

The world at a crucial juncture: new phenomena, demands and tasks – the crisis in the CWI

1. A new phase in the internal struggle has opened up in the recent period. In March the IDWCTCWI faction split, followed by the departure of the Spanish section “Izquierda Revolucionaria” from the CWI. The leaderships of the Mexican, Venezuelan and Portuguese sections are urging their members to follow them. In mid-April, without any consultation with majority IEC members, the IS majority announced it wanted to overturn the unanimous decision of November 2018’s IEC to convene an IEC in August followed by a World Congress in January 2020, instead announcing its plan for an IEC meeting four months later. A majority of IEC members objected to this and insisted that the IEC be convened, as agreed, in August. In response, in what appears to be an accidentally leaked draft letter, which wrongly anticipated the outcome of a meeting held by the IEC majority comrades on 16 & 17 April 2019, the faction announced that comrades who participate in an August IEC meeting, a large majority of IEC members, “are placing themselves outside the CWI and in a rival organisation”. This outrageous threat to expel the majority of IEC members and their sections by the minority is the most dramatic demonstration to date of the destructive path being followed by the faction, using methods completely alien to those earlier used in the CWI. It unfortunately confirms fundamental problems with the faction, that the majority of IEC comrades have pointed to in our recent statements.

2. On April 16 & 17 comrades from the “IEC majority”, and other leading comrades from sections, had a successful meeting to discuss the crisis, the lack of leadership in the International and to map a way forward. This document is intended to identify and start to develop some of the issues that have arisen so far in the debate. It is our intention to provide a more detailed analysis of perspectives, programme, tasks and methods in the run-up to the World Congress.

3. The struggle in our international has opened up at a very particular juncture in world relations and this is not accidental. As has been pointed out, the all-sided crisis of capitalism is putting all serious political trends to the test. This is so for the traditional bourgeois parties as well as social democratic parties, who are, in many countries, faced with crisis and isolation from their traditional electoral support. Also, significantly, a number of new left forces are in crisis.

4. Revolutionaries are also facing sharp challenges on multiple levels in this period. The underlying question that faces us is how to respond to these challenges, build our forces and point a way forward for the advanced workers and youth heading into the 2020s. The debate so far has revealed important differences on how to respond to the new period. The CWI has also faced important internal differences on quite a few occasions in the past. But although the differences that have emerged are important, we believe that they are not so crucial or so fundamental as to raise the prospect of a split of the CWI, as the faction claims. In any case, to characterise these differences properly we must first briefly describe key features of the juncture, which need to be discussed seriously at every level of the CWI.

Looming downturn and growing inter-imperialist rivalry

5. The capitalist class globally is facing a serious crisis of credibility. With an increasing inability to develop the productive forces, with social inequality at record historical levels, with mass instability, antagonisms between imperialist powers, and with the beginnings of climate catastrophe, the capitalists are increasingly exposed as reactionary parasites with no vision for a viable future for humanity.

6. The economic crisis of 2008-9 was the deepest capitalism has faced since the Great Depression. Despite recovery in some parts of the world economy, the ruling class is not prepared for the next downturn which has already begun. China is already in a “growth recession” with real growth down to a reported 3-4%, but possibly lower than that. There is growing unemployment in China, with job vacancies falling by 36% in Eastern China's coastal manufacturing regions in the final quarter of 2018, compared to a year earlier, and 77% in Western China. The EU is tipping into recession and the European Central Bank may restart its Quantitative Easing (QE) program by the end of the year. After beginning to raise interest rates, the U.S. Federal Reserve has stopped, alarmed by the indications of a slowdown in the world economy and in the U.S. as well. The Fed's growth forecast for the U.S. economy for 2019 has been lowered to 2.1% while the White House claims it will be 3.2%. Trump is calling on the Fed to cut interest rates and resume QE.

7. A key measure of the underlying problems is the staggering accumulation of debt. Total global debt has reached \$215 trillion, three times the annual Gross World Product. In the U.S., household debt was higher in 2017 than at almost any point in post-war history. Capital has been plowed into speculative activity similarly to the period before 2008-9, creating the potential for bursting bubbles. Currency speculation alone counts for \$5.3 trillion per day while the infamous global derivatives market has a nominal value of \$1.2 quadrillion (1 with 15 zeros)!

8. Meanwhile, we see the sharpening of inter-imperialist rivalry, especially between the U.S. and rising Chinese imperialism. The trade dispute clearly reflects the emergence of a much deeper conflict and the end of 40 years of U.S. “engagement” with China. The EU elite, already in conflict with Trump on a variety of fronts, has also concluded that it needs to take a firmer stance in response to China. The aggressive position of the Chinese regime is reflected, in the recent weeks, in the agreement it has reached with Italy to sign onto the “Belt and Road” program with the development of Trieste port. This is part of a broader intervention involving a whole number of Balkan and European countries, the latest being Greece, known by the name “16+1”. Besides the sharp antagonism between China and the US and EU, Indo-Pakistan tensions are also growing as are the sharp tensions between Russia, the US and EU.

9. The processes of mounting inter-imperialist tensions have been reflected in an accelerated arms race, with Trump symbolically declaring a walkout from the UN's Arms Trade Treaty, following the US leaving the intermediate nuclear weapons treaty with Russia.

10. Currently, world imperialist rivalries are expressed in their most brutal form in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly with the US and Russia's direct and proxy interventions. US imperialism has been forced in Syria to substantially give way to the Kremlin's interests, but nevertheless, Trump tends regionally to pursue his “neo-con” aggressive line, striving to impose US interests. Thus, he has stepped up economic sanctions against Iran and efforts to further organize a regional alliance against it. We have also seen his veto against ending US military assistance for the Saudi-led barbaric intervention in Yemen, his recent open support in Libya for Saudi-backed warlord Khalifa Haftar just when Moscow appeared to distance itself; and his provocative “historic” moves to back the Israeli regime against the Palestinians and the Arab masses.

11. The argument that we are seeing a new “cold war” is only partly valid as the current rivalries don't consist of fundamentally opposing and mutually exclusive social systems, and are more diversified and shifting than the global post-war conflict between a bloc led by U.S. imperialism on the one side and the Stalinist states on the other. The China-U.S. conflict is emerging as the most critical but others can rise and recede – as is reflected also in the tensions between the US and Russia over the 2016 US elections, or recently over the Venezuelan crisis.

12. The growth of inter-imperialist tensions, as well as the “depleted toolkit” for dealing with economic crises, are key reasons why the major economic powers will face serious difficulties in any attempt to replicate the coordinated intervention that helped prevent the 2008-9 downturn from turning into an even more catastrophic collapse.

13. Increasing protectionism points to the partial unwinding of globalisation. Global trade, the massive expansion of which was a key feature of globalisation, declined relative to economic growth in 2015 and 2016 but then rebounded in the past couple of years. This is not likely to continue. The WTO has now written down its forecast for world trade in 2019 from 3.7 % to 3.0%. The IMF asserts that 70% of the world economy will experience a downturn this year. On top of this, we see the breakdown of the postwar “architecture” of global diplomacy and fraying of institutions like NATO and the WTO which Trump has accelerated but certainly did not cause.

14. The unprecedented crisis of British capitalism reflected in Brexit – and the potential coming to power of a Corbyn-led government in the next period – shows on the one hand how the established institutions of capitalist rule have lost authority amongst big sections of the masses in Britain and on the other has revealed deep fissures in the main political parties. This also reflects a growing crisis in the European Union itself, with the possibility of the loss of power by the “Grand coalition” of the "centre right" and "centre left" parties in the European Parliament, as the electorate of many countries express their dissatisfaction by voting for right-wing populist parties.

15. While de-globalisation can go significantly further, it should not be expected to reach the dimensions that protectionism took in the period after the 1929 Wall Street crash. The bourgeoisie of the main capitalist powers have drawn conclusions about the catastrophic impact of the protectionist policies they followed then, which led to the stifling of world trade and their economies. This understanding, together with the complex international division of labour in production processes today, acts as a partial check on the de-globalisation process. Having said this, we need to be open about the possibility of "things getting out of control", given the rise of right-wing populism in a whole series of countries.

Politics and Consciousness

16. The capitalist strategists are increasingly losing political control of the situation. We see the Brexit process, to take one particularly dramatic example, stalled in a deadlock with the bourgeois unable to regain control. Again and again we see blindfolded governments ending up in a dead end. The ruling class has simply no credible "sober" capitalist alternatives.

17. In many countries, conventional bourgeois politics, including the traditional social democratic parties, is increasingly rejected by wide sections of the working class and middle class. We see a sharp political polarisation in country after country – often with the growth in support, both for the new reformist left and populist right and even far-right.

18. The 2008-9 crash had a profound effect on the consciousness of working people and youth across large parts of the globe and led to a growing rejection of neo-liberalism and often capitalism itself. In the advanced capitalist countries and beyond, this led to the creation and growth of a number of new left formations in addition to the ones that had already come into existence in the previous two decades, and in many countries a renewed interest in Marx and “socialism” among a wider layer. While pointing to the limitations of these developments, we intervened energetically to channel the potential they presented.

19. But the weaknesses/deficiencies of the leaderships of the new left formations, whose reformist

approach has inevitably led to political capitulation once faced with the determined opposition of the ruling class, and their failure to mobilise the working class in determined mass struggles, has led to disappointment and created an increased space for the development of right wing populism and the far right.

20. SYRIZA's capitulation to the European bourgeoisie and the IMF (the Troika) after the bailout referendum in 2015 was a critical turning point. Now the leaders of Podemos and Momentum, among others, are increasingly being exposed as having no strategy to win decisive victories for the working class and the oppressed.

21. However, it is very important, at the same time, to see the hunger of millions for a political strategy that can defeat the threat of right-wing populism and the far-right, and the parties and governments of the establishment. The failures of the new left formations can have a demoralising effect but it can not be comparable to the effects of the betrayals by social democracy and Stalinism in the past. New forces can rapidly coalesce around a more fighting approach and more far-reaching political programmes, and we have to be prepared to orient rapidly towards such developments. In some cases, we can also play an important role in the formation of such parties and formations.

22. On the other hand, we should not understate the dangers inherent in the situation. In the absence of a powerful left alternative, a number of demagogic right populists like Trump, Bolsonaro, Duterte, Orban and Salvini have come to power. Trump, for example, may be on course to lose the 2020 presidential election (though that is not certain) but he has consolidated his control over the Republican Party around a ferociously xenophobic and authoritarian message. He has a real mass base in sections of the white population. This base has a reactionary core, but many Trump voters also voted for Obama and many more would have voted for Bernie Sanders if he had been on the ballot in November 2016. In the U.S. and other countries, important sections of the population who have voted for the right wing out of desperation or did not vote at all can be pulled away as a result of developing class struggles. This is particularly the case if this is combined with the development of a new political force with a bold programme and approach.

23. Despite the undermining of bourgeois democracy and increasing authoritarian and bonapartist features of capitalist rule in key countries (including Brazil, Turkey, the Philippines, Russia, Hungary and Poland) and the rise of racist, populist right wing governments in the US, Italy, etc, the underlying objective strength of the working class generally points away from the threat of fascist movements coming to power. The situation is different to the 1920s and 30s when the impact of the 1917 October revolution meant that the ruling class feared revolution in a more immediate and concrete way than they do today. Moreover, the experience with fascism in the 1930s had catastrophic results for the ruling classes of Europe and internationally. There is no immediate or short term prospect in the industrially developed countries of the ruling class, fearing the loss of its power, handing over power to fascism. However, as the crisis deepens and the working class reasserts itself, as is already happening in parts of Eastern Europe, a desperate and decrepit ruling class will be tempted to resort to dictatorship or bonapartist methods and at times encourage the development of fascist forces as an auxiliary force to use against the working class and its parties. Such moves are full of dangers for the ruling class, however, as they can provoke a sharp reaction by the working class.

24. We have come through a decade with many explosive developments internationally, beginning with the North African and Middle East revolutions and, the historic struggles of the Greek working class and popular masses, the Spanish "Indignados", "Occupy" and similar movements. There were both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary features in the situation. But as the CWI has stressed, while there have been many important struggles, the working class has so far failed to change the

course of events in a decisive way, despite heroic efforts and sacrifices in many countries. In part, this reflects the lingering effects of the throwing back of consciousness after the collapse of Stalinism. And in part, the shortcomings of the movements' "leaders", the leaderships of the left and the trade unions, whose reformist policies contribute to defeats and demoralisation. This has allowed the ruling class to continue its offensive against the toiling masses. But consciousness can change quickly during struggle and the onus is on us to ensure that we intervene energetically in a transitional way to assist the development of consciousness in a revolutionary socialist direction.

25. Despite a number of serious defeats in the previous period, what is shown by the Yellow Vests struggle in France; the teachers' revolt in the US; the historic general strikes in India; the mass movement in Haiti including two general strikes since last summer; as well as strikes in the "maquiladora" zone of northern Mexico, is that the working class masses will recover and reengage in struggle. In a number of countries, a sharp development of the class struggle can be expected, and this is before the new down-turn in the world economy has really developed.

26. The mass revolutionary struggles in Sudan and now in Algeria against entrenched, corrupt and dictatorial regimes point to how rapidly explosive developments can occur in a whole series of countries. The toppling of al-Bashir and Bouteflika after decades in power bear particular importance in the context of a region dominated by bloody counter-revolutionary trends since the receding of the 2011 revolutionary wave. In Sudan, rising prices, austerity measures and privatization exploded in the uprising, with workers and youth shouting "freedom, peace, justice" and "revolution is the people's choice". Mass demonstrations in Khartoum refused to see the military as a savior and demanded civilian rule. New space has opened up for working class struggle and organization. Only the working class can point to a way out of the nightmare of barbaric capitalism and landlordism.

27. There is the potential for a massive wave of class struggles and protests against corruption and authoritarian rule in the former Stalinist countries, and particularly in China which can have many contradictory elements, including a search for genuine socialism, already evident among a layer of young people.

28. The movements around women's and LGBT oppression in a number of countries and the youth movement on climate change – now with the call for a "general strike" on 'Earth Strike 27 September 2019' – being thrown up, also point to the enormous radicalising potential of social movements against oppression and wider threats emanating from capitalism. The women's movements can, as we have seen, also feed directly into the development of the class struggle itself. Google workers internationally and McDonald's workers in the US took strike action against sexual harassment after the #MeToo mood developed. This can be combined, as in the U.S., with the growing popularity of "socialism" and demands for far reaching reforms like the "Green New Deal", which in reality, as the US comrades have explained in their public material, cannot be achieved without bringing the energy sector and other key parts of the economy into public ownership and a democratically agreed plan, decisively challenging capitalism, via a struggle for socialism.

29. Alongside challenges imposed by trends of reaction, the coming period can see enormous and rapid leaps forward in consciousness and organisation. Many developments in the working class, or in wider movements such as the Yellow Vests in France, can and will begin outside the formal trade union structures. At the same time, workers' struggles and pressure from below may also push even heavily bureaucratised unions into conflicts with the ruling class.

The tasks of revolutionary Marxists

30. In recent years, in the context of the unfolding capitalist crisis, we've seen the development of the aforementioned broad and at times even historic mobilizations against various forms of oppression. Particularly prominent has been the women's liberation struggle, demanding equality and against sexism and all forms of gender oppression, as well as the colossal movement of the school students on the issue of the environment. We cannot stress enough the importance, in this period, of the historic approach of the CWI, building on that of Bolsheviks, to women's liberation and other struggles of oppressed layers and peoples.

31. As demonstrated by the 2011 revolutionary wave of the "Arab Spring", and other events mentioned above, we live in an era characterized by permanent instability and a more generalized development of trends of revolution and counter-revolution. Revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations could arise rapidly in the context of the deepening social crisis of coming years. But as long as the working class does not put a strong imprint on developments as an independent force, it is inevitable that more political confusion and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas will have an influence in social movements that develop. Moreover, even movements with a distinct working-class composition, will not be "chemically pure". "Lenin described as "ridiculously pedantic" the view of revolution that says: "So one army lines up in one place and says, 'We are for socialism', and another, somewhere else and says, 'We are for imperialism', and that will be a social revolution!"

32. In the wake of the collapse of Stalinism, the CWI identified the "dual tasks" of building the revolutionary organisation at the same time as we assist in the rebuilding of the broader organisations of the working class. This approach remains absolutely relevant to the work of our international today as we face many complications in various countries due to the loss of fighting traditions and the weakening of organisation in the working class. Of course, as we saw in the West Virginia teachers strike in 2018, or with the mass unionisation wave during the Egyptian revolution, among other examples, these fighting traditions can be rapidly relearned. We also need to be clear that there is also the potential in the next period that mass or semi-mass revolutionary currents could develop in some countries even before broader mass parties with a reformist programme.

33. Ultimately, the key task of our international is to develop Marxist cadre, to take bold Marxist interventions into existing struggles and prepare for pre-revolutionary and revolutionary situations. As Trotsky said in *Lessons of October* directed at the critical struggle in Germany in 1923, "Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer." We would add that a developed revolutionary party with tested cadre cannot simply be created in the midst of a revolutionary situation – the roots for it will have to be laid and tested in the working class and the mass movement well in advance.

The roots of the crisis in the International

34. The objective situation, its complications and contradictions lie – as was the case in similar situations in the past – behind the crisis which hit our International, starting from the intense debate at the last IEC meeting (November 25 – December 1, 2018). The immediate cause was a disagreement over the work of the Irish section and the unbalanced and heavy-handed approach by the IS, but the root causes were much deeper. They relate to real differences that have to do with perspectives and methods of work. It is wrong to underestimate the importance of these differences but we are still convinced, after five months of debate, that they are not evolving around fundamental Marxist principles and positions, and they are not of a "life or death" nature for revolutionary Marxism. We believe that despite the extreme rhetorical attacks and evident strive for a split by the international faction, these differences should still be tested out patiently,

proportionately and constructively over a period of time through united work in a united organisation and should not lead to a sectarian split of our forces.

35. The CWI has been able to become the biggest of all international Trotskyist organisations after tremendous efforts and sacrifices, which took more than half a century. While we still have modest forces, this historic achievement opens up the way for relatively rapid growth, given of course the limitations of the objective situation and differing from country to country, in the direction of mass revolutionary parties of the working class in our epoch. A major split in the CWI will represent a significant setback in this struggle. We definitely disagree with PT's description of what we have achieved, when he said in his reply at the England & Wales NC, 20 January 2019: "*Comrades have been moaning... we are the biggest international and if we are the biggest international what a pity it would be for us to lose certain sections... Let's have a sense of proportion about what we represent... relatively small mostly propagandistic interventionist groups, but that is nothing compared to what is coming. That's what exercises me...*". At the time of writing the faction is supported by the majority of leading bodies in only nine sections in the International.

36. Differences have arisen over the issue of how to work in the trade unions; in relation to the women's movement and erroneous claims that some sections have made concessions to identity politics; the national question and the united front; in relation to new movements like the youth movement against environment change and the way such movements should orient to the working class; and over the issue of the transitional programme and method. It also seems that there are differences over the issue of consciousness, though the faction has not clearly stated this. And there are certainly differences in the way the work of the sections was approached by the IS and the relations between the IS and IEC members over a period of time.

37. It is not the first time differences have arisen in the CWI. There have been many debates in the IEC since the 1992 split with Grant and Woods, on important issues, but the unity of the CWI was never put in question. This time, the IS sought to bring out all possible differences, real or manufactured, exaggerated and blown out of proportion, and used them in order to defend its central argument: of two divergent trends in the CWI, of the "opportunist capitulation represented by the Non Faction Faction" (faction statement, 28 March 2019) and "Mandelism". A number of reasons explain why the differences that existed took the dimensions of a major crisis in the International. For one thing, the IS for the first time in the history of the CWI found itself in a minority on what they saw as a decisive question. In the past, the IS was able to listen to genuine criticism and adjust, but no longer. This was combined with their complete miscalculation of the reality within the international organisation.

38. It is beyond doubt in our opinion that the IS has not been able to respond, in recent years, in a satisfactory manner in relation to the challenges of the epoch which we live through. The collapse of Stalinism led to a serious retreat in consciousness, on a global scale, as has been analysed in the past. The last two decades, however, particularly the years since the 2007-8 crisis have given rise to exceptionally dynamic mass movements even of revolutionary or pre-revolutionary dimensions – such as the North African and Middle Eastern revolutions of 2011 or the struggles of the Greek working class in the period 2010 to 2013. However, in their majority these struggles failed to win. In Egypt, Syria and Libya the revolutions turned into open counterrevolutions, due to the absence of the subjective factor – i.e. the lack of a mass revolutionary party. In Greece, SYRIZA capitulated to the Troika (the EU, the ECB and the IMF) causing a very serious defeat. In the previous decade, the developments in Venezuela led the way in a revolutionary process developing over a large part of Latin America, but they ended in disaster. In the past 10 years, the weakness of the subjective factor, i.e., the lack of mass revolutionary parties, enabled the ruling class to go on a counter offensive, on a global scale, after the 2007-8 crisis, and to make the working masses of the planet

pay for the crisis that the capitalist system itself had created. The trade union leaderships and the leadership of the left, both “old” and “new”, failed completely to provide a way out for the struggling masses. As a result, a whole series of new movements are developing, not only outside the control of the “traditional organisations”, but often in complete hostility to the traditional leaderships.

39. So, for example, it is important to note that the Yellow Vests movement in France developed after a more “classical” trade union and youth movement challenged Macron in the first part of the year 2018. Despite a historically low level of support for Macron and a huge anger and clear will for struggle, the trade union leaderships disorganised and abandoned the movement and the immediate potential was lost. The struggle burst out again in the form of the Yellow Vests at the end of year, but with, especially at the very beginning, big suspicion of the trade unions and their leadership, and towards the organised left among wide layers. The picture is similar in relation to the emergence of the women’s movements on a global scale and more recently of the school students’ movement on climate change.

40. The IS, while it continued to make valid political contributions, has been slow in capturing the mood and the needs of the new phase in the class struggle internationally. In the early 1990s, the IS was quick to see the importance of the initiative of the Belgian comrades who created 'Blokbuster', and propose the creation of the YRE (Youth against Racism in Europe), which was a very successful international initiative. In the early 2000s the International went ahead with the creation of International Resistance (or International Socialist Resistance) depending on the objective developments in different countries. In the recent period however, though important initiatives were taken by different sections (e.g., Rosa in Ireland and Belgium, or Green Attack, an environmental campaign, in the previous period in Greece), the IS did not attempt to generalise this experience and take initiatives on an international level.

41. It is also clear that the IS has been increasingly unsatisfactory in providing day to day leadership to the sections – and relations with the IEC members have, in many cases, become less balanced and less productive. One vital role of leadership, especially at an international level, is maintaining regular and productive dialogue and collaboration with those to whom you are accountable and who elect you. Concretely, in the case of the IS, this required recognising that strong leaderships politically and organisationally had developed in a series of sections, and what was demanded of the IS was to develop a relation of close exchange and collaboration to draw common conclusions. Particularly in the more recent period, the IS has not effectively followed the developments in many countries and, as a result, its ability to provide opinion and engage in productive discussions with the sections and their leaderships was more limited. This limitation was on occasions reflected even in a top-down approach by the IS.

42. The deficiencies of the IS do not represent “a crime”. As Lenin explained, revolutionaries can, under certain conditions, be very conservative, if they stick to the formulas of the previous period. The IS, concentrating important collective experience, has historically enjoyed a high respect in the CWI, and has also definitely contributed to balancing, dealing with challenges and correcting mistakes in many sections. Many of the comrades who support the IEC Majority thought that the weaknesses in the IS could be checked – because despite these weaknesses the CWI was able to make great achievements, like the new roads opened by the initiatives of the US and Irish comrades and also, of course, by the entry into the CWI of the three sections of Izquierda Revolucionaria (Spain, Mexico, Venezuela). The existence of strong leaderships and relatively powerful sections in a number of countries seemed to provide the basis to check possible mistakes and minimise their impact. Despite the fact that frictions would sometimes develop, the international leadership seemed able to find its way forward.

43. This process came to a breaking point after the attack on the Irish leadership by the IS. IEC comrades from one section after another protested at the heavy handed way the IS reacted to the fact that they did not convince comrades and got a minority vote at the Irish NC in September 2018. The IS refused to accept the result as reflecting a democratic and fair debate, and went on the attack accusing the Irish leadership of abandoning democratic centralism and the centrality of the working class. Every section leadership that opposed the IS on this dispute has come to be characterised as “Mandelite”. All the accusations against sections have been based on a distortion of their real positions. Instead of retreating to consider its possible mistakes, the IS escalated the attack every time it was challenged by a section's leadership. Of course, the problem with this was never essentially with the style or tone, but with the the actual position being put forward.

44. The Spanish section, which entered the International in the summer of 2017, found itself at the forefront of the struggle against “Mandelism”, only to break away from the faction and from the CWI, accusing the IS of opportunism and bureaucratism, four months after the November IEC meeting. In response, the IS majority continued in its unfortunate method, refusing to recognise their blunders. They simply accused the Spanish, Venezuelan, Mexican and Portugese sections of sectarianism, and the rest, the majority of the International, as having “capitulated to opportunism”. We agree that the leadership of the Spanish section expressed sectarian features, and their split was a sectarian move. However, it is not us but the IEC Minority that entered a faction with them.

Debate on Consciousness

45. The documents produced by the Spanish leadership and the remaining forces of the faction feature the question of estimating working class consciousness in this period. The comrades of the ex-Spanish section allege that at the faction's meeting in London, PT claimed that the key reasons for the defeat of the working class in Greece in 2015 and the looming defeat in Venezuela was the low level of working class consciousness and not primarily the role of leadership. We cannot fully judge this claim nor the even more surprising assertion that PT declared that the failure of the Spanish Revolution in the 1930s was also primarily due to the low level of working class consciousness. If this is true it would certainly contradict Trotsky's assessment including in the famous article “The Class, the Party and the Leadership”, which summarises key theoretical conclusions of the early Trotskyist movement.

46. This is a wrong approach in general – the Russian revolution in 1917 did not win because the Russian workers had a higher “socialist consciousness” than the German workers of 1923 or the Spanish workers of 1936-7. It won because of the presence of the revolutionary Bolshevik Party, on the basis of its correct orientation, policies, programme and tactics. The Chilean workers of 1973 had a high socialist consciousness, but still lost. The Greek workers did everything possible to fight against the Troika in the period between 2010 and 2013, and would absolutely have been ready to take power if the subjective factor was present, but they were betrayed by SYRIZA.

47. This holds even more true for the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011. Yes, there were inevitable limitations in consciousness and political illusions, as there are in the early stages of every revolutionary process. But sections of the working class began to move objectively in the direction of challenging for power in society. This only re-affirms the urgency of building revolutionary Marxist forces and points of references in every country.

48. Having said this, we do not mean to underestimate the difficulties which exist today. Undoubtedly, there is a lower level of socialist consciousness than in previous epochs, and this is a factor in our attempt to build mass revolutionary parties on a global scale. Nevertheless, the faction document, while making many points which we would agree with about the impact of the collapse

of Stalinism on the world workers' movement, is in our view seriously unbalanced. Specifically, it does not take into account the radicalisation to the left of tens of millions of workers and youth in the wake of the economic collapse in 2008-9 and the subsequent struggles we alluded to above. This has included the reemergence of a basic level of class consciousness. This is expressed in the enormous anger at the ruling class and its institutions and in the increasing popularity of the idea strikes, both in the abstract and concretely in the form of workers' strikes. It is also reflected in support for important, potentially socialist, policies such as public ownership of key industries, services and natural resources, although this is not yet linked yet to the idea of a planned economy or the understanding that only an organised working class struggle can lead to profound change. This process has undoubtedly been uneven, with important differences in different parts of the world but it is a key feature in the present situation and for the future development of the forces of revolutionary socialism.

49. At the same time, the ex-comrades in the Spanish leadership seem to be making mistakes in an ultra-leftist direction. Their statement, while making some telling points about these developments in consciousness, in our view also understates the problems which the labour movement and socialists face in many, if not most, countries. Also, it understates the real threat posed by the development of right populist and far-right forces which, in the absence of a left/socialist lead out of the crisis, can also tap into the anger at the system and present the solution as attacking immigrants, women's and LGBTQ rights, or the left.

50. It is also revealing that the faction, in a weak and superficial attempt to claim that the disintegration of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO, which was historically linked to the British SWP and Tony Cliff) in the U.S. is a warning about the path our American comrades are on, speaks of "the recruitment of a large layer of middle-class youth who are infected with the disease of identity politics." To reduce the crisis of the ISO to this displays a lack of understanding of that organisation's evolution. In reality, the crisis in the ISO arose in a context of the shrinking and stagnation of its forces over years, not of the recruitment of a large layer of anything. It is a serious mistake to be afraid of engaging with large sections of radical young people (including when they come from a middle class background) today, even if they are influenced – and they will inevitably be – by petit bourgeois ideas, identity politics, etc. We must have confidence in our ability to confront and defeat these ideas and win people to Marxism. To a significant degree, it was precisely the recruitment of a "large layer of youth", sometimes from a middle class background, and their education in Marxist and working class methods, which has laid the basis for our organisation's successes in many countries, including during the early days of Militant in Britain.

Challenging new phenomena

51. This challenging new period, with growing revolutionary potential, has many unique features and characteristics. These features marked the class struggle during this period from its outset. The North African and Middle East revolutions, the waves of general and sectoral strikes, sit-ins, workplace occupations and social movements in Greece, the "Indignados" movement in the Spanish state and subsequent mass movements there, the two million strong "Umbrella Revolution" in Hong Kong, the unprecedented mass "tents movement" in Israeli society, the Palestinian teachers strike, as well as the global "occupy" movement... All of these varying movements displayed characteristics which have remained present since, through movements like the Water Charges revolt in Ireland, and are reproduced in different forms today in the "Gilet Jaunes" (Yellow Vests) movement, environmental movement and elsewhere.

52. This has included a tendency for social movements, movements against oppression and even many strikes to be channeled outside of the formal structures of the traditional labour movement

and left. This is, of course, a product of the role of trade union, social democratic and CP bureaucracies in the current period. It must also be said that, while there are mass anger and frustration with the role of these bureaucracies, the processes of internal polarisation and organised opposition from below and from the left within these structures have been more limited than was anticipated in some cases. Taken to the extreme, the lack of any organised left intervention in explosions of social discontent during the so-called “coloured revolutions”, particularly in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, saw the exploitation of these movements by bourgeois opposition forces.

53. This in no way means that our role in pointing these movements, and the best layers within them, towards an orientation to the wider working masses and the organised working class, is any less essential. However, it is a situation in which an innovative and principled but flexible approach must be adopted. Of course, we must consistently point in our material to the social power of the working class as the decisive force for change, and put demands on the unions to take concrete action to support social struggles. However, in none of these situations could our approach have simply been reduced to a formula for these movements to move through the channels of the official labour movement, and indeed this is not the approach that was adopted in any of these concrete situations. But in the absence of a lead by the trade unions, we have an even greater responsibility to map out a strategy for struggle and fight, where we can, to lead the movements.

54. In a similar way, none of our sections, when intervening into the Indignados movement, the Occupy movement or the Water Charges movement in Ireland, simply called for the existing trade union and left leaderships to assume the leadership of these movements, as we would have done in past decades, when big active left currents and a sizeable layer of militant and combative shop stewards were present. In situations where the trade union leaders were seen by those in struggle to be committed defenders of the system, where active left currents and sizeable layers of combative shop stewards were lacking, and the official labour movement had effectively failed to mobilise resistance, creating widespread suspicion, such an approach would have been mistaken. Our starting point was the development of these movements as democratic, working class based movements with an orientation to the rank and file of the labour movement, and intervening in them to stress the need to use the power of the working class, making the case for a transformation of the labour movement and a socialist programme. These movements are, over time and through experience, adopting more working class methods of struggle – in particular strikes as was the case with the McDonald’s and Google workers over the issue of sexual harassment. We have seen #MeToo move from Hollywood and social media, evolving into walkouts. Similarly, with the mass student climate change strikes and recently the school student strike in Ontario.

55. However, now, after more than ten years of crisis and class struggle, in which these features, opportunities and complications have persisted, there is a clear danger in the approach of the faction and IS majority in pointing away from such a flexible approach. The Greek section is now criticised as Mandelite for merely stating that calls on the Greek TUC bureaucracy to lead the struggle against austerity, in the concrete circumstances following a period of defeats and Syriza's capitulation, are not the most effective way to orientate to the trade union movement.

Trade Unions in the present epoch and our tactics

56. There is no dispute in the CWI over whether we must have an orientation to the organized working class, and to the trade unions. Nevertheless, an attempt to identify the official trade union structures with "the working class" would be wrong.

57. Trotsky fought against both the sectarianism towards the trade unions, but also against the fetishism of the trade unions. For example, he writes in his “Transitional Programme”, 1938 (Trade

Unions in the Transitional Epoch): *“Therefore, the sections of the Fourth International should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organisations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions. If it be criminal to turn one’s back on mass organisations for the sake of fostering sectarian factions, it is no less so passively to tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative (‘progressive’) bureaucratic cliques. Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution.”*

58. In “Communism and Syndicalism” (October 1929) Trotsky comments: *“The number of Communists in leading posts of the trade unions is only one of the means of measuring the role of the party in the trade unions... But the principal criterion is the general influence of the party on the working class, which is measured by the circulation of the Communist press, the attendance at meetings of the party, the number of votes at elections and, what is especially important, the number of working men and women who respond actively to the party’s appeals to struggle”*. We can find many similar references by Trotsky in other works, e.g., in his article, “The Trade Unions in Britain” (1933) or in his debate with the French syndicalist Louzon in 1923, which is taken up in the Russian comrades’ reply to the faction on the issue of the trade unions.

59. The debate is not about whether we are abandoning the trade unions and through them, also, the working class, losing our orientation and abandoning Marxism. The unions remain the main defence organisations of the working class, and Marxists should have an ongoing flexible orientation towards union work. What we are discussing is adopting flexible tactics in relation to the trade unions, depending on the differences in the objective situation from country to country. In countries where the trade union bureaucracies are so exposed that they are met with the hostility by the mass of the working class, *the way we put demands on the union leadership* can differ significantly from countries where the unions continue to enjoy a more authority, support and respect.

60. The mass mobilisations of women in the past few years should be seen as mobilisations of a great section of the working class and should not be counterposed to it. The way we try to link movements like the women’s movement to the official trade union movement can vary significantly from country to country. A similar approach holds in relation to youth movements, particularly the recent one on climate change. While our call for “youth and workers united in struggle” may not be as readily understood in a context of low levels of industrial struggle compared with past decades, it is also true that the experience of participating in mass movements such as the climate strikes – in which working class methods of struggle are looked to – can lead to rapid leaps forward in consciousness. It is therefore necessary that, even if it is not immediately understood by all sections of the movement, we should patiently explain the need to link youth movements up with the organised working class – emphasizing the potential power this force represents – as an important part of our intervention in such movements.

61. A feature of the climate strikes has been a seriousness about wanting to discuss what is actually necessary to win meaningful change. The attractiveness to a layer of direct action – road blocks, sit down protests and so on – should be seen in that context. Greta Thunberg’s reference to the idea of a “general strike” has had a wide appeal. We must explain how workers’ action can cause many thousand times more disruption than “direct action” to argue for the crucial next steps necessary to build the movement. This is not in contradiction with the desire for mass disruptive action. It would be wrong to pose our role as primarily “swimming against the stream” in the climate strikes. In

Britain, at recent school student inspired climate change protests, chants such as “students and workers unite and fight” were widely taken up, and, despite inevitable confusion and the presence of alien political forces representing petty-bourgeois ideas, the idea of public ownership was also popular. This speaks to the potential, in this period, for us to build rapidly out of such movements if we approach them energetically and in a non-sectarian way - offering at each stage a way forward, and pointing to the need for united youth and workers' action and socialist change.

62. Flexibility is absolutely necessary if we want to intervene productively in such movements and build our forces. The Greek comrades for example put direct demands on the leadership of GSEE (the Greek TUC) in the period 2010 to 2013, calling on it to lead the struggle, with a plan of general strikes which would culminate in an all-out general strike. After 2015 that would be out of touch with reality. Any appeal for struggle has to be directed at the rank and file, explaining that the while GSEE should be leading it does not, and therefore we have to coordinate via networks of rank and file trade unionists, and in doing so assist in “rebuilding” the trade union movement with a leadership that truly puts the interests of its members and the working class first. The US, Russian and other comrades have also provided important examples in their written material of what it means to have a flexible, revolutionary approach to the unions. New mass struggles and subsequently the entry of new fresh layers into the trade unions in the next period will play a fundamental role in transforming the situation in the trade union movement.

The struggle against women’s oppression

63. A thread which runs through the theory and practice of Marxism is the role of the working class as the tribune of all the oppressed. The working class movement establishing itself as the key reference point for, and winning the leadership of, all movements of the oppressed is a key strategic task for the socialist revolution. This task grows both from the common root cause of all oppression - class and capitalist society - and from the fact that only a revolutionary movement led by the working class can end capitalist oppression.

64. The CWI, like the Bolsheviks before us, has always grappled with this strategic task. Theoretically appreciating it is, of course, insufficient: how do we approach this strategic task politically, in action? On the one hand, we develop an analysis and perspective for these movements, and a socialist transitional programme which takes up the demands of all oppressed people, linking them to the class struggle as a whole and a socialist programme. On the other, we intervene, in a dynamic and audacious manner, in the living movements of the oppressed, and fight to win support for our methods, programme and leadership, in combat with other political and class forces.

65. It is well known and discussed throughout our ranks that the Bolsheviks’ programme on the national question, and the right of self-determination, was fundamental to the success of the October revolution. However, the Bolsheviks won the support of the masses of the nationally oppressed not through programme alone, but by demonstrating through revolutionary action over years that they could provide effective political leadership.

66. This has been the essence of the CWI’s work in liberation movements of the oppressed also in the recent period, of which the movements against women’s oppression have been the most important. In Ireland, as is well known, our section developed, over years, a perspective which identified the importance the women’s movement would acquire in the class struggle, developed a programme, a strategy and tactic to intervene, with great success. Until recently there was a consensus on this in the CWI. In the Spanish state, our ex comrades energetically turned their forces towards the mass women’s movement and played an important role among the youth within it.

Other sections of the CWI including in the USA, Brazil, Sweden and Belgium have also undertaken important work in this regard. Internationally, the real methods of Bolshevism and the CWI have seen our sections fight in a revolutionary manner to build a socialist feminist, working class oriented cutting edge of the international women's movements.

67. We have no pretension to claim that this was done "perfectly", without mistakes. Some of these mistakes – such as, at times, aspects of party profile and points of emphasis in propaganda, including regarding demands towards the unions and the elaboration of our socialist programme – have been recognised and dealt with in the course of this debate. We are also willing to explore and discuss further any particular mistake. However, we do not accept that any mistakes that were made in this work were crucial and overarching mistakes that overshadow the very successful work that has been done (and misrepresented by the international faction). Furthermore, "in real time", neither the IS nor any other faction comrade made a single serious concrete proposal to help improve any aspect of this work in any of the sections which are now being criticised.

68. There has been a consistent under-coverage of women's movements in our international material, including our key political documents. Supporters of the IS majority-led faction have argued in defence of this approach by saying that the IS "has not obstructed" the work of sections in this field. This is hardly the point, as the role of political leadership is not to "not obstruct" political work and initiatives but to engage with them, draw out and generalise the lessons and help provide political and organisational guidance.

69. The IS has shown a tendency to display an excessive "caution" and unwillingness, over-emphasising the dangers of adapting to the influence of cross-class movements, over the need to energetically intervene. For example, the first political intervention by the IS in regards the women's work of the Irish section (represented in the first IS document), in a country where a mass movement had just dealt an historic blow to the conservative Irish establishment, was to downplay its importance. Comrades were accused of "overestimating" the abortion rights movement, having too many leaflets and public meetings on the issue, and warned that male workers and youth might be put off by our emphasis on women's and LGBT oppression. They have described as "alarming" that the Irish leadership write that women's struggles could be "central" to a socialist revolution. This, they claim, implies that women, replacing the working class, will play the decisive role in changing society, despite the repeated clarifications presented by the Irish leadership as to how this is not their political position. The real positions of the Irish leadership and the leaderships in other sections have been subjected to gross and dishonest distortion by the IS led faction. The very idea that there is a genuine controversy over the centrality of the working class is a fabrication.

70. In our significant World Congress 2016 document on women's oppression, which we stand over, we explain that *"the struggle for women's liberation is, at root, part of the class struggle, in which the struggles by women against their own specific oppression dovetail with those of the working class in general for a fundamental restructuring of society to end all inequality and oppression"*. Unfortunately, it appears that at times the international faction now presents a much more one-sided view, tending to present a distinction between women's struggles and the class struggle. Yet, worldwide women make up around 40% of the workforce, around 45% in North America, the European Union and even sub-Saharan Africa.

71. This has been a growing trend for decades, but in recent years there has been an historic shift. Reflecting the growth of women in work and changes in the workforce, increasingly women are becoming the majority of trade union members. This is already the case in Australia, Canada, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Czech Republic, Ireland, and the UK. In many other countries, the gap is narrowing such as in France or the US where in 2014, 45.5% of union

members were women. This is not so much the case in Germany (in part because manufacturing has not been destroyed and is still a male dominated and unionised sector) or many neo-colonial countries.

72. The idea that the struggle against women's oppression, racial oppression, national oppression, etc, are central to the socialist revolution is not new, of course. It is part of the essence of Marxism and Bolshevism. As explained, the working class is central and decisive to the fight against all these forms of oppression as well as against capitalist oppression as a whole. Would comrades consider it controversial, or "Mandelite", to state that for Lenin, the national question was central to the Russian Revolution? We don't believe so. Why then, when in reference to a burning form of oppression which has mobilised many millions of working class people around the globe, is such a statement "alarming"?

73. As was noted in our 2016 document: *"Even where women make up a smaller percentage of the workforce they have often still played a central role in class struggle, just as it was women textile workers who began the February revolution in Russia 1917"*. Our perspective at that time was absolutely correct: *"the control of women's sexuality has been at the core of women's oppression since it first emerged. Today there is an increase in the struggle for women's right to their own bodies. [...] Struggle against the old order also tends to act to boost LGBT struggles, as we have seen globally. [...] Often a growing feminist awakening emerges with a growing LGBT consciousness, and these movements tend to intersect and mutually reinforce one another"*. We emphasised that *"we also have to be prepared for further mass movements relating to the specific oppression of women. [...] In fact, the increased confidence of women globally means that we can also see offensive movements, such as in Ireland, to improve women's rights"*. This important emphasis, however, was not further developed by the IS in the following period, and it is the international faction which has diverged from it.

For a socialist environmental struggle

74. "It's a line in the sand and what it says to our species is that this is the moment and we must act now," commented one of the scientists and authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. Without doubt, climate change represents one of the major threats to humanity. If capitalism is allowed to continue to economically and politically dominate the planet, then it is inevitable that the cumulative impact of this system, which puts profit before the interests of a sustainable environment, will create conditions which will be exponentially hostile to the continued existence of human civilisation as we know it.

75. The IPCC report which indicates that dramatic global change is needed in the next 12 years in order to prevent irreversible catastrophic changes to the climate has alarmed and sparked millions of young people into action. On 15 March 2019, 1.6 million school students, in 2,200 cities and towns, in over 120 countries participated in the #schoolstrike4climate, many demanding system change. The increasing impact of climate change such as extreme weather events, drought, famine, rising sea levels, depletion of insect populations, wildfires, decreasing food production, shrinking freshwater resources etc, are processes and events that in and of themselves can cause mass movements and revolutionary struggles by the working class and poor masses.

76. Yet it is not only climate change that combined with continued economic, political and social crisis will continue to spark mass movements and struggles. In the past years we have seen mass environmental struggles on all continents in a number of cases where the workers and the poor have

faced the devastating effects of capitalist attacks to the environment. The Standing Rock movement and the struggle for clean water in Flint in the US, struggles against mining in Greece (Khalkidiki), Romania (Rassia Montana), Germany (Hambach), struggles against the pollution of drinking water and the destruction of forests in almost all countries of Latin America, are some examples. In China, one in three mass protests is linked to the environment. As many sections of the CWI have already been doing, it is imperative to intervene into these struggles and attempt with a transitional programme and through a transitional approach to direct these movements towards our struggle to build a mass workers movement to overthrow capitalism and for the socialist revolution.

77. The ecological crisis extends beyond climate change, including global plastic pollution (which poses very serious threats to the health of humans and to the existence of innumerable species) the capitalist agricultural and farming model and collapsing biodiversity. The earth is in the midst of the sixth wave of mass extinction of animals and plants in the past half billion years. Unlike past extinctions this wave is caused by “humans” i.e., specifically by the capitalist ruling class. The mounting and interconnected ecological crises pose a threat to human civilisation on the planet as we know it. The planet will survive, but with a much lower level/quality of ecological balance. The planet’s suitability to the survival of the current numbers of human population depends on how soon the present deeply-entrenched trajectory is stopped and reversed.

78. Capitalism is incapable of dealing with these crises. They are rooted in capitalism’s reductionist science and worldview, its treatment of the natural world as external and disposable, but mainly in its dependence on profit, ever expanding markets and competition. Some of the most striking examples are the policies of right-wing populists such as Trump and Bolsonaro which recklessly ignore the scientific evidence. Bolsonaro is preparing to open up the Amazon rainforest to even greater exploitation, which poses a direct threat to the ability of the planet to cope with capitalist-induced climate change, as well as threatening the future of the indigenous peoples. Thirty three banks have invested \$1.9 trillion in fossil fuels since the signing of the Paris Accord. Capitalism is incapable of taking the coordinated measures needed on a global scale such as immediate turn to technologies that use renewable energy sources and complete break with the use of fossil fuel for energy and plastic production, mass reforestations, drastic changes to the agricultural and farming model and the food industry in general, and as a consequence, to the nutritional model in the advanced capitalist countries.

79. Among the core ideas we need to put forward and popularise are: Tackling the global ecological crises requires global coordinated action (planning). The technology, skills and wealth exist to tackle the most immediate and pressing crises – the barrier is the control and ownership of the technology and wealth by the capitalist class. There are plenty of good and rewarding jobs to be created in the conversion to clean and efficient energy, restoring ecological damages. There needs to be a mass conversion program with re-training and skilling of displaced, unemployed and under-employed workers, without any loss of pay. The private ownership of land and resources is an obstacle to planning and using them for the benefit of humanity and protection of a safe planet. In our agitation on ecological issues, we need to point to class solutions, pointing out that separate competing nation states and the private ownership of land and resources are fundamental obstacles to necessary international planning and actions. We need to link the necessity of providing good jobs with tackling the ecological crises.

80. More and more sections will be faced with directly intervening into the political debates on climate change. As with the “Green New Deal” in the U.S., we will have to skilfully critique the plans and proposals of the various new left forces, pointing clearly to the necessity to replace pestilent capitalism with a democratic socialist planned economy. The “Green New Deal” proposed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the U.S. Congress is gaining mass support. The resolution calls for

100% renewable energy but also calls for the creation of millions of “high quality union jobs”, guaranteeing wages in the transitional period, as well as calling for everyone to have a guaranteed job, decent wages, healthcare and housing, and for a democratic process that would include workers and oppressed communities in the planning and implementation of the “Green New Deal”. All laudable demands but of course utterly unachievable under capitalism. The U.S. comrades have publicly argued that a Workers’ “Green New Deal” would require public ownership, a democratically planned economy and a mass struggle by the working class against the economic and political interests of the capitalist class who are an absolute fetter on the development of society.

81. The comrades have also called on the unions to support the “Green New Deal” and to mobilise the working class to play the key role in the struggle that is required for the new “green industrial” and social revolution that is needed to deliver it. In a new faction document, it is claimed that the U.S. section has been calling for the Green New Deal without qualification citing posters at a Seattle rally which said “Seattle Needs A Green New Deal” rather than a “Workers Green New Deal” or a “Socialist Green New Deal”. Bizarrely, they also mention in passing that “an article has recently been published explaining that this would only be possible with the implementation of a socialist programme”. In reality, the slogan “Fight for A Green New Deal for Working People” is on the front cover of the section’s newspaper and we have been using this slogan prominently since 2013 with no comment from the IS majority or current remaining forces of the faction. This is the same slogan that appears on Kshama’s campaign website. The “article” they mention which has a fully transitional approach is the centre page of the paper! This is only one of a catalogue of examples of distortions being used by the faction in this debate. There is a compelling need for an international discussion which will bring together the experiences and advances of many sections which are already involved in environmental struggles, to further develop our transitional programme and our tactics on how we can intervene to popularise the need for a socialist environmental struggle.

Youth hold the Future

82. Globally, young people face a grim future. In most of the advanced capitalist countries they face a worse future than their parents. They face precarious employment, and mounting student debt for an education that no longer provides a path to a secure job. Youth unemployment is in most countries higher, usually much higher, than for middle aged workers. Housing costs are out of control, forcing a growing number to live with their parents. Many neo-colonial countries have large youth populations that face mass unemployment. This is a key factor in the upheavals in the Arab world and will play out in other countries.

83. Just in the last few months we have seen a glimpse of the future potential of youth movements. We have already commented on the massive worldwide climate strike. In another example of a different nature, in Ontario, Canada on April 4, 100,000 to 200,000 school students walked out of 700 schools in protest against the Ford government’s plan to increase class sizes and other attacks on their education. It is often the case that youth or less organised workers move before more organised sectors. While student strikes cannot directly hit the profits of capitalism, they can have an inspiring impact on organised workers and wider society. The energy and enthusiasm of Ontario students, for example, could dramatically shift the mood in the province.

84. Capitalism’s inability to provide more than precarious economic conditions for young people, along with the radicalising impact of climate change, the struggles of women, particularly young women, for their rights, and the struggle of minorities will create huge opportunities for revolutionary socialist ideas on a global scale. The radicalisation of millions of young people

globally in the next decade represents an unmissable opportunity for our international to intervene, recruit and replenish its ranks with hundreds and thousands of youth who can be developed into revolutionary cadre.

On the Transitional programme

85. One of the central issues that has arisen in the debate is the accusation by the IS majority of the lack of a socialist programme in the material produced by the Irish section initially, and then by other sections like the Greek and US sections. In doing so, the faction often takes phrases out of context ignoring other material, even if it appears in the same edition of the paper or has been published on the website on the same date. They use their arguments as a basis for their accusation of “Mandelism” and opportunism. This is in reality an attempt to rewrite the history of the CWI. In the past, the CWI discussed on more than one occasion this issue with the conclusion that it is not necessary for every article or every leaflet produced by the sections to include a socialist programme, or a fully developed transitional programme. In the same way, we have discussed many times how our "front organisations" or broad campaigns created by our sections need not have a fully worked out socialist/transitional programme – that depends on the circumstances and is debatable in each concrete case.

86. For example, the IS majority counterpose the CADV (Campaign against Domestic Violence) and 'Panther' UK to Rosa today to showcase the struggle of then British section against Identity Politics in the past. These campaigns were established in different conditions 20 or 30 years ago, but neither of them had a socialist programme.

87. When the YRE was established there were discussions on the leading bodies of the International in both 1992 and 1994. It was decided that sections should decide, based on the objective conditions in their countries, whether to call for the socialist transformation of society or limit themselves to a general anti-capitalist programme in YRE propaganda. Broader banners, even if they don't have the party's full programme, are part of the arsenal of the transitional method, to help move broader forces into action, into discussion with the revolutionary party, and to build a working class pole in movements. The transitional programme as a whole characterises, by definition, the revolutionary party. The same discussion as the ones on the YRE took place in relation to the aforementioned initiative “International Resistance” and “International Socialist Resistance” that took place at the beginning of the 2000s, and the conclusions were the same.

88. Sections, whose leaderships rejected the claims of the IS-Majority faction, were attacked for not raising socialism in some of their articles or leaflets. This is another rewriting of the history of the CWI. For non-sectarians, it is, of course, never a matter of repeating mantras. Some general basic conclusions must be often repeated, yes, but if all articles in our websites and papers finish with “for socialism” we would become laughable. In addition, we must always pay concrete attention to terminology. Obviously, following the historic reformist degeneration of social-democracy from a Marxist position and its final capitulation and betrayal at the onset of WW1, revolutionary Marxism could no longer be associated with that banner. The Bolsheviks and the Third International turned back to the term 'Communism'. The Stalinist counter-revolution and its tremendous crimes have meant that in many countries, 'Communism' is not a banner which the genuine forces of revolutionary Marxism can present to the working class in a way which would be widely understood. Following the collapse of Stalinism, the CWI correctly identified that in many countries the task was to reclaim the broad label of 'Socialism' for the work of our forces. Most of our sections correctly employ the term 'socialism' in their official names, as well as the names of their papers and websites. Internationally, it is the case that the idea of "socialism" is also increasingly popular in many countries. At the same time, in some other countries, that term may be associated

with bourgeoisified social-democratic parties, and we have been faced with the challenge of making a clear distinction for our banner.

89. Thus, general references to socialism do not have the same effect or even meaning that they had a few decades ago, before the collapse of Stalinism and the bourgeoisification of Social Democracy. Particularly in countries where socialist parties have been in government for many years (Greece, Spain, France, etc), a simplistic use of the word “socialism”, without any explanation, will identify our forces with the parties of ex-Social Democracy. The faction seems to ignore all of the above. The transitional programme represents the art of linking the needs, the struggles and the consciousness of today with the struggle for power and for a socialist society. The struggle for socialism and the central demands will be the same everywhere, and it is essential that all sections skilfully use the transitional programme to highlight socialist demands as this is a primary task for our international as set out by Trotsky in “The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International” in 1938. But the way they are presented in different continents, regions and countries will inevitably differ, because consciousness will differ.

Crisis rooted in political epoch

90. Crises within workers’ organisations, including revolutionary Marxist ones, tend to coincide with changes in the political epoch. This has been the case in all major debates within the CWI, most notably in 1991/1992. That crisis and debate, which led to an international division and the emergence of the IMT, was first and foremost characterised by the inability of part of the historic leadership of the organisation, based around Ted Grant, to adjust to a new period.

91. The CWI, including the signatories of this document, has correctly pointed towards the fact that amid this period of political crisis, splits and divisions, our international has been a beacon of political strength, unity and cohesion. While by and large, our sections have not experienced transformative numerical growth in the last decade – apart from the substantial leap forward of the US section – we have strengthened our organisations, generally avoided splits, carried out an important fusion with IR (which in hindsight was overly rushed) and achieved historic victories in the leadership of mass struggles. We can remain proud and encouraged by our record. However, in the light of the crisis currently gripping our ranks, we can conclude that this situation masked the depth of the challenges facing our organisation in this new period and underlying political weaknesses.

92. A key lesson of the current situation for all comrades is the need to not take the health of our organisation, our leadership and methods, for granted. A party is a living organism, and its health can only be guaranteed by its membership and leadership at all levels exercising a constant check and control. While there is no guarantee against crises in a revolutionary party, a timely identification, discussion and resolution of problems and dangers can be of critical importance to avoid unnecessary explosions of crisis and division. This goes in both directions: from leadership level to the whole membership and back again.

93. The primary task of a political leadership is to provide the organisation with a political perspective and programme which is a product of collective discussion. However, it has come to light that for whole a number of years, the IS and IB have – outside of the preparation of CWI summer schools and IEC meetings – not held any collective political discussions on world perspectives, the women’s movements, the trade unions, finances, party building etc. Such an absence of developed collective political discussion inevitably leads to a weakness, a “hollowing out” of our perspectives. This has been reflected in a decline, both in the quantity and political quality of our international material, both public and internal. In-depth, informed analysis of global

and regional trends and features has often been substituted by largely superficial country-by-country commentary.

94. This accumulated weakness has also been reflected in the material of the faction, which, despite commenting at length about the work and alleged mistakes of sections like Ireland, Greece, the US, Sweden, Brazil, and others, makes very little comment on the real existing political situation and the class struggle in these countries, apart from generalities.

Methods of leadership

95. The most clearly defining characteristic of the methods of the faction so far in this debate relate to the question of methods of leadership. This question, of how a revolutionary leadership deals with criticism, political difference and debate in a democratic manner, is key for Marxists. Faction comrades consistently dismiss the importance of this question, as “apolitical”.

96. It should not be forgotten that the prelude to the crisis in the international was the struggle in the U.S. section in 2017-8, which was precipitated by a section of the leadership (SK and PL) who were not able to adjust to the demands of the new period. They insisted on the acceptance of their own positions and prestige as opposed to the challenges of building a collective working class centered leadership in the section. Resisting the right of the wider leadership to make necessary changes in comrades’ roles, they resorted to an all-out attack on the rest of the leadership based on exaggerating secondary differences and making finished political characterisations which were not substantiated. In the end they resorted to appealing to all those with a grievance against the leadership and pandered to “horizontalist” sentiments among new comrades, seeking to undermine democratic centralism. They also argued for what de-facto borders on liquidating the organisation into the Democratic Socialists of America— an approach they have pursued since leaving our ranks. While the political conclusions may be different, there are unfortunately many echoes of the false approach of PL/SK in the approach of the international and Irish minority factions.

97. The methods of leadership that gave birth to the international faction, in the run-up to the 2018 IEC meeting, as well as during and after, are deeply unhealthy. They amount to methods which point away from healthy democratic centralism and are in stark contrast with the best traditions of the CWI.

98. The faction’s methods have political consequences. In their attempt to retrospectively prove a stitched-up case for “Mandelism” in the majority of the sections of the CWI, there is a real possibility that their own politics can evolve in a dangerous direction - in this case, in the direction of an abstract, even economic approach to the class struggle.

99. On the basis of the accounts of the IS Minority, the Irish comrades, and members of the IEC, as well as of the logic of the conduct and exaggerated claims by the IS Majority, it is quite clear that the IS majority, over a number of years developed a negative political characterisation of the Irish leadership. They reached the conclusion that it had diverged from Marxism. Consequently, the IS Majority was inevitably moving in the direction of changing or removing the leadership of the Irish section and on this basis they developed a special relationship with PM hoping that something could be built around him.

100. These opinions were developed, and these conclusions reached, with absolutely no attempt to democratically discuss or clarify them, either in the international leadership, in the ranks of the international, with the Irish leadership, or with the Irish membership. This is a problematic, undemocratic method. As a reflection of the problematic approach towards the Irish leadership,

exclusive communications and discussions developed between PM and the IS. PM took encouragement from the IS and this affected how he operated in the Irish section, including moving towards organising undisclosed factional activity with a completely imbalanced and negative approach to the party work. PM has now formed a faction in Ireland, which has become increasingly critical of the IS majority, but nevertheless, the Irish faction still echoes many of the attacks of the IS majority in their own commentary.

101. When the majority of the IEC stood up to what came across from the beginning as a weak and highly exaggerated case from the IS majority and rejected it, the same exaggerated political accusations were developed against one section after another. This approach was then also taken to minority voices, including in the leadership, in a number of sections where faction supporters are a majority in the leadership. The England & Wales EC majority, has claimed to have lost all political confidence in the editor of its paper (who they deem “on her way out” of the party) due to her opposition to the faction – and they are now rushing to remove the 2 comrades opposed to the faction from the EC and remove the editor of the paper. The IS majority effectively removed two IS members opposed to the faction from the international’s day to day leadership, even voting to instruct them to work from home and made a proposal for them to only be allowed to enter the CWI’s premises if sufficient prior warning was given to the faction.

102. These methods do not speak of a leadership which is confident politically, and are in sharp contrast with the methods which CWI cadre recognise as our own. Many comrades have pointed to the example of Scotland in the 1990s. In this situation, the section’s leadership was clearly breaking from Trotskyism and concretely proposing to dissolve itself, but the IS, confident of the correctness of its ideas, insisted that no organisational division or split should take place, and that unity be maintained while positions could be tested against reality. The IS also took a patient approach to written debate and discussion without resorting to worked-out political characterisations despite the fact that the Scottish majority was clearly moving in an opportunist direction. The same approach was taken as recently as last year in the U.S.

103. In the 1930s, when confronted with a REAL petit-bourgeois opposition in the U.S. SWP, Trotsky severely chastened those who hinted at resolution via organisational measures and divisions and argued for generous representation of the minority in the party’s leading bodies. Why the dramatic change in approach? Why, in a crisis where a much more damaging split is at stake than the loss of one section, is this confident, patient approach being replaced with a bureaucratic approach and a hasty declaration of an inevitable split?

Faction unconvincing and losing the debate

104. As is known, the faction represented a minority of the CWI’s IEC (21 full members as opposed to 24 for the majority) at the time of its establishment (30 November 2018). These included leading comrades from 10 sections (England & Wales, Spanish state, Venezuela, Germany, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, India, Italy and Scotland). Since the IEC, leading comrades in four further sections (Mexico, France, Chile and Portugal) declared, in one way or another, their support for the faction. But then in a dramatic development, the faction imploded, and the leadership of four sections (Spanish state, Portuguese, Mexican, Venezuelan) left the faction, with the Spanish section leaving the CWI, and now attempting to convince the Portuguese, Mexican and Venezuelan sections to also leave. This in itself represents not only the sectarian approach of the Spanish leadership, but also a clear manifestation of the political weakness of the IS majority and the faction, and the unprincipled factional “unity” they built with the Spanish leadership. The breakaway of four sections (and seven full IEC members) leaves the faction with leading members in ten sections. In one of these, the Italian section, the faction’s supporter is the only faction

supporter in the entire section. The faction therefore now represents a majority of national ECs in only nine sections. In four of these sections, no debate with an alternative view to the faction has been organised so far.

105. The faction is losing the debate not only on a leadership level but throughout the ranks of the CWI. It is an established fact that, despite enjoying every democratic opportunity, up until now, literally only one member of any section of the CWI, at any level, outside of those listed above, has declared their support for the faction.

106. Moreover, within those sections where faction supporters are in the leadership, there is significant opposition to the faction. Eleven members of the German NC signed a document opposing the faction, together with other leading comrades. In the largest section, England & Wales, where the faction is supported by the NC majority, six branches submitted resolutions critical of the faction to the section's congress, and a resolution in opposition to the faction received the votes of 20% of delegates with a further 5% abstaining..

107. Of course, being in a minority is never, in itself, an indication of a wrong position – many outstanding Marxists have been in minorities many times, throughout history, including in revolutionary parties. However, rather than recognising this situation, the faction engages in incredible somersaults and contortions in order to attempt to avoid accepting it is in a minority. In its latest statement, the faction accepts it is in a minority on the IEC (of 16 out of a total 42 full members) but goes on to question the democratic legitimacy of this body stating *“this is not a full representation of the balance of forces in the CWI”*. Tellingly, they do not elaborate what alternative “representation of the balance of forces in the CWI” would put them in a majority (as no such situation exists).

108. However, the reality is that the faction's claims in this regard are a smokescreen. The US section, with over 800 members, has only one full IEC member and the Irish section has only two. In contrast, there are seven full IEC members who are members of the England & Wales section, and the full IEC member from Italy is the only faction supporter in the whole section. However, the IEC isn't a group of "representatives" from sections. It is elected to be the political leadership of the CWI between World Congresses. There is an attempt by the faction to delegitimise the democratic structures of our international and its leadership – which is itself accountable to the delegate-based World Congress. It constitutes an attempt to refuse to accept the democratic procedures and decisions of the International. This must be added to the fact that the faction has refused so far, despite repeated requests, to clarify its commitment to the unanimously agreed meetings of the IEC and World Congress over the next eight months.

109. The implosion of the faction is politically very significant. First and foremost, it confirms the unprincipled basis for the “unity” of the faction. This basis was never, in reality, a common commitment to defend the “working class Trotskyist” nature of the CWI – though we are sure many supporters of the faction have this genuine intention. The faction arose as a hastily-formed and declared bloc of those IEC members who were prepared to support the approach of the IS majority in relation to the Irish section, and subsequently, all other IEC members who did not agree with their methods. It was formed without any process of discussion to establish a basis of principled political agreement. The Spanish leadership, now described as an “ultra-left sectarian trend,” were hailed as a working class Trotskyist, principled “model” alternative to IEC majority comrades. It is astonishing that not even a word of self-criticism has been made by the Faction following that development.

A way forward

110. Over a decade ago, a discussion took place on the IEC about numerically and politically strengthening the IS for the period ahead. This was not reflective of a criticism of the existing IS members, but a product of some IS members resigning from the role and the ageing of key IS members (a situation which has since become more acute). Several IEC members proposed the need for leading cadres from sections to be brought onto the IS as preparation for the period ahead.

111. This was opposed by the IS and other comrades, on the basis that the strength of national leaderships was a priority. Instead, three younger comrades from Belgium, Ireland and E&W were taken on as international FTers and then onto the IS (two of whom now make up the “IS minority”) and two E&W EC members were made members of the IS (while remaining primarily E&W FTers). While these changes had a positive impact, they did not constitute the political and numeric strengthening of the international leadership and FT apparatus which the situation demanded. Reflecting the growing weakness in the role of the IS we have not had international members bulletins for over a decade – despite two formal IEC decisions – nor have we had sufficient, in-depth discussions on the difficulties of party building, or developed documents on party building that would assist in the work of all sections. The mistaken methods of the IS Majority in the period that preceded this dispute and since illustrates the need for a change in the approach of how we develop and sustain a healthy international leadership.

112. The IEC meeting in November 2018 unanimously (the following excerpt was part of both the majority and the minority resolution) agreed on the following: *“The IEC agrees that the next World Congress will take place in January 2020 in Belgium, with an IEC meeting at the end of August. For the preparation of this congress we agree to form a Congress Organising Committee to oversee all aspects of the pre-congress debate period starting now, up to and including the congress.”*

113. However, at the time of writing, the COC has not met in over three months because the Faction members have refused to make themselves available for meetings. Specifically, no plans have been agreed to organise the August IEC despite concrete proposals from our side. This undemocratic manoeuvring cannot be allowed to obstruct the implementation of the IEC decision to convene an IEC meeting in August which is vital to the preparation of the World Congress in January.

114. If the Faction continues to impede the functioning of the COC and therefore the convening of the IEC meeting in August, then the IEC Majority will have no option but to invoke the CWI statute number 16 “A special meeting of the IEC may be called by the IS and *must be convened* at the request of one third of the full IEC members.” (Our emphasis). That formal clause is reserved exactly for acute and extraordinary crises.

115. As a majority of the IEC members are now clearly opposed to the faction and “The IEC is the highest authority in the CWI between World Congresses”, we will have no other choice but to insist on our democratic right to demand that the IS convene a meeting of the IEC in August 2019.

116. The IEC is meant to meet twice a year according to the CWI statutes. Even if this was to occur (which it doesn't, the IEC meets only once a year) it would still not be enough of a political input by the collective leadership of the international into the ongoing political and organisational tasks of the CWI. It is necessary for us to find ways to bring the collective experiences of our sections, as that is represented by the IEC members, more into play in the discussions and decisions that are needed on a constant basis regarding all of our political tasks. Discussion is needed on involving IEC members in assisting the work of other sections. This role has been played by IEC members in the past, via visits to sections, although this has diminished in recent years.

117. Discussion will also bring forth other options, for example, special commissions of IEC comrades could be established that could meet periodically, between IEC meetings using online video conferences to discuss and share experiences and lessons from our trade union work, on party building, consolidation and cadre development and the myriad of other challenges we face. Such an approach would enhance the ability of both the IS and the IEC to play a real role as the collective leadership of the CWI and in doing so strengthen our ability to maximise the potential that exists in the current period.

118. The World Congress was due to take place in December 2019 and was only postponed to January 2020 because of the international dispute. This congress will, as usual, discuss perspectives, deal with questions raised in this discussion and the latest economic and political developments. It will draw a balance sheet of the past period and will as usual, elect a new IEC, which subsequently elects the IS. This dispute has brought to light grave inadequacies in the political analysis and methods of the IS Majority. The differences that now exist in the IEC on questions of method and the political analysis of the current period, perspectives and programme are significant and will undoubtedly be reflected in the discussions and proceedings at both these important international meetings and the outcome of the elections at the World Congress.

119. Regarding the IEC meeting planned for August we restate what we said in our letter replying to the email from Tony Saunois' titled "Re-drafted Statement when they call the IEC meeting":
"While the IS majority is in a clear minority in the IEC and CWI, and discussing the composition of leading bodies in this situation is legitimate, we clearly state that it is not the case that we plan to propose the removal of the IS in August."

120. We understand that when some comrades read some basic points made in the International Factious' documents, they tend to agree with them – because the faction are repeating, in many instances, the ABCs, the basic ideas of the CWI which we of course also agree with. The signatories to this statement are fully committed to building a democratic centralist, international revolutionary Marxist party, orientated towards the working class, as the only class and force capable of leading and completing the socialist transformation of society. Our international should be based on utilising Trotsky's transitional method - and supporting the building of such an international is not the exclusive preserve of the International faction - it is the approach of all comrades within the CWI.

121. If a correct approach is taken by all sides, committing to a full and democratic debate, despite the damaging of relations over the last six months, we are convinced that the CWI can emerge united and politically strengthened from these processes. This is crucial to preparing our forces, politically and organisationally for the explosive and revolutionary events of the 2020s.

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Sonja G (IEC, Austria)
Els D (IEC, Belgium)
Eric B (IEC, Belgium)
Bart VDS (IEC, Belgium)
Nicolas C (IEC alternate, Belgium)
Andre F (IEC, Brazil)
Jane B (IEC, Brazil)
Athina K (IEC, Cyprus)
Vincent K (IEC, China/HK/Taiw)
Jaco L (IEC alternate, China/HK/Taiw)
Danny B (IS and IEC alternate)
Cedric G (IS and IEC alternate)
Claire L-M (EC, England & Wales, visitor to 2018 IEC)
Sarah W (EC, England & Wales)
Andros P (IEC, Greece)
Eleini M (IEC, Greece)
Nikos A (IEC, Greece)
Nikos K (IEC, Greece)
Christoph G (Germany, visitor to 2018 IEC as translator)
Kevin McL (IEC, Ireland)
Stephen B (IEC, Ireland)
Laura F (IEC alternate, Ireland)
Ciaran M (IEC alternate, Ireland) — *endorses content with the exception of paragraphs 113, 114, 115*
Joe H (Ireland, visitor to 2018 IEC)
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Yasha M (IEC, Israel/Palestine)
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Ty M (USA, visitor to 2018 IEC)
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