

International *Correspondence*

No 43 • August • November 2019 • IWU-FI

**What does
Trump get out of
his conflict with
China?**



**Hong Kong: Rebellion against
the CPC's dictatorship**

International *Correspondence*

No 43 • August • November 2019

Magazine of the UIT-FI

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International

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Argentina: Ar\$50

Brazil: R\$5

Rest of Latin America: US\$2

USA: US\$5

Europe: €5

Rest of the World: US\$3

Signed articles do not
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position of the leadership of
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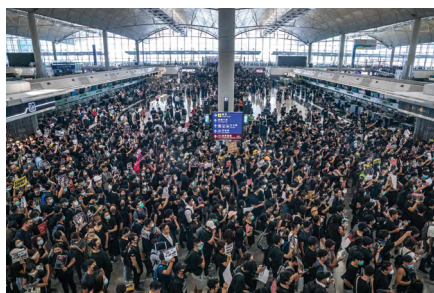
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Collapse in Wall Street

Foreword

In mid-August, Wall Street and also European stock markets indicators collapsed, fearing that a new recession will break out in the United States. Many analysts attribute this fall in the markets to Trump's 'trade war' with China. We, revolutionary socialists, think the opposite. That the underlying cause of this collapse of the world stock exchanges and of the dispute with China itself lies in the failure to overcome the acute crisis of the capitalist economy unleashed in 2007. The stock market crashes are only an expression of that underlying crisis.

Precisely this new issue of *International Correspondence* is largely devoted to the so-called "trade war" of Trump and China and its relationship with the global crisis of the capitalist economy. Of course, the friction with China pours more fuel in the crisis's fire. But it is a global crisis of the capitalist-imperialist system. That is why Germany's economy, the head of European imperialism, is also slowed. The German GDP contracted in the second quarter by 0.1 per cent. But the great concern of imperialism is that a new

recession be confirmed in the United States. In our previous issue, we said that, although its GDP had grown 2.9 per cent in 2018, "those positive numbers show clay feet. The American economy has grown under the artificial impulse that meant the cut of taxes to the rich and the companies (...) that Trump launched at the beginning of his mandate. The large corporations took advantage of this to launch an authentic speculative feast (...)". In general, in all the continents of the world, Europe, Asia, Latin America, have already entered into recession or are on that path. The United States would be close to joining this global trend.

The crisis and decline of the capitalist-imperialist system also express themselves in the catastrophe of climate change and the crisis in Argentina, topics that we develop in this edition.

Imperialism and its allied governments want the workers and the exploited sectors to pay the capitalist crisis. This is the fight open all over the world for workers and popular struggles. •

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Huawei's main building in the company's production campus, near Shenzhen, China

What does Trump get out of his conflict with China?

Miguel Sorans

Leader of Izquierda Socialista (Socialist Left) of Argentina and the IWU

The so-called “trade war” unleashed by Trump against China opens a whole series of questions and debates. What is the real magnitude of this conflict? Is it essentially a “war” over technology? Or is it a kind of “cold war” of the United States to prevent China from becoming the dominant capitalist power in the world in a few years? Could imperialism “attack” China?

Some leftist authors go so far as to say that Trump and the United States could only impose themselves on China using military force. Also from certain sectors of the reformist left (former

Stalinists, Castroism, or Chavismo), they consider there would be something “progressive” in this clash, in favour of China which supposedly would seek “a multipolar world” weakening Yankee imperialism.

From our socialist current, we discard any apocalyptic vision as if it could be an irreconcilable clash that could even bring us closer to a third world war. Nor do we consider that there could be something progressive from China. We believe the so-called “trade war” between the United States and China to be a part, logically the most prominent, of all inter-bourgeois friction and clashes that have worsened in the world because of the continuation

of the capitalist world economic crisis opened in 2007/2008. In this case, it is a strong clash between the economic interests of the dominant imperialist power (United States) and the second and growing capitalist power (China).

Trump and his “trade wars”

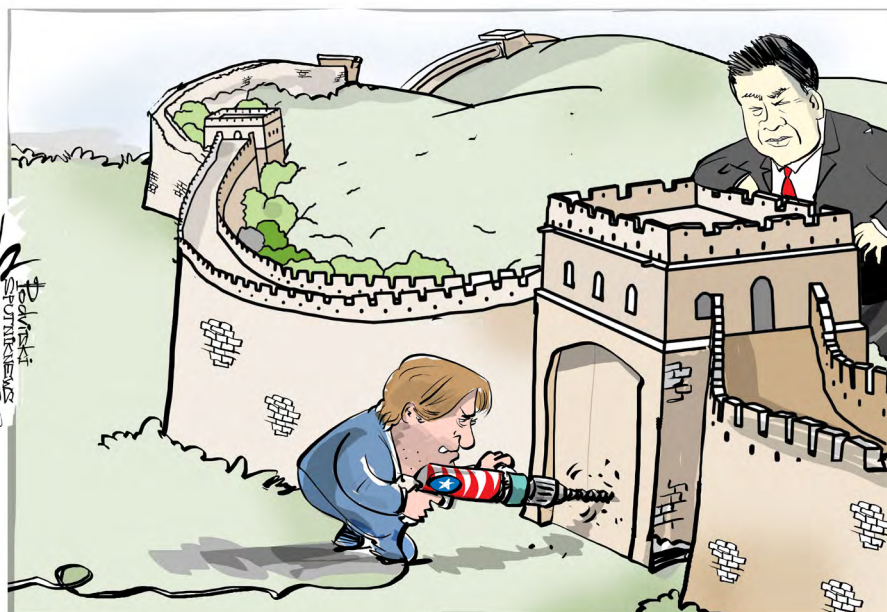
The capitalist crisis is global and is the background of these economic or trade shocks. That is why there is not only an “economic war” with China, but Trump has launched several “trade wars.” He began, in 2018, with the European Union (EU) and Canada imposing strong tariffs on the importation of steel and aluminium and also other industrial products from those

countries, to comply with his “America first” electoral slogan. Then he went against Mexico to force it to establish a new free trade agreement. In July, he launched another “war” threatening French President Emmanuel Macron with applying sanctions to French wine, if he did not go back with the so-called “Google tax”, a tax on American multinational companies (Amazon, Google, Apple, and Facebook) that invoice in France above €750 million per year. Trump takes on the defence of his multinationals’ profits in France and in the world. Additionally, he also endorses the conservative Boris Johnson, premier of the United Kingdom, who wants to move forward with Brexit, i.e., with the break with the EU, another of the ongoing “trade wars”.

Trump is developing a fight for the defence of the interests of Yankee imperialism amid a brutal crisis of the capitalist-imperialist system. He seeks to defend his multinationals and tries to balance their weaknesses in the world market. He threatens with the club to end with the negotiation carrot.

This non-recovery from the crisis is even ratified by the data and preventions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In its report *World Economic Outlook* it says: “Against this backdrop, global growth is forecast at 3.2 percent in 2019, picking up to 3.5 percent in 2020 (...). The projected growth pickup in 2020 is precarious...” (IMF, *World Economic Outlook*, 23 July 2019). China has ceased to grow in double digits for years: its annual growth is between 6 and 6.2 per cent.

The underlying causes of the non-recovery of the acute crisis of the capitalist economy are because of the failure of imperialism and the multinationals and the IMF to impose the quotas they would need for exploitation and looting on the masses and countries. The other pole of the world situation is the advance of popular rebellions and mass movements against austerity plans, against governments and regimes. This is the main obstacle that Trump, the capitalist dictatorship of the Communist Party in China, and



A cartoonist of peoplesdispatch.org pokes fun at Trump's “trade wars”

the multinationals across the globe have to overcome the chronic crisis in which they are plunged.

What does Trump get out of his conflict with China?

There are those who say that the background of Trump's goal in his “economic war” with China would be to prevent it from becoming the dominant capitalist power in a few years, displacing the US. There are many analysts who agree with this vision.

We rule out that this is Trump's goal. Because, for now, there is no condition in which, in the coming years, China could become a superior power to the United States and, in turn, the dominant power of the world.

The United States, despite its crisis, remains by far the first world power. It is hegemonic and the dominant imperialism. It is real that China has been progressing in recent years and is occupying the second place, behind the United States, in GDP (Gross Domestic Product, the total of what is produced in a country) worldwide. It is also real that China in recent years displaced Japan and Germany from second and third place, respectively. In 2008 we pointed out that China was the seventh world economic power, today it is the second (see the article on *Correspondencia Internacional* No. 25,

February 2008, www.uit-ci.org). And it cannot be ruled out that, in the coming decades, China can overcome the US in GDP. But you cannot measure a dominant power in the world just by GDP.

Regarding GDP, we must consider the peculiarity of what China is. It is the country with the largest population on the planet, with 1.4 billion inhabitants. The United States has 327 million. The population of China is 20 per cent of the world total. That gives it exceptional productive potential. But, in the other areas, it is clear the United States is comfortably above China and the rest of the countries of the world. Just compare, for example, per capita income in 2018: while in the United States was US\$62,850, in China, it was US\$9,470. It was even lower than that of more backward countries like Argentina, which stood at US\$12,370. Also if we compare military might, the difference is abysmal. In the ranking of the 100 largest multinational companies in the world, 53 are from the United States and 11 from China. And so we could continue with other numbers.

In fact, reflecting the crisis and decline of US imperialism, Trump is really looking to stifle China to favour his multinationals and his financial capital. Therefore, he also launched an offensive against the large multinationals of European imperialism

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Country	Year	Worth in US\$
US	2018	20,494,099,845,390
China	2018	13,608,151,864,638
Japan	2018	4,970,915,556,639
Germany	2018	3,996,759,291,058

Source: knoema.es/atlas/topics/Econom%c3%ada/Contabilidad-Nacional-Producto-Interno-Bruto/PIB

Updated chart on Gross Domestic Product per capita

Country	Year	Worth in US\$	Position
China	2018	9,470	71
US	2018	62,850	6
Germany	2018	47,450	18
France	2018	41,070	23
Spain	2018	29,450	32
Japan	2018	41,340t	21
Argentina	2018	12,370	62
Brazil	2018	9,140	75
India	2018	2,020	144
Russia	2018	10,230	69
Australia	2018	53,190	13

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ny.gdp.mktp.kd.zg>

Military power United States – China

Budget

US: US\$ 633 million China: US\$ 151.5 million

Military Personnel

US: 1,330,240 China: 2,330,000

Airforce aircraft

US: 13,000 China: 3,000

Navy

Aircraft Carrier

US: 10 China: 1

Destroyers

US: 62 China: 32

Submarines

US: 75 China: 68

Blinded Vehicles

US: 8,848 China: 9,150

Nuclear Heads

US: 1,740 China: 260

and Canada, to reach agreements in favour of his companies.

In the peculiar case of China, Trump presses to achieve greater openness for US multinationals and financial capital than what has existed for many years in that country. And to condition China's renowned technological advances in the field of mobile phones. But this is always based on limiting the competition of Chinese multinationals with Yankee multinationals. Because of the inheritance of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in the 1949 revolution, state-owned companies and banks still have great weight. The Chinese financial system still has a high state and mixed dominance. Under current regulations, a bank, for example, cannot have a foreign shareholding majority. "Today, foreign firms have less than 2 per cent of the assets of the Chinese banking sector" (*La Nación*, 11 July 2019). Trump and European imperialism, want to change this. In addition, "China has about 150,000 state-owned companies. It is a tiny amount compared to the total number of companies that exist in the country, but their weight is overwhelming" (*El País*, Business section, 28 May 2019).

And in this, imperialism has made progress. China, on several occasions, has been retreating and agreeing to Yankee pressures. President Xi Jinping, for example, in April 2018, in the middle of the so-called "economic war", made an announcement of a greater opening to foreign investments. Among its most outstanding points, it states that there will be "an immediate majority of foreign capital in Chinese stock companies, and all kinds of restrictions on foreign investment are eliminated in three years" (article by analyst Jorge Castro, *Clarín*, Argentina, 15 April 2018), which would start in manufacturing. Jinping also announced an opening of regulations in telecommunications and that there would no longer be any restrictions for foreign investment in private health. The same in education, on the grounds that there are already 14 private



Xi Jinping and Donald Trump at the G20 meeting in Japan, June 2019

universities, including a Harvard branch, in China.

These are the things that imperialism seeks. This is the essence of the supposed “economic war” and not a background confrontation or a total break with the Chinese dictatorship.

China: irreconcilable enemy of the United States or strategic capitalist ally?

The facts show that China is not an irreconcilable enemy of the United States but that, first, it has grown as a capitalist power thanks to a large injection of foreign direct investment and especially from the American multinationals.

Second, the dictatorship of the Communist Party of China is essentially an ally of the United States at a key point: the need to continue exploiting the world working class. And in particular the Chinese proletariat and people, to get the highest exploitation quotas that guarantee the super-profits of multinationals and international banks. Therefore, also, in countries where China makes investments in infrastructure or mining works,

they move this super-exploitation regime; a regime which is endorsed by the capitalist governments of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

The United States, the EU, China, and Japan are, in fact, part of a counterrevolutionary front against the masses of the world to super exploit them. This is also reflected in the institutional superstructure, in events such as the G7, the G20, in the general assembly of the United Nations, in the IMF, in the World Trade Organization (which China has been part of for decades, confirming they are already a capitalist economy). In these events, the plans for exploitation and looting of the peoples are settled and agreed in an attempt to get out of the crisis the great powers have.

The other major point of agreement between the United States and China, also with the European Union, the Vatican, and Japan is the unrestricted support for the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party. For them, it is a guarantee of stability to continue with their super-exploitation plans for their multinationals and for any capitalist company installed in China.

All this does not mean that, as a great capitalist country and holder of a Chinese bourgeoisie, it does not have its friction or clashes and economic disputes within the framework of a global crisis of capitalism. Undoubtedly, the regime headed by Xi Jinping defends the interests of a great Chinese bourgeoisie that has been forming in the process of capitalist restoration of recent decades. Among them, private multinational groups such as Alibaba, Lenovo, Huawei or ZTE.

Trump and his contradictions with the “economic war”

Trump’s comings and goings in his “economic wars” show the weakness of imperialism. In the case of China, it led to a division in the great bourgeoisie of the United States itself and the large economic groups linked to foreign trade and its multinationals.

China responded to Trump’s tariffs with heavy import tariffs on US soybeans. Because of them, the claims to Trump by the large soy producers grew. This resulted in the Trump administration having to grant an aid package to the agricultural sector of

“US\$ 16 billion to mitigate the effects of the trade dispute with China” (*Clarín*, 28 April 2019). Something similar happened with other Yankee multinationals that produce in China and export to the US.

For example, “over 170 companies, including the multinationals Nike and Adidas, asked Trump to remove footwear from the list of Chinese products, whose imports into the country could be affected with 25 per cent tariffs” (*Clarín*, *ibid.*).

Huawei conflict

In much of 2019, the centre of the conflict unleashed by Trump was linked to cell phone company Huawei, China’s number one company in cell phones. Huawei is the second-largest mobile phone company in the world, after South Korean Samsung. This conflict also shows the contradictions in which Trump and China itself are immersed.

There are those who say it is a war for “the mastery of technology”. And that China could jeopardise US technological supremacy. We consider that, also in this, there are exaggerations. Even used by Trump himself, who accused Huawei of “endangering national security”, “spying”, and so on.

We cannot deny the technological advances of capitalist China. And that in some specific aspects it has approached or surpassed the United States. One of those aspects is the issue of mobile phones and 5G. But it is not true that China is close to surpassing the United States in the global technological issue. Nor is it true that Huawei is the only one that dominates the 5G technology. There are five companies that develop 5G, including the Chinese Huawei and ZTE. But the South Korean Samsung, the Swedish Ericson, and the Finnish Nokia are also advanced.

Therefore, we must acknowledge that China has progressed in recent years in technological development, but it is an uneven development since it cannot reach the same level as the United States. It has also taken steps in cyberspace or robotics but, as a whole, it is far behind the United States.



American company Broadcom supplies chips to Huawei and ZTE

International analyst Jorge Castro, an admirer of Trump and the Chinese regime, recognises the abysmal inequality in technology between the United States and China. Castro points out that “[The United States surpasses China 10 to 1] in basic artificial intelligence research and its pool of talents it reaches 850,000 researchers while there are 50,000 on the People’s Republic” (*Clarín*, 21 March 2019).

The very example of Huawei, and beyond its worldwide recognised potential, shows that it has no technological independence from the United States. On the contrary, China relies heavily on American components to assemble its cell phones. For example, “American chips and software feed the central Chinese servers. In fact, China has been a huge driver of revenue for Apple, Oracle, Intel, Qualcomm, and other big technology names. And to a large extent, China had no choice since it did not have the capacity to produce these components” (*La Nación*, Argentina, 21 May 2019).

There is an interrelation since these American multinationals have Huawei, ZTE, and other Chinese companies as a major buyer for their cell phone components. So, there is a productive integration, a unity between the United States and China, not independence. Huawei depends on the United States and in turn,, American Apple depends

on its factory in China. For example, US company Broadcom, which makes chips, forecasts a fall of US\$ 2 billion in its 2019 revenue from Trump’s policy. Hence, in June, over 500 companies in the United States asked through a letter to Trump to stop the so-called “trade war”. Among those companies that signed are Walmart, Levi, GAP, and another 650 American entities (data from *Clarín*, 15 June 2019). That’s why at the G20 meeting in late June in Japan, Trump had to sit down with Xi Jinping and set a truce for the Huawei conflict, which may be called the “Osaka truce”.

Of course, there will continue to be new clashes and friction between the United States and China and their companies, but the real framework for both Trump and Xi Jinping is the search for agreements between the United States and the Chinese dictatorship, to balance common business.

The future of China as a capitalist power

The outlook and the result of the economic development that China may have in the coming years is closely linked not only to economic issues and pacts with multinationals and the United States, but also to the class struggle in China and the world.

Precisely this factor is denied by most international analysts. The “Chinese



Thousands of Longmay Mining workers protest over unpaid wages

miracle” has always been talked about as a demonstration of the progress that capitalism can give. There was a factor that was the unprecedented invasion of foreign investments in the last 20–30 years. But the “Chinese miracle” is based on the over-exploitation of millions of workers with salaries in dollars 30 or 40 times lower than those in the metropolises. This has allowed a capitalist accumulation, enrichment, and a spectacular profit of the multinationals and the new Chinese bourgeoisie itself that was emerging in the heat of openness to capitalism.

The reality of China shows that capitalism as a great “progress” and modernity is limited to a high and middle class, a sector of 300 or 400 million. A strip that includes not only the new oligarchs and Chinese businessmen but the entire bureaucracy of the political and military apparatus of the Chinese CP. But China is a country of 1.4 billion inhabitants, so there is inequality as unknown in other countries. There are over a billion people who have tremendous salary inequality. In rural areas, half of the population has total poverty wages. There are 82 million who live below the poverty line (World Bank 2018 data), hundreds of millions suffer from the decline in the level of health care and education and,

fundamentally, hundreds of millions receive hunger wages.

China is a great capitalist power, a sub-imperialism led by a bourgeois Stalinist dictatorship. It has been built as a great power on those bases of super-exploitation. So, its future is linked to the result of the class struggle. Precisely the slowdown or economic stagnation that China is experiencing has to do not only with the problem of the global crisis, but there has been a wage change in the interior of China because of the development of strikes for years.

In the big industrial centres of the coastal cities, the “offensive” strikes for wage increases have grown since 2010. As the protests grew, wages have increased because the dictatorship and the bourgeoisie had to give concessions to avoid a social destabilisation that they fear. The victory of the strike by Honda workers in Guangdong, who achieved a 50 per cent increase, was an example that was repeated in industrial areas. The minimum industrial wage in Guangdong is estimated at US\$ 287 (2018 data), still very low compared to the salary of a worker in the big metropolises. But higher than the US\$ 60 or US\$ 70 they received since the 1980s–1990s. This led to some smaller multinationals moving to other countries where labour costs are

lower such as Vietnam, Cambodia or Bangladesh.

So, China’s future is closely linked to the result of this social confrontation. Strikes, that continue to develop each year (in 2018 they increased by 400 protests compared to 2017), combined with the rebellion of hundreds of thousands in Hong Kong for democratic rights, are putting a yellow light of alert. Not only for the Chinese dictatorship but for their own multinationals and imperialism because a social destabilisation would cause fundamental changes in the country and in the world situation. The “Chinese miracle” could stumble or cease to be because it is clear that the dictatorial regime is mounted on a pressure cooker, which at some point may end up bursting.

We, as revolutionary socialists, are committed to supporting the struggles of the working class and the youth of China. We rely on this mobilisation to end the capitalist dictatorship and achieve a government of the workers and the people. And that the revolutionary traditions of the socialist revolution begun in 1949 with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie can be retaken by the Chinese mass movement in the 21st century, to reverse the capitalist restoration. •

Interview to Au Long Yu

The rise of China to world power



Tianjin, the port of Beijing

We reproduce, because of its interest, parts of an interview to Marxist activist Au Loong Yu, a Hong Kong resident, author of numerous studies in China and editor of the Borderless Movement website. The interview was held by **International Socialist Review**, issue #1112, Spring 2019. The full interview can be read on isreview.org/issue/112/chinas-rise-world-power.

“Later, from the 1980s on, the Chinese state drafted this labor force from the countryside into the big cities to work as cheap labor in export processing zones. They made nearly 300 million rural migrants work like slaves in sweatshops. Thus, the backwardness of China’s absolutist state and class relations offered the Chinese ruling class advantages to develop both state and private capitalism.

“China’s backwardness also made it possible for it to leap over stages of development by replacing archaic means and methods of development with advanced capitalist ones. A good example of this is China’s adoption of high technology in telecommunications. Instead of following every step of more advanced

capitalist societies, beginning first with using telephone lines for online communication, it installed fiber optic cable throughout the country nearly all at once. (...)

“At the same time, China suffers from weaknesses as well. If you look at its GDP, China is the second largest in the world. But if you measure GDP per capita, it is still a middle-income country. You also see weaknesses even in areas where it is catching up to advanced capitalist powers. For instance, Huawei mobile phone, which is now a world brand, was developed not just by its own Chinese scientists, but more importantly, by hiring four hundred Japanese scientists. This shows that China was and is still heavily reliant on foreign human resources for research and development.

“Another example of weakness was revealed when China’s ZTE telecom company was accused by the Trump administration of violating its trade sanctions on Iran and North Korea. Trump imposed a trade ban on the company, denying it access to American-designed software and high-tech components, threatening the company with collapse overnight. Xi and Trump eventually worked

out a deal to save the company, but the crisis ZTE suffered demonstrates China’s ongoing problem of dependent development.

“This is the problem that China is trying to overcome. But even in high tech, where it is intent on catching up, its semiconductor technology is two or three generations behind that of the United States. It is trying to overcome that with dramatically increased investment in research and development, but if you look closely at China’s huge number of patents, they are still mostly not in high tech but other areas. So, it still suffers from indigenous technological weakness. (...)

“But after the crisis over ZTE, Xi conducted a bit of a tactical retreat because that crisis exposed China’s persisting weaknesses and the danger of too quickly declaring itself a great power. In fact, there was an outburst of criticism of one of Xi’s advisors, an economist named Hu Angang, who had argued that China was already a rival to the US economically and militarily and could therefore challenge Washington for leadership in the world. ZTE proved that it’s simply not true that China is on par with the US.” •

Starbucks opens a new store in China every 15 hours

Since the opening of the first store in 1999, China has become Starbucks' biggest and fastest-growing in the international market. Currently, the firm is in over 130 cities, with almost 40,000 employees.

It opened a 2,700 square metre store in Shanghai. It is the first Starbucks Reserve Roastery, the new commercial offering of the company, outside the US. It is also the biggest Starbucks, encompassing an area nearly twice as large as the next largest,

a Roastery in Seattle that opened three years ago. China stood out as Starbucks' fastest-growing market. There was an 8 per cent increase in sales compared to the same quarter last year.

Starbucks partnered with Chinese technology giant Alibaba to aggressively promote the opening of Shanghai's online. Starbucks confirms that it will have 3,000 more stores in China by 2022. The goal of the coffee store chain is to almost double the

number of stores in this country, to reach 6,000 stores. In 2017, Starbucks had some 3,300 stores and some 40,000 employees, figures that it wants to triple by 2022, the date on which the company wants to count some 6,000 stores. Shanghai is the city with the most Starbucks in the world, over 600, also this city has its largest store.

Source: expansion.mx/empresas/2017/12/05/el-starbucks-mas-grande-del-mundo-esta-en-china

The 10 wealthiest Chinese

The enormous amount of wealth produced by Chinese workers is appropriated by multinationals and a minority of Chinese billionaires. According to *Forbes* magazine, in 2019 there are 324 Chinese who have a fortune in excess of one billion dollars. The ranking is led by Jack Ma, with US\$ 34 billion.

1. Jack Ma: Alibaba co-founder, tops the *Forbes* 2018 list of the richest in China with US\$ 34 billion.

2. Ma Huateng: of Tencent Holdings, is in second place on the *Forbes* list with US\$ 32 billion.

3. Xu Jiaying: of the real estate company Evergrande, ranks third with US\$ 30 billion.

4. Guang Jianlin: from the Dalian Wanda Group, with US\$ 22 billion.

5. He Xiangjian: co-founder of Midea, one of China's largest companies and, eventually, the world's largest household appliance company, a fortune of over US\$ 19 billion.

6. Yang Huiyan: majority shareholder in Country Garden Holding, the richest woman in Asia, with a fortune of US\$ 17 billion.

7. Wang Wei: presides over SF Holding, a parcel delivery service



Jack Ma, Alibaba co-founder

known as the 'Fedex of China'; also called SF Express. Nearly US\$ 15 billion.

8. Robin Li: is the CEO and co-founder of Baidu, China's leading search engine and one of the world's most popular websites. With US\$ 14.6 billion.

9. Li Shufu is the president of Geely Automobile Holdings, one of

China's largest car manufacturers and one of the few not controlled by the government. With US\$ 14.2 billion.

10. William Ding is the CEO of Netease, one of the world's largest online and mobile gaming companies. Netease's business partners include Mojang, a subsidiary of Microsoft, and Blizzard. With US\$ 13.5 billion.

China faces new labour activism



Biel Crystal workers, in Huizhou, gathered in protest for wage delays and layoffs



Protest at the Faw-Volkswagen plant in Changchun

Workers and social struggles grow in China, despite repression and censorship applied by the Chinese dictatorship. To show this, it will be worth reading this article published in **The New York Times** that we reproduce for the most part.

BEIJING — Factory workers across China are staging sit-ins demanding unpaid wages for “blood and sweat.” Taxi drivers are surrounding government offices to call for better treatment. (...)

With economic growth in China weakening to its slowest pace in nearly three decades, thousands of Chinese workers are holding small-scale protests and strikes to fight efforts by businesses to withhold compensation and cut hours. The authorities have responded with a sustained campaign to rein in the protests. (...)

Such protests are a glaring example of the challenges the sharp economic slowdown poses to China’s top leader, Xi Jinping, who has aggressively promoted the “Chinese dream,” his signature vision of greater wealth and a fairer society. (...)

“Nobody cares about us anymore,” said Zhou Liang, 46, who took part in a protest last month in Shenzhen outside an electronics factory that he says owes him over 3,000 dollars. “I sacrificed my health for the company,” he said,

“and now I can’t afford to buy even a bag of rice.”

China Labour Bulletin, an advocacy group in Hong Kong that tracks protests, recorded at least 1,700 labour disputes last year, up from about 1,200 the year before. Those figures represent only a fraction of disputes across China, since many conflicts go unreported (...)

Workers have few government channels to resort when they do not collect their salaries. A protest for Shenzhen workers (Sue-Lin Wong/*Reuters*)

The authorities have detained over 150 people since August, a sharp increase from previous years, including teachers, taxi drivers, construction workers and leftist students leading a campaign against factory abuses.

(...)

Labour protests in China are common, and to avoid protracted conflicts, local officials often put pressure on businesses to settle disputes. But companies may be more unwilling — or unable — to do so now as they struggle to find money.

Now, with no independent unions, courts or news outlets to turn to, some workers are resorting to extreme measures to settle disputes.

Wang Xiao, 33, a construction worker, grew tired of lobbying his bosses for over 2,000 dollars in unpaid wages (...). So last week he turned

to social media, threatening to jump off the headquarters of the company overseeing the project.

“If I get to the roof of the building and make a scene, then the money will be given to me more quickly,” he said in an interview. (Mr Wang did not carry out his threat).

Mr Xi has particularly sought to suppress a resurgence of labour activism on college campuses, including a high-profile campaign for workers’ rights led by young communists at elite universities. The activists have used the teachings of Mao and Marx to argue that China’s embrace of capitalism has exploited workers. (...)

The authorities have repeatedly tried to quash the protests, leading to the disappearances and detentions of over 50 people associated with the campaign. The authorities have responded so forcefully to the young communists in part because their demands are ideological, not material, said Professor Fu (...)

“To the government, calling out the party for not being Marxist is like children openly denouncing their birth parents,” she said. “They see it as outright defiance and rejection of the state-led socialism.”

By Javier Hernandez

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GM Headquarters in China

American multinationals in China

For almost 40 years, thousands of American multinationals have been settling in China alongside Germans, French, Dutch, Japanese, Koreans and even Taiwanese. Here we give only a brief review of some of them.

Boeing

The friendly cooperation between the American company Boeing and China began in 1972 (in Mao's lifetime). Boeing has conducted extensive training in flight simulation and aircraft maintenance and management to provide guarantees for the operation of Boeing aircraft. In addition, the company has established services by its accredited representatives at various Chinese airports, and logistical and technical support systems, and has collaborated with China's civil aviation to improve its level of air traffic control and air safety.

Boeing has cooperated extensively with the Chinese aviation industry in production and has created new co-

investment companies dedicated to the manufacture of synthetic materials, aircraft remodelling and repair, and spare parts supply.

Currently, 3300 Boeing aircraft operating worldwide carry important parts or sets of parts produced in China.

Source: espanol.cri.cn/chinaabc/chapter3/chapter30603.htm

General Motors

General Motors (GM) was one of the first foreign car manufacturers to enter China. GM sells more cars in China than in the United States. In 2017, for example, General Motors reported sales of 4,040,000 vehicles in China, a third over the 3,002,000 the company sold in the United States.

China's total includes sales of Buick, Cadillac, and Chevrolet brands, and sales by joint ventures with Chinese car makers Wuling and Baojun.

"Consumer confidence in our brands will help us achieve sustainable, high-quality growth. We will continue to

bring the right products and technology to market to meet the increasingly diverse demands of personal mobility", said Matt Tsien, executive vice president of GM and president of GM China.

Source: www.hoylosangeles.com/vidayestilo/autos/hoyla-aut-general-motors-ya-vende-mas-autos-en-china-que-en-estados-unidos-20180123-story.html

Microsoft

Since Microsoft entered the Chinese market in 1992, it has invested heavily in creating its research and development centre, the Asian research institute, and the global technology centre, enabling Microsoft China to become a full-featured subsidiary of the software giant outside the United States.

Microsoft now has two mixed-investment software companies. It invested 19 million Yuan to establish Zhongguancun Software Society together with Stone Group and Zhongguancun Scientific-Technological

Development Corporation; it created Shanghai Weichuang Software Company together with Shanghai Lianhe Investment Corporation. It also established the Software College of Shanghai Communication University the Shanghai Scientific-Technological Services Company for Software Education in cooperation with Shanghai University, Lianhe Investment Corporation and Shanghai Pudong Software Park Management Company. Microsoft contributed 4 million yuan, or 10 per cent of the investments required for creating this college and the scientific-technological services company.

Microsoft has transferred to China the production of Xbox, which is sold like hotcakes around the world. It produces computer mice in Guangdong through outsourcing, whose annual value exceeds 100 million dollars.

Source: espanol.cri.cn/chinaabc/chapter3/chapter30603.htm

McDonald's

McDonald's will open up to 2,000 new restaurants in China over the next five years as part of its "Vision 2022" expansion strategy, the company informed.

For this, it has a strategic partnership with Citic Ltd. (The CITIC Group, formerly China International Trust and Investment Corporation, is a state-owned investment company in the People's Republic of China) and the Carlyle Group to increase its number of stores to 4,500 branches in the next five years with the goal of achieving double-digit sales growth.

The first McDonald's opened in mainland China in 1990, in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. Most prominently, McDonald opened the world's largest branch on 23 April 1992, in Beijing.

Source: www.peru-retail.com/conozca-estrategia-expansion-mcdonalds-china/

Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)

KFC, an American company born in the 1940s and 1950s in Kentucky,



McDonald's in Shanghai

became the first Western fast-food company in China after its first establishment opened in Qianmen, Beijing, in November 1987.

With profits of over five billion dollars and 5,200 restaurants, KFC is at the top of China's fast food market. That number of franchises exceeds even those in the United States and, to give us an idea, it's over twice the number of McDonald's stores in the Asian country.

Source: laopinion.com/2018/12/22/kfc-domina-el-mercado-de-la-comida-rapida-en-china/

Coca Cola

This drink was distributed in China from 1928 to 1949, i.e. until the victory of the revolution, from three bottling plants in Shanghai, Tianjin, and Qingdao, which suspended production.

The reappearance of Coca-Cola in China dates back to 1979, after the normalisation of relations between Beijing and Washington but it was only sold, in foreign currency, in hotels, airports, and other points frequented by tourists. In 1981 it had its first Coca-Cola Bottling Plant — one of the most typical among capitalist beverages — capable of producing two million cases of 24 bottles per year, at a rate of 300 units per minute, destined almost

exclusively for foreigners who visit the country.

"China is our third largest market in terms of volume, and we remain optimistic about the market's growth potential," said Coca-Cola Chairman and CEO Muhtar Kent (2017).

Nike

Nike claims to have been in the country since 1981. The bulk of shoe production is concentrated in Vietnam, China, and Indonesia, where in 2013 were manufactured 42 per cent, 30 per cent and 26 per cent of the total shoes of the company, respectively. China is the country that concentrates most of Nike's industrial activity. In the Asian giant, the company has 195 factories with 249,655 workers. The growth is largely for China. Revenues coming from that market grew 19 per cent to reach US\$ 1.5 billion. This growth is split in 19 per cent in shoes and 21 per cent in apparel. In comparison, the US market grew 'only' seven per cent. That's about US\$ 3.81 billion, below analysts' expectations of US\$ 3.87 billion. Shoes grew nine per cent and apparel two per cent. In Europe, Nike's revenues grew six per cent to US\$ 2.43 billion dollars.

Source: www.reasonwhy.es/actualidad/resultados-financieros-nike-china-marzo-2019

Rebellion against piecework

To avoid censorship, employees of Chinese technology companies (Alibaba, Huawei, and others) adopted an unusual form of protest against oppressive working hours. Repudiating working days from 9 to 9 and six days a week. They use an ironic page called 9-9-6 ICU. “If you work 9-9-6, you’ll end up in the ICU.”

“It is unusual, both for having expressed itself publicly — the GitHub platform for code developers — in a country where censorship reigns and for the national debate it has generated.”. A debate that has become red hot, as described by Macarena Vidal in her article in *El País*, (21 April 2019), after magnates like Jack Ma, the founder of the e-commerce giant Alibaba, have gone out to defend that labour regime.

The discontent began to be felt, according to employees in the sector, last year. Back then, long working hours were not uncommon. But from then on, the very intense competitiveness of Chinese technology companies began to be joined by the general slowdown of the economy. Companies began to hire less. In January, job vacancies in the sector had dropped 15 per cent from 12 months earlier, according to the Zhaopin job posting page. You had to produce more with less and for the same salary, and everyone had to lend a hand. Or he would risk of being left on the street, through dismissal or bankruptcy of the company.

Of course, it was never said explicitly or in public. Chinese law provides for a 40-hour working week. If the employee exceeds them, he or she must receive compensation and the number of overtime hours must not exceed 36 per month.

In March, a group of anonymous developers created in GitHub, a platform for sharing programming



During their lunch break, workers sleep on their workbenches

codes, an ironic page, 996.ICU. The name referred to a saying among workers in the sector in China: “If you work 9-9-6, you’ll end up in the intensive care unit (ICU).”

The site includes recommendations — “go home without regrets at 6 pm” — and a list of over 150 companies that apply this work regime, including technology giants such as Alibaba, Huawei, or Byte Dance, the parent company of the TikTok short video application. The “anti-996 license”, which has already adopted over 90 projects in GitHub, forces firms that want to use the software from those projects to respect labour laws. The genius of the initiative is that censorship,

no matter how much it wants to, can’t block GitHub: Chinese technologies need this platform to share code.

996ICU immediately became viral, the most shared project of the entire platform. Many people felt identified.

“In Shanghai software companies these days you don’t talk about anything else”, says a data analyst. In the opinion of several employees of technology companies, if the debate has gone so deep is because, for the first time, companies have publicly and clearly defended a practice that “until now nobody said directly that you had to comply. The pressure was there, but it worked because of insinuations, because of understandings.”

“If you’re not willing to work 12 hours, why do you come?”

Jack Ma, one of China’s richest men and owner of Alibaba, said, “Workers should see it as a blessing to work 9-9-6”. Without this regime, which made it possible for his company to take off, the country’s economy “would most

likely lose momentum and vitality”. “If you come to work at Alibaba, you must be willing to work 12 hours a day. Otherwise, why do you come? We don’t need those who work eight hours comfortably” (*El País*, *ibid.*).



Thousands into the streets against the extradition law

A popular uprising in Hong Kong

Eduardo Ruarte

Hundreds of thousands took to the streets of Hong Kong since June, demanding their rights and repudiating the Beijing dictatorship. In 1984, when the agreement to handover Hong Kong to China was signed, Deng Xiaoping, the then Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), came up with the ingenious slogan that China became "One country, two systems" By this, he meant that in China there would be 'socialism' on the mainland and capitalism in Hong Kong. Reality has shown it to be false. In China there was and there is only one system which is capitalism managed by the dictatorship of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The inhabitants of the former British colony might have believed that Deng's slogan would mean certain freedoms and social progress, but the opposite happened. Over 20 years after

reunification, in 1997, the social crisis worsened, and the curtailed freedoms of the former British colony are being questioned. The oligarchy of bankers inherited from the British not only continued but grew.

The capitalist restoration of China and the single-party dictatorship of the Communist Party began to meddle in Hong Kong's internal affairs. In 2014, the CPC tried to push through a political reform that sought to impose its candidates on the Hong Kong people and then call for a pseudo-election. This generated a popular repudiation that ended in massive mobilisations all over Hong Kong, the democratic rebellion called the 'umbrella revolution'.

A paradise of inequality

Hong Kong is considered not only one of the world's financial centres par excellence but also serves as a bridge to enter China's rising market. The CPC

dictatorship takes advantage of it to use Hong Kong for its dealings with multinationals as a financial bridge under its control.

Hong Kong outperformed the United States in the rankings, having the richest people in the world with assets over US\$ 30 billion. Because of flexible tax regulations, Hong Kong is one of the world's most important attractions for financial investments.

In contrast to this "financial paradise", one in five people are poor. Year after year, despite government aid, poverty rates are rising. Over 20 per cent of children are below the poverty line. Over 200,000 people live in illegal housing cubicles of up to two square meters or even in capsule-beds two metres long by one metre high (*La Nación*, Argentina, 27 July 2019).

The inequality between the millionaire owners of multinational,

bankers and financial speculators, gambling tycoons and the millions of poor who live in overcrowded conditions is scandalous. This is one more reason why popular discontent against the government measures is growing.

Extradition law and an advancing popular rebellion

In June 2019, pro-Beijing minister Carrie Lam announced a proposed law allowing the CPC dictatorship to extradite those accused of “crimes” so they could be judged in mainland China. A law that would open the way for the CPC to prosecute and convict opponents of the dictatorial regime, not just from Hong Kong but also from the rest of China who are fleeing to the former British enclave.

This announcement unleashed massive mobilisations. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of the financial and economic capital, paralysing traffic and daily activities. The demonstrations, which rejected this law because it represented the interference of the dictatorship in the autonomy and freedoms of Hong Kong citizens, won when Minister Carrie Lam suspended the law.

However, the suspension of the law was not enough. Demonstrations grew stronger demanding the complete elimination of the law and the resignation of Lam, betting on an election of the executive through universal suffrage and not by a pro-Beijing Election Committee, puppet of the CPC and the Chinese dictatorship. The demand convened hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who have been deepening the mobilisations, despite the police repression, that caused the opposite effect, the repudiation of repression and adherence to the demonstrations grew.

The social and political crisis that is worsening in Hong Kong puts Carrie Lam's government on edge and worries the regime of the CPC. The possibility is growing that the demands and demonstrations will spread to mainland China, where millions of workers live

From colony to reunification

British imperialism had occupied Hong Kong since 1842, after defeating the Chinese empire in what was called the “Opium War”. From then until 1997, Hong Kong was a British imperialist enclave in China.

In 1997, they returned Hong Kong to China without major conflict. It was the product of an agreement between the dictatorship of the Communist Party of China and the Prime Minister of British imperialism, Margaret Thatcher, in the framework of China's capitalist restoration.

Hong Kong, which has 7,483,000 inhabitants, was and is one of the key financial centres for the region, a safe place for the big capitals that penetrated China. For the British, the big business was to take part in the feast of restoration and semi colonisation of China. Hong



Kong became a gateway for British, Japanese, American and European transnationals. For this purpose, they also agreed on certain autonomy and their own legislation.

The city's openness to free trade is such that the same British financial institution, HSBC, has a 35 per cent share of the retail lending market, through its own operation and Hang Seng Bank, a local bank it controls.

super-exploited, in misery, and with no democratic rights. They have no right to protest, to organise in trade unions or to organise a party other than the Communist Party of China. The dictatorship even threatens a military intervention (as it keeps a Chinese army barracks in the city) to repress the massive demonstrations.

First general strike in 50 years

On 5 August 2019, the first general strike was called after 50 years (in 1967 there was one against the British Empire). Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators returned to the streets taking advantage of the strike called to which a big share of transport sectors adhered. Over a hundred cancelled flights, barricades and roadblocks, police buildings surrounded by demonstrators, and blockades on public transport exits generated chaos in the city. The police repressed with tear gas and arrested over 80 demonstrators, nearly a thousand since the demonstrations began in early June.

Thousands of demonstrators insist that the suspended extradition law be dropped completely. They demand

an end to police repression and the opening of an investigation into the violence unleashed by public forces. In addition, they demand the release of the thousands and thousands of detainees who were added over the course of two months. The call for Carrie Lam's resignation becomes stronger with each public announcement of the rejection of her resignation, and the call for free elections takes on greater force.

As we hold from the International Workers Unity – Fourth International (Statement “China/Hong Kong: thousands on the streets for more freedoms”, <http://www.uit-ci.org/index.php/news-a-documents/2303-chinahong-kong-thousands-on-the-streets-for-more-freedoms>), “we call on workers, women and youth of the world to show solidarity with the Hong Kong workers and youth who fight for democratic demands. We call to repudiate the repression of Carrie Lam's police who defends the interests of the capitalist dictatorship of the Chinese CP and any attempt of intervention of the dictatorship of the CPC.” •

Marxist students, the new enemies of the Chinese government

Since late 2018, news has been growing of the emergence of a movement of Chinese student activism in support of workers' strikes. What is unusual, for the bureaucrats of the CPC, is that when they repressed them, they under cover of following the teachings of "Marxism and Mao" against the exploiters.

Macarena Vidal highlighted this in an article in *El País*, Spanish State (20 November 2018): "Suddenly, the groups of 'red' university students — very minority, but on the rise — are in the sights of a regime that defines itself, at least on paper, as a communist.

"At first glance, the positions of these students and the authorities should be perfectly aligned. The Chinese president himself, Xi Jinping, who has recovered some hallmarks of Mao's mandate — the source of legitimacy of the system — has called for a strengthening of ideological education in Chinese schools and universities. Marxism is a compulsory subject for third-cycle students.

"But 'the Marxism that [the Communist Party of China] teaches in schools is not the real one; it is selected and reinterpreted to adapt it to its own ends,' explains Eric Fish, author of the book *China's Millennials: The Want Generation*.

"The contradiction between the ideals of the original doctrine and reality is obvious.

"Rising inequality and other social issues in China have led to disappointment in certain sectors towards the 'reform and openness' agenda, and there is a perception that the Communist Party has abandoned its socialist origins,' explains researcher Simone van Nieuwenhuizen, from the Australia-China Relations Institute



Members of the Jasic Workers' Support Group in the city of Dezhou, Shandong Province; Zhang Shengye, a graduate of Beijing University, who was later arrested, pictured at the right of the backrow

at the University of Technology in Sydney. (...)

"This summer, dozens of students from across the country travelled to Huizhou, in the country's southeast, to show solidarity with Jasic Technology workers protesting against what they considered a 'slave deal' by this welding machine manufacturer.

"In China, labour protests are far from infrequent. So far this year alone, the Hong Kong-based NGO China Labour Bulletin has counted over 900 strikes across the country and in many sectors, from taxis to mining. (...)

"Beijing decided it had a problem. 'The combination of workers' and students' activism is exactly the formula with which the Communist Party of China prevailed in its day. Therefore, in his experience, now that he is in power, he cannot allow it to be repeated,' says independent historian Zhang Lifang. Fifty students were arrested in August. And since then, the pressure has been mounting. (...)

"This week, and after the last raids, Beijing University has described the activities of the 'Jasic Workers Solidarity Group' as 'criminal', and has warned its students that 'if there

are still some who want to defy the law, they will have to stand by the consequences'."

In mid-2018 the workers of Shenzhen Jasic Technology Co (Jasic) in repudiation of the bosses tried to form a company union. According to Chinese law, it would be authorised but the government and the "official" trade union federation fight independent trade unions.

Instead of responding to their legitimate requests, on 27 July, the government arrested 29 activists, including Jasic workers, solidarity workers from other factories, and students, accusing them of "problematic and troublemakers", a criminal charge often used by the government to suppress protests. As the struggle did not cease, in December the government "restructured" the Marxist student society at Beijing University, replacing its leaders, including graduate Zhang Shengye. We revolutionary socialists repudiate this repression, demand the release of those arrested and support the right to strike and to form workers' unions and student organisations freely.



Macri, the day after the election

A beating to Macri and a good election by the Left Front-Unity

Juan Carlos Giordano

Candidate to National Deputy, Socialist Left/FIT-U (Left Front-Unity)

In the PASO¹ elections of 11 August there was an “electoral bombshell” against Macri’s government. This was the headline on some media and it was international news. Macri was defeated by 15 points (47 per cent to 32 per cent) with a punishment vote that favoured the Peronist formula Alberto Fernandez-Cristina Fernandez Kirchner.

The other distinctive fact of the election was that the Left Front-Unity with Del Caño-Del Pla

formula received 700,000 votes for president and 760,000 for national deputies despite the enormous polarization and pressure to vote for Peronism to “get rid of Macri”.

Macri’s defeat generated a tremor, leaving a very weakened government to maintain ‘governance’ in the next four months remaining before the change of government in December, amid a new currency depreciation and the worsening of the political and social crisis.

The pollsters did not manage to register the magnitude of the popular hatred that would be expressed in the elections against Macri and the government of Cambiemos, not even those hired by the winning formula. Millions repudiated with their ‘revealed vote’ or silently, the tremendous social

crisis because of the government’s brutal austerity plan applied with the aid of the IMF. All economic indices are catastrophic.

Macri promised ‘zero poverty’ and the poor rose from 30 per cent in 2015 to 35 per cent. He said he would fight inflation and it reached 56 per cent last year, with a similar rate by 2019. Unemployment rose from 5.9 per cent to the current 10 per cent (4.5 million people with employment problems). 23,000 companies closed down. The minimum wage fell from US\$ 580 to US\$ 200. The number of workers who pay income tax doubled; reaching 2 million (Macri had promised to remove this tax on workers, TN). The rates for gas, electricity, and public transport rose between 1,000 and 3,000 per cent. The dollar rose 300 per cent in four years (from 15 pesos to the current

¹ PASO (Primary, Open, Simultaneous and Obligatory). These elections were created in 2009 during the government of Cristina Kirchner. They only serve to decide which alliances or parties are qualified for the general elections if they avoid the floor of 1.5 per cent of the votes validly cast. We always denounce them as proscriptive for the left and demand their annulment.

60), while the popular consumption of milk, meat, and basic products fell. The country is in recession and the level of indebtedness is astronomical, above US\$400 billion.

With Macrism rabbiting on that we have to “avoid becoming Venezuela” and the delusional idea of “going back to the world” hand in hand with Donald Trump, the IMF, and the Mercosur–EU agreement that would “save” us, the country became fertile ground for the profits of the multinationals, banks and a pact with the IMF for US\$57 billion lent only to finance capital flight and ensure debt payments. Argentina has taken a leap as a semi-colony of imperialism, a condition also held under the previous government, taking on water on all four sides.

This situation provoked an accumulated hatred channelled electorally. The electoral defeat of the government is irreversible. If these results repeat themselves on 27 October, there will not be a run-off.

Macri had to admit defeat long before they gave the official results, delayed on purpose by the multinational Smartmatic hired for a better ballot counting. On the night of that black Sunday, he called everybody “to go to sleep”. The following day, he held a press conference blaming the escalation of the dollar on those who had not voted for him. With a haggard face, with his vice-presidential candidate, the Peronist Pichetto, by his side, he called for “continuing the fight until the end to reverse the election results”. Something impossible, except for a miracle. Later, he announced a series of cosmetic measures to calm the popular anger, granting aid ranging from US\$20 dollars per worker to nothing for pensioners.

The punishment vote went to Peronism

There was a huge hatred vote against a pro-imperialist, liar, and austerity-based government. Cambiemos (the president’s centre-right coalition) had won in 2015 with the support of sectors

of the workers and the people who repudiated Kirchnerist Peronism that had ruled for 12 years. Later on, it swept away the 2017 legislative elections. Emboldened by it, in December of that year, Macri launched a law of retirement reform causing a mass repudiation with one hundred thousand fighters mobilised in front of Congress together with the left. It was a point of no return. From there, the government could never recover. The agreement with the IMF in mid-2018 finished sinking it.

A foretaste of their current fall was this year’s early provincial elections, where the government lost most of them. Now, the government suffered the mother of all defeats with the sinking of their “star” candidate with angelic face Maria Eugenia Vidal, governor of Buenos Aires Province. The difference with Peronism was 17 points (52.5 per cent to 34.6 per cent), receiving the most crushing blow in the populous Greater Buenos Aires. Macri also lost Mendoza, Jujuy and Corrientes provinces where the governors were his.

The Frente de Todos (Front for All) with the Peronist formula Alberto Fernandez-Cristina Fernandez Kirchner capitalised the national punishment vote, achieving over 10 million votes. Many workers, women, and young people voted for the Fernandezes even though they knew that there would not be a material change, or directly as a “lesser evil”. But the sentiment that “we must get rid of Macri any cost” prevailed.

The Frente de Todos is a new Peronist alliance, not just hard Kirchnerism. Kirchnerist Peronism could join the victory by changing its electoral policy in time. Cristina had to accept a different political layout. She chose Alberto Fernandez as the presidential candidate, a man who had resigned from her own government in 2008 with a great deal of criticism. Until 2016, Fernandez worked for Sergio Massa’s Frente Renovador (Renewal Front) advising him to vote for Macri’s main laws. Massa finally ended up joining the Frente de Todos despite having said “with Cristina never again”.

Alberto Fernandez was a channel to add the governors — the same ones who enforced the austerity measures in the provinces — and most of the complicit union bureaucracy. The head of the CGT (General Workers Confederation), Hector Daer, Hugo Moyano and the CTAs (Autonomous Workers Central) — public servants and teachers — gave their support to the winning formula. Sectors of the crestfallen centre-left also joined this front. Thus, they reduced to a minimum a possible ‘third front’ of Federal Peronism (Lavagna-Urtubey only achieved 8.3 per cent).

There will be a new austerity plan with Alberto Fernandez and the IMF

There was an “inertia vote” in favour of Peronism. Does this mean that with the next Fernandez government Peronism will overcome its historical crisis? We don’t think so.

Peronism ceased to be a bourgeois nationalist movement that grants social gains. Menemist Peronism that ruled in the 1990s, for example, auctioned off all state-owned enterprises and doubled the foreign debt, inaugurating the famous “carnal relations” with imperialism. Neither did Peronism in the 12 Kirchnerist years fight the social evils. But the masses still hold Peronism as a reference for some concessions it had to grant, forced by the Argentinazo and other great struggles; by keeping a “national and popular” double discourse against the austerity measures, or against the IMF (they held great meetings with that slogan years ago), or using the old Peronist banners. That is how they achieved an important circumstantial recomposition. Millions voted again for Peronism as a dissenting vote and a faint hope that they will be “better off”.

There has not yet been a total break with the mistaken belief that bosses’ leaders can fight capitalist evils and social decay as did the old Peronism in 1945. That situation did not return during the 12 years of Kirchnerism and it will not return now.

In the electoral campaign we said, “if the IMF continues, a new austerity plan will come, with either Macri or Alberto Fernandez”. Alberto Fernandez said he is going to keep the agreement with the IMF, or in any case he is going to renegotiate it and that he is going to continue paying this usurious and illegitimate foreign debt. In other words, he will continue ruling for the rich and powerful and the workers will once again fight against a Peronist government.

There is no insurmountable “contradiction” between a future Peronist government and imperialism, the IMF or the big businessmen, forecasting possible unavoidable clashes. Macri was Trump, the IMF, and Bolsonaro’s favourite but the IMF itself has already said it is going to get along with a different government. Fernandez himself and Cristina’s former Finance minister, Axel Kicillof, present day winner in Buenos Aires Province as the future governor, met with the representatives of that organisation bringing tranquillity to the markets and the establishment saying they will honour what Macri had signed. Reminding them that when they ruled, the profits of the banks were enormous and US\$ 200 billion of debt were paid (“serial payers”, according to their sayings).

Alberto Fernandez already showed his “moderation” the very day after the election despite the currency depreciation and the price increases. He asked to go with the government in the transition, he will support the “favourable” measures that it applies and the CGT ruled out any general strike. In the name of governability, they let Macri do the dirty work of continuing with the austerity plans to save his next government from taking the anti-popular measures it will have to apply.

FIT – Unity made a very good election

The Left Front–Unity made a very good election. This was reflected in congratulations to our candidates and

militants in their workplace, among friends, and family.

The FIT-U managed by far to get over the proscriptive floor set by PASO and became the fourth national force. It was an important vote despite the tremendous polarization set and the enormous pressure of having to vote for Peronism as the “useful vote” to get rid of Macri. In this context, the almost 700,000 votes for president and the growth for national deputies in very important districts such as the Province and City of Buenos Aires are very valuable.

The results show there is an enormous electoral foundation consolidated with the Left Front–Unity supporting a left-wing solution to the crisis and turning its back on the different bosses’ variants. Recognition for the persistence we had in the left and the militant unionism in the confrontation to the austerity measures of Macri, the IMF, and the governors; in the women’s struggles; in defence of youth and to expose the union bureaucracy.

The support for the FIT–Unity was part of the vote against Macri on the left, for a real change and for class independence. It was also a recognition that we were the only ones who said there is no way out for the working class without breaking with the IMF and stop paying the debt. It was a vote in favour of keeping and fighting for more unity of the left (see box).

The important vote is an incentive to keep on growing towards October. To raise our substantive solution, saying no to the IMF and no to the payment of the debt, as a first step to impose a workers’ and people’s economic plan. To get workers’ and socialist seats, highly valued by the fighters when it comes to supporting workers and popular demands and bringing the voice of those who fight to the Congress and the legislatures.

The support achieved must serve to strengthen the fight against the current austerity plan and the one to come. And to strengthen the political alternative that we are building to fight for a government of the workers’ and

the left, in search of a workers’ and socialist solution.

The election also showed the failure of the sectarianism of the New Mas (Movement Towards Socialism) and its presidential candidate Manuela Castañeira, who could not make it to October, and the evident retreat of Luis Zamora. Both refused to go on a single left-wing slate as we proposed from the FIT-U.

After PASO, we have fundamental tasks ahead of us. The first one is to go out and face the new austerity caused by the rise of the dollar and its consequent theft of wages and pensions. From Izquierda Socialista (Socialist Left) in the FIT–Unity we call on the workers to go out and fight it. Mass meetings and actions by militant unionism are already being prepared Demanding CGT to break their complicity with the government and together with CTA to call a 36-hour general strike and a national struggle plan to impose emergency measures. For an increase in salaries and pensions to the cost of the family basket. That lay-offs be prohibited and utility rate hikes be cancelled. And, fundamentally, that they suspend debt payments and nationalise banks to avoid capital flight and speculation.

At the same time, while we confront Macri, we keep saying the way out for the country is to break with the IMF and with its economic and political ties to imperialism. Denouncing that Alberto Fernandez, by saying that he will comply with his dictates and pay the debt, will not give wages or jobs as he promises.

Finally, we call for us to continue to raise our substantive solution by putting up the political-electoral fight towards October, to consolidate and increase the vote for the candidates of the FIT–Unidad and to strengthen a political alternative that in the face of possible social upheavals prepares a favourable outcome for the working people. A good new election will strengthen us to continue that struggle against the new government and the new austerity plans that will come. •

Enhanced unity of the Left

In these elections, the Left Front–Unity was formed. The word “unity” was added to reflect the greater unity achieved for these elections than the one achieved in 2011 by the Left Front among different Trotskyist forces (Party of Socialist Workers, PTS; Socialist Left, IS; and Workers’ Party, PO).

Now the comrades of Socialist Workers Movement (MST) have joined us, making it possible for us to present ourselves in 23 out of 24 districts, together with the comrades of Popular Power, PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), Socialist Convergence and other sectors of the left that joined.

The unity of the left was a demand of the fighters, thus FIT-U answered them in this election. Only New MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) and Luis Zamora (Autonomy and Freedom Party) excluded themselves, opting for their permanent divisionism.

The agreement with MST was captured with a programme that establishes the breaking up with the IMF and the non-payment of the debt; nationalising the banks and foreign trade; state ownership of privatised companies; expropriation of the landowning oligarchy; down with mega-mining; for a workers’ government; support for the struggle of the working class worldwide against imperialist capitalism and its governments, and for the socialist unity of Latin America and international socialism.

In all these years, the unity of the left has allowed FIT to take a stronger stand at workplaces, promoting militant unionism led by railworkers leader and Socialist Left comrade, Ruben “Pollo” Sobrero, among other valuable anti-bureaucratic representatives; the women’s movement demanding the right to legal abortion; the youth, schools

and universities, and in the struggles against impunity.

The seats won by Nicolas del Caño, Romina del Pla, Monica Schlotthauer, Juan Carlos Giordano, Nestor Pitrola, Liliana Olivero, Laura Marrone, Angelica Lagunas, Mercedes Trimarchi, Ezequiel Peressini, Anisa Favoretti, among others, show both in the national Congress and in the provincial legislatures the positions of the left and to support popular demands from those workers’ and socialist seats.

Having won the vote of hundreds of thousands of workers, pensioners, neighbours, women, and youth in this election results from the greater unity the left achieved. We must continue along this path. Socialist Left (IS) has always been a vanguard in this and will continue to be so.



Nestor Pitrola (PO), Celeste Fierro (MST), Nicolas Del Caño (PTS), Romina Del Pla (PO), Juan Carlos Giordano and Mercedes Trimarchi (Socialist Left), Myriam Bregman (PTS)



Dry bed of the Loire River in France

The impending catastrophe and how to combat it

◀ Miguel Lamas ▶

A UN report on the environment by 250 scientists predicts that by 2050 the Earth will be uninhabitable for humans because of climate change “if we do not take urgent action on an unprecedented scale to reverse that situation.” They predict a global catastrophe in 30 years! Which, however, would be avoidable.

In Europe, tens of thousands of young people, mostly teenagers, went on school strikes and mass protests demanding that governments take urgent action against climate change, within the framework of the “Friday for the Future” movement, led by Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish activist who started the initiative last year.

We intentionally copied for this note the title of Lenin’s famous article

of 14 September 1917, calling for the overthrow, within the framework of the Russian revolution, of the capitalist government and the seizure of power in Russia by the workers’ soviets (council bodies), achieved a few weeks later.

Today, according to a UN report by 250 scientists, we face the possibility of an unprecedented global catastrophe, and the title, like the solution of overthrowing the capitalist government, which Lenin showed more than a century ago for Russia, is in force on a world scale.

But almost nothing is being done...

According to the UN report, the continuing inability to take urgent action is having sustained and potentially irreversible negative impacts on essential environmental resources and human health.

Remember that 195 nations signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in December 2015. It establishes a voluntary reduction in CO₂ emissions produced by burning fossil fuels. The main aim of the agreement is to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius during this century, relative to the average temperature of the pre-industrial era. This would avoid catastrophic effects on the planet.

Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement in 2017, shortly after assuming that it “harms the United States” and that climate change is “a tall tale”. The withdrawal of the Paris Agreement means that the United States, one of the two largest emitters of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the world (the other is China), is not actually willing to accept any agreement that makes it reduce these emissions. Nor did the United States sign the 1997

Kyoto treaty, the first global climate agreement.

The inevitable result, in the capitalist framework, is that the big European capitalist companies pressure their governments also not to comply because they would be at a disadvantage, with higher costs, against the American capitalists. And, in addition, the multinationals moved their most polluting industries to China, India and other semi-colonial Asian countries.

At the last climate summit held in Katowice, Poland, last year, the scientists' reports were removed from the final declaration. And the declaration itself has no concrete commitments.

In recent decades, the use of so-called "biofuels" has been increasing. Despite all the climate summits, besides continuing to use traditional petroleum, coal and gas fuels, "biofuels", produced from soybeans, sugar, and corn, which also emit greenhouse gases (mainly CO₂, carbon dioxide). They replace potatoes, wheat, and rice, staple foods of hundreds of millions of poor people on the planet, or they eliminate forests, which are the ones that absorb CO₂ naturally. Deforestation which will increase greenhouse gas emissions through soil drainage and speed up global warming and desertification. These biofuel crops are spreading rapidly, destroying the Amazon, which is a real lung of the world, first in Brazil, but also in Bolivia, whose government calls itself "defender of Mother Earth".

"Humanity's Struggle"?

The dominant ideology tells us the fight against climate change is a "struggle of humanity" against a phenomenon "humanity" provoked. This is a half-truth that hides the most important thing: "humanity" is divided into classes, and the world capitalist ruling class commanded by its big multinationals is the one that dominates the economy and constantly advances rapaciously over nature regardless of the environmental effects. No individual capitalist, no group of capitalists, can or will solve it, and if



Pollution created on the factories of Chinese capitalism

some would like to, they would quickly lose their capital to the fierce inter-capitalist competition. Governments today obey those same capitalists and their different factions, competing to guarantee capitalist profits. The problem lies in the anarchic way in which they produce it with the sole aim of profit, so putting a brake on the ecological crisis implies putting a brake on the capitalist form of production.

It is also misleading to say climate change affects "humanity". Those truly affected are the working-class men and women from all over the world, the youth, the native peoples and poor peasants, and the oppressed classes of the poor semi-colonial countries who receive pollution and garbage from the rich countries, also their most polluting industries; they are not represented at the climate summits.

This capitalist system is the one that is already producing disaster among most workers and the poor of humanity. There are over two billion people with "moderate or severe food insecurity" (according to the UN, i.e., they skip meals or eat almost nothing). Every day more and more people lack drinking water, hundreds of millions breathe poisoned air or consume poisoned food. Added to this is the catastrophic threat detailed in the UN report. Millions of

people, particularly young people, are wondering what their future will be in this situation and are rightly demanding environmental and social solutions.

Meanwhile, the super millionaires of the planet will always find paradise in the world, oases without pollution, with beautiful vegetation, crystalline rivers, and safe from disasters where they will live without problems.

There are new technologies that have come a long way and have become cheaper, to use solar energy (in Germany for example, they get 30 per cent of the energy from solar panels) or wind; also, the use as a fuel of hydrogen produced from solar or wind energy. These types of energy are being used in many countries with good results. But the crazy race for profits of the big capitalists prevents the enormous technological change needed from being accomplished and ceasing or reducing the use of fuels based on oil, gas or coal, or so-called biofuels.

Some economists have calculated that the cost of the technological change to "clean" (non-polluting) energy would be about US\$ 240 billion a year. It seems a lot, however, seen on a global scale, it is less than half of what the United States alone spends on arms production. That is to say, in theory, it would be totally within the reach

of the budgets of the rich countries to promote this change. But it contradicts the interests of large hydrocarbon

producers such as Russia, the United States, and Saudi Arabia.

The problem is not economic “growth”, nor is it that there are no

technological and economic possibilities to stop climate change. The question is social, of class. No multinational slows down a big investment that gives it big profits, even though it knows that it pollutes, poisons rivers or seas, desertifies rich agricultural regions or spends enormous amounts of energy from gas, coal or oil. Nor will the states controlled by these multinationals do anything effective to control their business owners and prevent them from polluting. The Environmental Summits are pure theatre to deceive the working majority and the youth by making them believe that they are doing something. It is impossible to prevent ecological disaster without destroying the system of domination of the multinationals, i.e., imperialist capitalism.

Socialist revolution or catastrophe

In Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, there are important environmental struggles. It is essential to support these struggles and integrate their concrete demands into a workers’ and people’s programme. Because without overthrowing the capitalist governments and imposing a workers’ government, the capitalists and their governments will continue the environmental devastation, even though a struggle may temporarily stop them.

To prevent environmental catastrophes, we need a revolutionary change in the way of producing, transporting, consuming, and distributing. Besides changing the type energy, we can reduce energy consumption by nullifying useless productions, starting with the gigantic production of world armament that involves US\$ 1.5 trillion a year (almost half by the United States alone). There is also the useless transport of enormous quantities of goods that local production should replace. Public transport must be state-owned, free, or very accessible, and of good quality. Particularly the less polluting electric should predominate over individual cars. This cannot be done

Peru: “Yes to agriculture, no to mines”



Demonstration in Tambo Valley, Islay, Arequipa

Peru is one country with the most intense struggles to defend the environment from multinational capitalist depredation, especially mining.

Since 15 July, the indefinite strike in the Tambo Valley, Islay province, in Arequipa, that from 5 August has spread throughout the Arequipa region against the Tia Maria mining project authorised by US multinational Southern Copper Corporation, which will destroy its rich peasant agriculture by poisoning the water. Practically, the entire population supports the strike, including the regional president, and the regional workers’ union, farmers, small merchants, and the youth who mobilised massively by blocking roads. There were also popular youth support demonstrations in Lima, and all the deputies of the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) travelled to Islay to

show solidarity with the struggle of their people.

The mine would be open-pit, which is enormously polluting. The Southern mining company has a record of denunciations for not following the environmental norms in its projects and is accused of ecocide. Southern is the mining company that earned billions of dollars and did not contribute a cent to the Treasury for being exonerated of that obligation.

The struggle, that comes from 2008 with the slogan ‘Yes to agriculture, not to the mines’, has defeated the attempts of four governments to impose the mine, Toledo, Garcia, Humala, and Kuczynsky (all four also prosecuted for corruption and receiving bribes from multinationals). Now President Vizcarra allowed the same multinational Southern Copper to execute the Tia Maria mining project. The people get up again and shout: ‘Tia Maria, no way!’

without nullifying useless or highly polluting branches of production, expropriating the big capitalists with no compensation, protecting the workers, reassigning functions reorienting mining, agricultural, and industrial production based on maximum environmental protection, reducing workdays without reducing wages and without lay-offs. In other words, we have to take power away from the capitalists and the politicians at their service and plan the economy.

And this is only possible with a socialist revolution, with governments of the democratic organisations of the workers and the poor, women and men who today are suffering climate and social disaster. Governments that

expropriate multinationals foremost, the energy ones, and impose economic planning at the service of the vast working majorities and the care of nature.

In this path, we revolutionary socialists support and promote popular struggles in defence of natural resources, of protection of the environment, which confront the plundering and depredation of nature, the pollution of water, air, land, sea, the destruction of forests, the indiscriminate cutting down of forests and all the consequences of the destruction of nature by the multinationals and their imperialist policy of plundering. Prevent large hydroelectric dams in areas that cause the destruction of forests, prohibit

open-pit mining because it is highly polluting of soil and water. Support this demand for the peoples of Peru, Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Argentina, among others. No to the looting of raw materials (minerals, cereals, energy, etc.) and no to the payment of royalties and patents imposed by multinationals like Monsanto. Expropriation of mining, oil and gas, agrochemicals (Monsanto and others) multinationals. Fight to put first state public- transport of goods and people through less polluting means of transport like the railway, with the funds the multinationals and the IMF take today, and the payments of the foreign debt. •

Even the UN denounces it

During the Fourth Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), held in Nairobi (Kenya) in March this year, an extensive 740-page report, "Global Environment Outlook" (GEO), developed over six years of information gathering by 250 scientists from 70 countries, was presented.

The report points out the states are not complying, nor are they on the path to complying, with the environmental treaties, so it warns that either a profound change takes place or the consequences will approach catastrophe. And it is not just the so-called climate change. The reduction of potable water, air pollution, mountains of plastic garbage in oceans, seas, and lakes, the melting of the poles, overfishing, the extermination of species including bees essential for pollination of plants, the excess of agricultural poisons, are other alarming issues that, although they may be related to climate change, hardly give rise to debates among states, nor to concrete actions for international solutions.

The report notes that by 2050 the disappearance of the Arctic ice sheet, the increase in deaths from

air pollution in cities and the extension of the desert in large regions of the Earth would cause the destruction of Earth. It points out that, by 2050, some four billion people would live on desertified land, mainly in Africa and South Asia. This confirms that air pollution already kills seven million people each year.

Pollutants in the environment would cause antibiotics not to be effective in humans by 2050, and this would lead to uncontrollable epidemics that would be the leading cause of death in the world.

A letter to global policy-makers accompanies the report. One conclusion is: 'We need urgent action on an unprecedented scale to stop and reverse this situation'.

This acceleration of climate change is undoubtedly because of human action. And although there are discrepancies in the magnitude of the effects and in the times in which they will take place, it is



Global Environment Outlook 6 (GEO-6) published by the UN in July 2019 denouncing the imminent environmental catastrophe

practically unanimous in the world scientific community and even most governments that the situation is serious. With the important exceptions of Trump in the United States and Bolsonaro in Brazil, who say that there are no problems with the climate.



Kurdish women's militia in Syria

Democratic Confederalism and the Kurdish Question

Andreu Pages and Cristina Mas

Lucha Internacionalista (Internationalist Fight), Spanish State

The Syrian civil war is over, except for the remaining pockets in the province of Idlib, with the defeat of the March 2011 revolution that followed in the wake of the revolutionary wave begun three months earlier in Tunisia. To defeat it has been necessary the intervention of all the imperialist and regional powers, of Hezbollah and the betrayal of the greater part of the world left that left the Syrian people alone. But the question of Syrian Kurdistan and of the Kurdish people, in general, remains unresolved.

In Syrian Kurdistan an autonomous entity has been formed, the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, which the government of Bashar al-Assad does not control and which the Turkish president Erdogan threatens to invade, as he did in January 2018 with Afrin, another Kurdish region of Syria.

Uncertainty marks the future of Syrian Kurdistan because of several reasons: first, because the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria — of which the Kurdish YPG (People's Protection Units) militias are the backbone — maintains control of the territory independently of the Syrian

regime. Second, because of the war against the Islamic State, the Kurds, with the support of American air force, have gained control of the territory that Daesh occupied. Third, because US President Donald Trump announced on December 2018 the United States would withdraw the troops stationed in the region. Lastly, because the Kurds have never participated in the Syrian revolution and have remained “neutral” in the civil war that al-Assad unleashed to crush its people. The final conclusion is that the Kurds are alone and their organizations have never ceased to be considered “terrorists” by

the imperialist powers, which have used them to curb Daesh's threat when the latter ceased to be useful to them and are now preparing to abandon them to their fate. The Kurds have been left alone in the face of the regimes of Turkey and Syria, which already have the green light from imperialism to attack them.

Faced with this uncertainty, the Kurdish political leadership, with Russia's approval, has begun negotiations with the genocidal Syrian regime to find a way out and guarantee some kind of autonomy for the Kurdish-Syrian territory. This attitude of the Kurdish leadership should provoke confusion and criticism among left-wing and anti-imperialist militants all over the world and yet it holds their sympathy and support. This policy is justified with the theory of "Democratic Confederalism" which inspires the action of the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) and the territorial organisation of Syrian Kurdistan and which counts on the international solidarity of a left that never supported the Syrian revolution.

What is Democratic Confederalism?

It is the political project developed by Abdullah Öcalan (main leader of the PKK imprisoned since 1999 and serving a life sentence in solitary confinement) announced on 20 March 2005 in the *Declaration of Democratic Confederalism of Kurdistan*.¹ It is a model of territorial organisation in the form of a pyramid in which "Within Kurdistan democratic confederalism will establish village, towns and city assemblies and their delegates will be entrusted with the real decision-making, which in effect means that the people and the community will decide."

In this system "it is the communities who talk, debate and make decisions. From the base to the top the elected delegates would form a kind of loose co-ordinating body. They will be the

The Economic Model of Democratic Confederalism

Although we do not have the space to delve deeper into the subject, the economic model proposed by Democratic Confederalism seems to be based on an idealised conception of small communities and cooperativism when it explains that "There also strong traces of a clan and tribal culture, although urban culture has not developed much. All these properties are a blessing for new democratic political formations. Communal units in farming but also in the areas of water and energy are not only ideal but necessary."¹ It also states that "democratic confederalism (...) therefore, taking its essence from the people; its success is based on self-management and self-sufficiency, even from an economic point of view".

1 Abdullah Öcalanm *Democratic Centralism*, op. cit, p. 36.

This model, in the framework of the world's capitalist economy, of which Syrian Kurdistan is a part, is impossible without establishing socialism, without creating a state ruled by the popular classes, without a socialist state that cannot be isolated but must be part of the international revolution. The cooperative system, without it being clear who is the owner of the means of production, does not cease to be a capitalist system in which the enterprises are cooperatives which, eventually, will end up competing. Rosa Luxemburg, over 100 years ago, already criticised cooperativism in her book *Reform or Revolution*.

This conception is profoundly nationalist, although it is declared anti-nationalist and a sui generis adaptation of the Stalinist theory of socialism in a single country but without socialism.

elected representatives of the people for one year."

In this project special importance is given to the participation of women and youth, through their own organisations, to the inclusion and respect of all cultural and religious minorities and to ecology.

Regarding the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people, it states in its sixth point: "For Kurdistan, however, democratic confederalism is a movement which does not interpret the right to self-determination to establish a nation state, but develops its own democracy in spite of political boundaries. A Kurdish structure will develop through the creation of a federation of Kurds in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. And by uniting on a higher level they will form a confederal system."

In another document published in 2017, entitled *Democratic Confederalism*, Öcalan further develops the project that

aims to organise the Kurdish people on the basis of local institutions "to liberate society and democratise it and that political authority is not state (...). States only administrate, while democracies govern. States are founded on power; democracies are based on collective consensus. (...) In the frame of this kind of self-administration an alternative economy will become necessary (...)."²

This project is constructed in a communal way but without building a nation-state considered as an instrument of the bourgeoisie to exploit "the labour capacity of society" and without questioning the other nation-states or their territorial limits. For Öcalan, in the creation of a nation-state "it does not make sense to replace the old chains

2 Abdullah Öcalanm *Democratic Centralism*, International Initiative Edition, Cologne, Germany, 2017, page 21. Available for download from ocalan-books.com/downloads/EN-brochure_democratic-confederalism_2017.pdf.

1 http://www.freemedialibrary.com/index.php/Declaration_of_Democratic_Confederalism_in_Kurdistan.

with new ones or even enhance the repression. This is what the foundation of a nation-state would mean in the context of capitalist modernity.”¹ But “Whether nation-state, republic or democracy – democratic confederalism is open to compromises concerning state or governmental traditions. It allows for equal coexistence.”²

Democratic Confederalism is defined as “a kind of self-governance in contrast to administration by the nation-state. The relationship between a democratic confederation and nation-states should neither be continuous warfare nor assimilation of the former into the latter. It is a relationship of principles that rests on the acceptance of two separate entities that accept coexistence. In the case of interventions and attacks, not only by nation-states but in general from capitalist modernity, democratic confederations should always have self-defence forces.”³ On the basis of these postulates “the foundation of a separate Kurdish nation-state does not make sense for the Kurds” since “another state would only be the creation of additional injustice and would curtail the right to freedom even more.”⁴

Finally, it states that “Democratic confederalism in Kurdistan is also an antinationalist movement. It aims at realising the right of self-defence of peoples by the advancement of democracy in all parts of Kurdistan without questioning existing political borders. Its goal is not the foundation of a Kurdish nation-state. The movement intends to establish federal structures in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq that are open to all Kurds and at the same time form an umbrella confederation for all four parts of Kurdistan.”⁵

This supposed overcoming of the state is what has made the project of Democratic Confederalism attractive in the eyes of anarchist organisations although, in reality, the functioning of the PKK and the Democratic



The Kurdish people

The Kurdish nation is the largest without a state of its own. They live in the mountainous region of Kurdistan in Western Asia, mainly divided between the states of Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. There are about 30 million of them. Its population is roughly divided between Turkey (15 million), Iran (6.5 million), Iraq (6.5 million), Syria (1 million) and Armenia (300,000), besides its large diaspora in Europe and the US.

Federation of Northern Syria is more typical of a guerrilla organisation that builds a kind of party-state. We are concerned that this political project blurs such important questions as the Middle East crisis, imperialism, the class character and revolutionary programmes. Practically, it does not mention the class struggle, the working class, or socialism but it does mention the “labour potential of society” instead of the productive character of the workers.

We cannot here get into the in-depth theoretical debate on Democratic Confederalism even though it is supposed to be applied in one of the most explosive areas of the planet from the point of view of the international class struggle. The Middle East is the clearest example of imperialist aggression: Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and, in particular, Gaza. In this article, we only deal with the consequences on the exercise of the right to self-determination.

The renunciation to the right to self-determination

From the theoretical point of view, in our understanding, Democratic Confederalism completely renounces

the right to self-determination, the unification of the Kurdish people and internationalism. It only asks for autonomy, in which to develop its project, respecting the borders and class character of the states that divide the Kurdish people and renouncing the construction of a Kurdish state. This policy has catastrophic consequences for the Kurds in Syria.

The first consequence has been to contribute to the victory of the Syrian regime, which has always brutally oppressed the Kurdish people and will now be able to continue to do so. To crush the revolution that broke out in 2011 the regime of Bashar al-Assad has left a destroyed country, with over 500,000 dead, five million displaced, and millions of exiles abroad, in the hands of its allies, Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah, without whom it could never have won the war. Turkey and the Persian Gulf regimes helped divide the Syrian opposition by supporting radical Islamist groups. Erdogan's priority has always been to avoid a revolution in Syria and the self-determination of the Kurds in northern Syria. All regional and imperialist powers, without exception, have collaborated in this civil war in which the Syrian people have

- 1 Ibid., p. 19.
- 2 Ibid., p. 22.
- 3 Ibid., p. 28.
- 4 Ibid., p. 19.
- 5 Ibid., p. 31.

been alone, without even the sympathy of the world left. It has been a warning to all peoples fighting for their freedom and for their living conditions.

Syrian Kurdistan has hosted many Syrian refugees on its territory but the leaders of Rojava have maintained collaboration with the regime. The non-intervention of the Kurdish militias allowed Bashar al-Assad and his allies to concentrate all their forces in the areas where the rebel forces were fighting. However, the Kurdish militias did accept to be the strike force of the United States and the European powers. The demonstrated neutrality in this war has little in common with the goals of 'liberating society and democratizing it,' but it does with peaceful coexistence with the nation-states as long as they 'do not interfere in the central affairs of Kurdish self-administration.

If the Kurdish militias had reached an agreement of military mutual

support with the militias fighting against the Syrian regime, possibly the Al-Assad regime would no longer be here. It is true the Syrian opposition forces were unwilling to recognise the Kurdish identity, and that, in the beginning, they relied so much on the intervention of Turkey at their side that they denied their reality. From Lucha Internacionalista (Internationalist Fight), we fought against this orientation in the scarce international forums supporting the Syrian revolution and we demanded the project of a free and democratic Syria should necessarily contemplate the right to Kurdish self-determination.... a right that the Kurdish leadership had renounced with the policy of Democratic Confederalism! The reality is that this strategic unity of action based on the common objective of overthrowing the dictatorship that

crushed everyone has not taken place and the price has been very high.

Recognition of the borders of the oppressor states of the Kurdish people

Beyond Syria, the approach of Democratic Confederalism recognises the borders that divide Kurdistan and makes it easier for each political leadership in its different regions occupied by Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran to defend their own interests. With the excuse that creating another state would be another form of oppression and that political realities can be built outside the existence of states, the reality is that imperialism is allowed to impose the policy of "divide and conquer". Thus, the regional government of Kurdistan maintains excellent relations with the governments of Iran and Turkey and forces the Kurdish groups of those states not to carry out actions from their territory. Worse still the regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan allows Turkey to bomb and invade the areas of Iraqi Kurdistan where PKK militias are located. It has not been necessary for Barzani and Talabani, Kurdish leaders of Iraq, to build a new state in order to generate a new oppressive apparatus.

The refusal to promote the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people, to its re-unification and, in short, to set up a Kurdish state implies the recognition of the current borders of the states that oppress the Kurds: Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. It ends up accepting the existence of these genocidal regimes with which "peaceful coexistence" is impossible and isolating the Kurds from the rest of the peoples of the Middle East who are fighting for their freedom.

From the International Workers Unity – Fourth International (IWU-FI), we will continue to defend the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people, independently of their political direction, and we will be by their side against the threats and aggressions of Turkey, Syria or any other regional or imperialist power.

May 2019

Solidarity with all Kurdish prisoners in Turkey

Leyla Güven, Kurdish Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey by HDP (People's Democratic Party) started an indefinite hunger strike on 7 November 2018 in protest against the conditions of isolation suffered by Abdullah Öcalan, president of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party, imprisoned since 1999 on the island of Imrali.

Leyla has always been a fighter for the rights of the Kurdish people and has been arrested and imprisoned on several occasions. She started her hunger strike while in prison but was finally released on 25 January 2019 because of her state of health. Several hundred Kurdish political prisoners and about 7,000 people in Kurdistan and the diaspora supported this hunger strike. Some prisoners have also committed suicide in protest against the conditions of Öcalan's isolation and an exile.

This action has enabled that, for the first time since 2016, the visit of his brother Mehmet Öcalan, who has stated that Abdullah declared the against hunger strikes and suicides of Kurdish prisoners or exiles.

From the IWU-FI, we demand the release of all Kurdish prisoners jailed in Turkey, as part of the right to the liberation of Kurdistan. However, we do not agree with these methods of struggle, although we acknowledge the bravery of the militants who carry them out. We call for an international campaign to demand an end to the repression of the Turkish state against the Kurdish people and against the left-wing fighters, trade unionists, journalists, and teachers who have been imprisoned for opposing the government. Only the union of the social and political struggles of the peoples of Turkey can defeat the authoritarian regime of Erdogan.



Leon Trotsky Academic Meeting Table with Simon Rodriguez, second from left to right

Cuba: Academic Meeting on Leon Trotsky

Between 6 and 8 May, the first Leon Trotsky International Academic Event, sponsored by the Institute of Philosophy and the Juan Marinello Cuban Institute of Cultural Research, was held at the “Benito Juárez of Havana” house, with the collaboration of other institutions, including the Trotsky House-Museum in Mexico City. The presentations covered Trotsky’s contributions to Marxist theory, his participation in cultural and artistic debates, Trotsky as a historian, among other topics.

Simon Rodriguez Porras, co-author of the book *Why did Chavismo Fail? A balance sheet from the left opposition*, a member of the Socialism and Liberty Party of Venezuela and the IWU-FI,

took part in the panel “Revolution in the Caribbean and the Continent” with the paper “The validity of the Fourth International in the 21st Century” (see “Academic Meeting on Leon Trotsky in Cuba”, uit-ci.org/index.php/news-documents/2239-academic-meeting-on-leon-trotsky-in-cuba).

The coordinator of the event was Cuban researcher Frank Garcia. His initiative and work allowed the realisation of this historical event, where about 60 international guests from some 15 countries attended.

Unfortunately, the attendance of young Cuban students, researchers, and activists was very limited. They did not publicly announce the activity, and they restricted the entrance to the “Benito Juárez” house to a previously elaborated list of guests. Customs

withheld donations of Trotsky’s books and other materials.

Esteban Volkov, Trotsky’s grandson, sent his greeting to the event. The book *Trotsky in the Mirror of History*, by Peruvian historian Gabriel Garcia, a new edition of *The Revolution Betrayed* by the Karl Marx Centre for Socialist Studies, and the compilation *Latin American Writings* by the Leon Trotsky Centre for Socialist Studies and Thought were presented, and extracts from a documentary in preparation, *The Most Dangerous Man in the World*, by audio-visual producer Lindy Laubman.

Among the speeches by Cuban researchers, Natasha Gomez, professor of philosophy at the University of Havana, stood out. She highlighted the importance of the theory of permanent revolution, of which Marx himself was

a precursor for a Marxist reading of revolutions in peripheral countries such as Cuba itself.

The speeches and papers that sought to demarcate Marxism from Stalinism were reiterative. There was no lack of polemics between different currents about the social character of the USSR, the revolutions of the post-war period and the debates between Trotsky, Nin, and Serge, among other topics.

The First Leon Trotsky Academic Encounter attracted international attention. For the Latin American and world Marxist activism and intellectuality, it could not go unnoticed that Cuba opened a discussion on the Bolshevik leader and founder of the Fourth International. The circumstance that Trotsky's murderer, Stalinist agent

Ramon Mercader, had spent his last years on the island could metaphorically synthesise the relationship of the Cuban regime with the old Soviet revolutionary, in a fact that became the axis of the novel *The Man Who Loved Dogs* by Cuban writer Leonardo Padura.

For a group of young researchers and activists who recognise themselves as socialists, Trotsky offers relevant clues for interpreting the processes that led to the fall of the USSR, and in economic and social transformations in which they confirm the emergence of a new Cuban bourgeoisie, while debates about the meaning of those changes gain strength, undoubtedly that the realisation of this event marks a milestone. Beyond the fact that the attendance of the Cuban public has

been as scarce as the broadcast of the event in the local media.

In his presentation, Simon Rodriguez Porras presented "a possible reading of what it means to be a Trotskyist today, through an interpretation of the validity of the Fourth International project, which (Trotsky) considered the most important work of his life [...]. There is evidence that this debate (of internationalism versus socialism in a single country) was the one that most concerned Stalin at the time of ordering Trotsky's assassination." Our comrade claimed that "it is still possible and necessary to build a world revolutionary party to fight against a system that is also global."

"Bringing Trotsky to the Cubans"

Simon Rodriguez, a leader of PSL of Venezuela, who took part in the event, interviewed Cuban researcher Frank Garcia, who was at the head of the praiseworthy organisation of the event, a month later by e-mail, to learn more about the process that frames

it. We reproduce part of that interview.

The event was the product of an individual revolutionary stubbornness, of my personal interest in Trotsky, because nobody, because of the ebb from 2017 onwards, expected something like this. Many had immense scepticism and thought I would get tired along the way. Something that, before banning — it was never banned — some officials gambled: on my tiredness.

Except for those who collaborated with the organisation of the event or were speakers, very few Cuban people attended the event. However, that core showed great commitment and their speeches were of a high level, which shows that there is a genuine interest in the subject. After its culmination, did the event have any exposure within Cuba?

The event, beyond what we can do on social networks and on the Cuban Marxist blog La Tizza and the left-wing foreign press, has had no exposure in Cuba. People have heard about it after it was done. However, the university students who were present brought with them the will to study Trotsky. Thanks to them, in Santa Clara — without these young being Trotskyists — a growing interest in this figure has been born. As a result, ten copies of *The Revolution Betrayed* and other titles have been distributed, not always by Trotsky, but unknown in Cuba. But, when they find that there is a whole theoretical body that is not only Trotsky: Bensaid, Broué, Löwy, Callinicos, Tariq Ali, Robert Brenner, the September Group... they clash not having access to that literature. They want to read in digital form but it is very uncomfortable and there are not always



Frank Garcia, researcher, and organiser of the event



Despite the bureaucracy of the Cuban CP, they cannot ignore Leon Trotsky

the devices for it. They devour volume 1 of *Capital* and not a few writings by or about Lenin, but when they ask their teachers for more readings, they send them to Hegel and Feuerbach. I ask for literary solidarity for those young comrades: Yunier Mena Benavides, Verde Gil, and Ana Isa, which are their names on Facebook. All three helped a lot with the event. Please contact them. They want more and more books.

In Havana, we have our comrade Lisbeth Moya, a journalism student who took over the production of the event. She has a better situation in access to literature, but don't stop helping her.

In 2016, you taught a graduate course on Trotsky. During the meeting, we heard speeches from Cuban academics linked to philosophy studies who emphasised the importance of Trotsky's theoretical contributions to Marxism. Is Trotsky studied at Cuban universities?

No. We do not study Trotsky in Cuban universities. However, interest in heretical Marxism continues and grows. That was what you saw in the speeches of our academics: a tremendous desire to enrich Marxist theory in Cuba. Professor Natasha Gomez, who spoke

from the audience in the first session of the first day, is a colleague who develops a very interesting theoretical-critical work on Anton Pannekoek, Otto Rühle, Karl Korsch, the Austro Marxism and the theoreticians of the so-called "infantile disorder of leftism". Today, the dogmatism that accuses any theory which is not within the dogma of being revisionist is very weak. To help this process, I always ask for international support: send us literature. We have the big problem of not being able to shop online: the US blockade against Cuba exists. It is not propaganda: it is a fact.

You yourself clarify that you are not a Trotskyist, but as a Marxist you recognise the importance of knowing their political and theoretical legacy. In what sense do you consider that, to today's Cuban youth with anti-capitalist, revolutionary concerns, this legacy is useful to them?

Trotsky does not foresee the current situation of Cuba, but a good part of his texts helps us understand something of what originated what we Cubans live today: the collapse of the Soviet Union. A process that is still very confusing for many on the island and it will continue to be so, as long as one of

the most important pieces of Marxism is not completely discovered in Cuba: Trotsky. That is why we held the event. To bring Trotsky to the Cubans. And not the Cubans towards Trotsky, which is different.

But in addition, Trotsky's contributions to the conceptions of art, in its link with the cultural currents of the beginning of the Bolshevik revolution and later in writing the *Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art*, give clues about how Marxism has assumed meridian aspects such as the freedom of artistic creation. And this part is of great interest in Cuba, because here is the generalised criterion that most communist policies towards art are censors.

Do you have any news about the progress of the plans to publish the papers presented at the event? Are there new projects to continue promoting Trotsky's study?

I am in the process of compiling, translating and transcribing the debates. We need urgent help with these last two tasks. Speeding up the editing process and providing the publisher with a complete and edited book will make it possible for us, at the Havana International Book Fair, to have the presentation of the memoirs of the 1st Leon Trotsky International Academic Event: our greatest achievement. There is, and not less important, the realisation of the 2nd Leon Trotsky International Academic Event, in Sao Paulo, in October 2020. Contact Daniel Persegui on Facebook. He will tell you the need that corresponds with the solidarity. We need urgent help.

I am not a Trotskyist, but — as I have already said — all the female and male Trotskyists in the world are my comrades, and because I am a communist, all of them, those who fight against capitalism and for socialism, are my comrades. It doesn't matter which groups, tendencies or political parties they belong to. We have a common goal: everything for the working classes, nothing for the bourgeoisie. No kings, no bourgeoisie, no state: towards communism. •



IWU-FI

Training schools were held

On 12, 13 and 14 July in Mexico City, the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), Mexican section of the IWU-FI, held a party cadres school.

The theme was Theory and Programme for the Revolution of the 21st Century. The speaker was Mercedes Petit, leader of the Socialist Left, of Argentina, and of the IWU-FI. Comrades from the section and guests from the United States and Venezuela took part.

The IWU-FI sections of the northern hemisphere have promoted summer schools for the formation of their cadres and militants. Besides the one held in Mexico, a summer school was also held in Barcelona, Spain.

On 1, 2, 3 and 4 August, was held the summer school organised by Lucha Internacionalista (Internationalist Fight), Spanish State section of IWU-FI. This time the chosen theme was:



Debate in Mexico



Study table in Barcelona

Debates in the left on the national question. The first day of the session was in the city of Barcelona and the others in a nearby summer camp. At

the end of August, the summer school of İşçi Demokrasisi Partisi (Workers' Democracy Party, IDP), Turkish section of IWU-FI, will be held.

Venezuela

Ruben Gonzalez sentenced to 5 years and 9 months in prison

Ruben Gonzalez, general secretary of Ferrominera Orinoco Workers Union (Sintraferrominera), was sentenced to 5 years and 9 months imprisonment at La Pica jail in Monagas.

Gonzalez was arrested on 30 November 2018, after a protest in demand for implementing collective bargaining agreements and wage tables at a checkpoint in Anaco, Anzoategui state. He was returning from a workers' march in Caracas called by the Intersectoral of Venezuelan Workers, where they demanded from the government

of Nicolas Maduro to comply with collective agreements and rejected the salary tables unilaterally imposed by the government.

This is the second time Gonzalez has been sentenced to prison. In 2009, the Chavez government imprisoned him for leading a strike in Ferrominera. In 2011, he was sentenced to seven years, six months and two days in prison. Two days later, the Supreme Court of Justice repealed the sentence. On that occasion, there were big demonstrations in Guayana, strikes in the basic industries, even the threat of a general strike, Chavez was defeated and the sentence repealed. In a new trial, they acquitted Gonzalez. On 15 August, the military court in which

he was being tried sentenced him to five years and nine months in prison. Rodney Alvarez, a Ferrominera worker, has been in prison for eight years, with a false accusation, and without being judged. Faced with this situation, Alvarez has declared himself in a state of rebellion.

The persecution of workers and union leaders is a government policy to weaken the struggles of the workers. From the IWU-FI and other organisations, among them PSL and CCURA, we repudiate the unjust condemnation of Ruben Gonzalez and call for the broadest unity of international action to achieve his and Rodney Alvarez's freedom.

Puerto Rico: Rossello Fell and the Crisis Remains Open

The massive protests that began on 13 July and mobilised over a million people ended up overthrowing Governor Ricardo Rosello. He resigned because of the general repudiation of his homophobic, macho and violent statements. The day of 22 July, with a general strike, roadblocks on highways and motorways ended up crowning Rossello's exit. But the political and social crisis remains open, although they can impose a change in the government.

What many called a "citizen revolution" has produced a before and after for the Puerto Rican mass movement. Nothing will ever be the same on the island.

Puerto Rico is a state "associated" with the United States, with a status of self-government, exploited by U.S. imperialism. The island has a population of over three million people but, as a product of the economic crisis, it continues to decline with a process of constant emigration.

Puerto Ricans have been US citizens since 1917, but unusually they do not have the same rights. The power to exercise their sovereignty depends solely on the US Congress. Over the years, this process has led to the formation of different expressions of independence. This struggle left martyrs, such as the leader Filiberto Ojeda Rios, assassinated in 2005. The independence activist, Oscar Lopez Rivera, after spending 36 years unjustly detained by imperialism, was released in 2017 after major international campaigns demanding his release.

Two parties have alternated in power in Puerto Rico since 1950, the deposed governor's New Progressive Party (NPP) and the Popular Democratic Party (PDP). Both are transmission belts of American imperialism.

Since 1950, two parties have alternated in power in Puerto Rico,



The mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans drove out the corrupt governor Rossello

the deposed governor's New Progressive Party (NPP) and the Popular Democratic Party (PDP). Both are transmission belts of American imperialism. The Financial Oversight and Management Board, a body created by US bankers to guarantee debt payments (US\$ 70 billion), is still in place. There is an unemployment rate of 15 per cent, three times higher than in any state in the Union, the cost of living being more expensive than in the continent and wages significantly lower.

In 2017, hurricanes Irma and Maria battered the island, devastating it from one end to the other, affecting the most the poorest neighbourhoods because of their precarious infrastructure. There were thousands of deaths, hundreds of people disappeared and for months popular sectors lived without electricity. The popular majorities also had to suffer the abandonment of a corrupt government that did not supply answers.

Eduardo Lato, a Puerto Rican writer, pointed out that "it was twelve days in which, for the first time in decades, we lived without masters and discovered the unstoppable force of freedom"

(*Clarín*, Argentina, 26 July 2019). It seems to be the best illustration of what the revolutionary days of July were like. The popular mobilisation did not have a political leadership. That void was partially covered by art figures such as the musician Ricky Martin, Rene from Calle 13 or rapper Bad Bunny. This puts on the table the need for the rebellious youth, the artists, the workers, the women and sectors of the left take steps in the formation of a new party of those from below.

The Puerto Rican people must continue their struggle until a government from the revolutionary mobilisation and the new popular organisations emerges. The mobilisation must demand the non-payment of the foreign debt to use that money in an emergency public works plan to create jobs and rebuild the cities most affected by the hurricanes. On this path, to resume the fight for Puerto Rico's independence from the United States. From the International Workers Unity – Fourth International (IWU-FI) we call to surround the people of Puerto Rico with solidarity.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The catastrophe threatening us



A UN report by 250 scientists on climate change predicted that by 2050 the Earth would be uninhabitable for humans. The heatwave in the Arctic, after passing through Europe, has accelerated the melting of ice in Greenland. July has been the warmest month in history on the entire planet. Trump and the capitalist governments don't care about global warming. For them, the priority is the profits of the multinationals. The capitalist-imperialist system is leading us to an announced catastrophe. The UN has said we must change our diet. What we need to change is the system. Only socialism and a government of the workers will plan

the economy for the benefit of the peoples and in defence of nature. On this path, we revolutionary socialists support and promote popular struggles in defence of natural resources and to face the plundering and depredation of nature. No to the pollution of water, air, land, and sea. No to the destruction of jungles and the indiscriminate cutting down of forests. No to the destruction of nature by multinationals and their imperialist plundering policy. For the prohibition of open-pit mining because it is a high soil and water pollutant. Expropriation of mining, oil and gas, agrochemicals multinationals (Monsanto-Bayer and others).