February, Trotsky made the following statement "If this commission decides that I am guilty in the least of the crimes that Stalin accuses me of, I promise beforehand to voluntarily surrender myself into the hands of the executors of the GPU."

After several months of a thorough investigation, the commission concluded the Moscow trials were fabricated, that Trotsky and his son Sedov were not guilty of the 18 charges against them.



Trotsky next to Natalia Sedova during the Dewey Commission proceedings



Mercader with the Mexican police

all found guilty with false evidence or forced confessions and shot or sent to Siberian concentration camps, where they died quickly. Trotsky was the only one of the accused Bolshevik leaders who was outside the country, beyond Stalin's fist. When Zinoviev and Kamenev were tried, Trotsky challenged Moscow to request his extradition from Norway, where he lived at the time. Stalin refused and put pressure on the Norwegian government to keep him isolated. For six months he was silenced and denied the possibility of answering the monstrous accusations against him.

Why did Stalin kill Trotsky?

Stalin was increasingly concerned with Trotsky's activity in exile, so his obsession was to kill him. In early 1939 he made one of his usual purges among the GPU staff and put Pavel Sudoplatov as deputy director of the Foreign Department. In 1992, when he recounted his memoirs in the book *Special Tasks*, he said his mission, with all available resources, was to kill Trotsky. As he details, Stalin would have told him when he summoned him in March 1939: "In the Trotskyist movement there are no important political figures apart from Trotsky himself. By eliminating Trotsky, the threat disappears (...) Trotsky must be irremediably eliminated." According to Sudoplatov, "the core of the ideological struggle among the leaders" was Stalin's

idea of "revolution in a single country, against the internationalism of Trotsky", whose efforts in exile "to split and then control the world communist movement were harming Stalin and the Soviet Union". Sudoplatov's memories are faithful to that uneven confrontation between Trotsky, exiled with a few thousand followers, and Stalin, at the head of a super-powerful counter-revolutionary bureaucratic apparatus that dominated the powerful Soviet Union.

What the Stalinist agents were right about was that Trotsky's task in exile was titanic. He earned his living as a writer, moving from country to country with only a handful of collaborators, denouncing step by step the counter-revolutionary policies of the dictator, the CPSU, the Third International and their satellite parties, the suicidal policy

of dividing the German workers in the face of Hitler's rise, the capitulation to the bourgeoisie in Spain and France with the Popular Front, the phenomenon of bureaucratic degeneration and repression in the USSR and calling for a new political revolution because the "old party is dead". Together with these denunciations, he began to form an alternative, promoting since 1933 the formation of a fourth international, which became a reality in 1938, although he maintained the unconditional defence of the USSR against any imperialist military attack.

In 1939, the signing of the "non-aggression" treaty between Stalin and Hitler surprised the world. This gave the Nazis the confidence needed to invade Poland, which meant the start of the Second World War. Trotsky single-handedly denounced this pact

The last hours

On 21 August 1940, with an ice-pick tucked in his raincoat, the murderer Ramon Mercader managed to get to Trotsky's office and, while they were talking, he slammed it in Trotsky's head. The guards detained him, but he had already managed to inflict a fatal wound. The next day, at 7:30 pm, the old leader died.

Although his followers in Mexico were few, at his funeral, according to Mexican newspapers on 23 August, between 250,000 and 300,000 people paraded in front of the coffin.

Since then, his remains rest in a simple grave in the garden of the Coyoacan house, where Stalin's agent murdered him, and which has been turned into a museum.



Thousands attended his last farewell

as a political crime and reiterated that Hitler's actual intention was to invade the USSR and he was only looking for time to prepare. Only Trotsky denounced that, as socially opposed systems (Germany an imperialist power, the USSR a degenerated worker's state), Stalinism and Nazism were very similar totalitarian regimes, and that Stalin and Hitler were "twin stars". After August 1939, the overnight smear campaigns against Trotsky replaced the swastika and the nickname "Nazi agent" with "agent of the US and the Yankee flag".

With his activity, Trotsky was a stake in the bureaucracy's heart. He embodied the continuity of what Stalin and his apparatus had destroyed: the revolutionary program, workers' democracy, internationalism, i.e., genuine Leninism.

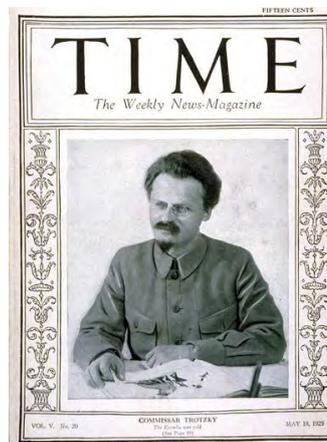
His legacy remains alive

The current we are promoting from the IWU-FI vindicates Trotsky's trajectory with his most important decision, the foundation of the Fourth International and the absolute need to build revolutionary parties. The

1938 *Transitional Program* remains a key orientation for responding with revolutionary policy to the new reformist leaderships. The struggle against world capitalism-imperialism, the bourgeois governments in each country in defence of the rights of the workers, peasants, youth and other popular sectors to develop mobilisation and to win, with the triumphant revolutions, the most important thing: the workers' and popular governments to build real socialism throughout the world.



Trotsky and Natalia in Coyoacan



Time Magazine "Man of the Year", 1925



Trotsky at his desk

Nahuel Moreno on Trotsky's assassination

Nahuel Moreno was the most important Latin American Trotskyist leader. He started being part of the Fourth International in 1948 in its Second Congress and, since the 1950s, he entered polemics and faced the current headed by the Belgian Ernest Mandel, who led the Fourth International into capitulating to the Communist Parties and the reformist and nationalist bourgeois leaders.

Since then, Moreno insisted on the historic meaning of Trotsky's death for his movement. We remember his thought in *Conversations* (<http://www.nahuelmoreno.org/writings/conversations-with-nahuel-moreno-1986>).

"In several of your writings,

you mention Trotsky's death as a fundamental fact in the history of the Fourth International...

"Nahuel Moreno: Indeed, we have always said the death of Trotsky is an objective, not subjective, element in the crisis of leadership of the Fourth [International]. This analysis is typical of our current. It was a qualitative fact: not that the Fourth [International] was worse led than before his death but, plain and simple, it was left with no leadership.

I'm convinced that if Trotsky had lived a few more years, the Fourth [International] would have advanced in its program, its analysis, and its numbers.

Another aspect of the leadership

vacuum is the experience in the workers' movement, which for me is crucial. Without a long experience in the workers' movement, there can't be great leadership. (...)

"Trotsky had taken part in the leadership of the three Russian revolutions." [1905, February 1917, and October 1917] "He had been part of the largest revolutionary leadership that humanity has known; the leadership of the Third International in its first five years. Between 1905 and 1917, in exile, he had fought in the socialist movement in several countries in Europe, mainly in France and Germany. That colossal experience, irreplaceable, was lost in one fell swoop with his murder."