

The Strategy of International Class Struggle and the Political Fight Against Capitalist Reaction in 2019

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As this statement was being completed, the International Committee of the Fourth International learned of the untimely death due to cancer, on December 31, 2018 at the age of 57, of its comrade Halil Celik, the founder and leader of its sympathizing group in Turkey, Sosyalist E?itlik. This statement is dedicated to the memory of this intransigent revolutionary and fighter for Trotskyism.

1. At the start of last year, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) stated: “This new year of 2018—the bicentenary of Marx’s birth—will be characterized, above all, by an immense intensification of social tensions and an escalation of class conflict around the world.”

2. Events have substantiated this prediction. After decades of its suppression—especially in the aftermath of the 1989 breakdown of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, the Chinese regime’s massacre of workers and students in Tiananmen Square, and, above all, the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Kremlin bureaucracy in December 1991—the class struggle has reemerged throughout the world. A wave of strikes and demonstrations, most of which occurred in opposition to and outside the control of the official pro-capitalist parties and trade unions, swept across the entire globe, including in the United States. The year ended with the mass “Yellow Vest” protests that have shaken the regime of Emmanuel Macron, the “president of the rich” in France, and upheaval in Tunisia. The great issue of world politics is the striving of the international working class for social equality. As far back as 1995, the ICFI embodied this conception in the very founding of its national sections as the Socialist Equality Parties.

3. In 1938, in the founding document of the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky defined the epoch that had opened with the catastrophic outbreak of World War I as the “Death Agony of Capitalism.” Summing up the state of the world, Trotsky wrote:

Mankind’s productive forces stagnate. Already new inventions and improvements fail to raise the level of material wealth. Conjunctural crises under the conditions of the social crisis of the whole capitalist system inflict ever heavier deprivations and sufferings upon the masses. Growing unemployment, in its turn, deepens the financial crisis of the state and undermines the unstable monetary systems. Democratic regimes, as well as fascist, stagger on from one bankruptcy to another. [*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*, 1938]

4. All the immense problems that faced the international working class when Trotsky wrote those words—global economic instability, the

subjugation of entire countries by the imperialist powers, the breakdown of parliamentary democracy, the malignant rise of fascist-type movements, ferocious inter-state conflicts, and the imminent danger of world war—are present today. As in the 1930s, the capitalist elite of all countries is feverishly building up its military and police state apparatus, while stoking extreme nationalism and anti-immigrant xenophobia to divert social tensions and protect its rule. So far, fascistic movements lack a genuine mass base, relying on the sponsorship of sections of the existing capitalist parties and promotion by the mass media. The danger is nevertheless clear.

5. But another social force has now entered the political arena. Repressed and dismissed for so long, the working class is beginning to assert its own independent interests. The outbreak of mass social struggles in France, in the US and internationally signals the beginning of a new revolutionary period. The disorientation and confusion that followed the defeats of the major struggles of the 1980s and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have finally given way to a mood of renewed militancy and willingness to fight back.

6. All the anti-Marxist nostrums of the intellectual and political representatives of the affluent middle class, no less than the bourgeois establishment itself, have been discredited—not only in theory, but now in mass social practice. It is not only Francis Fukuyama’s proclamation that the dissolution of the Soviet Union represented the “End of History” and the triumph of the capitalist market that has been consigned to the dustbin of radically false political prophecies. British Stalinist historian Eric Hobsbawm’s claim that 1991 marked the end of the “Short Twentieth Century” and any possibility of socialist revolution by the working class has also proven to be myopic.

7. Moreover, the demoralized denial of the revolutionary role of the working class by the petty-bourgeois theoreticians of the Frankfurt School, the cynical postmodernist denial of objectively verifiable historical events and irrationalist incredulity toward the Marxist “grand narrative” of the historic centrality of the revolutionary struggle of the working class against capitalism, and the banal and scientifically worthless pontifications of self-absorbed professors on the “primacy” of gender, race or sexual identity, all stand exposed as ideological justifications for the domination of bourgeois rule.

8. The analysis and perspective of the ICFI has been confirmed. The contemporary world is still grappling with the essential historical challenge of the “Unfinished Twentieth Century”—the conquest of political power by the working class and the transition to a socialist society.

The global breakdown of capitalist rule

9. The year 2019 begins amidst the explosive interaction of geopolitical, economic and social crises. Nothing remains of the giddy optimism that prevailed within ruling circles following the demise of the Soviet Union. In fact, the mood within the international capitalist class is one of immense anxiety. The extreme turbulence that wracked the international stock exchanges as 2018 came to an end is seen as a sign that the desperate measures to revive the markets following the 2008 crash have exhausted themselves. The prevailing pessimism is summed up in the banner headline of the year-end edition of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the voice of Swiss bankers and the most astute of all bourgeois newspapers, which proclaimed, “Conditions must first get worse.” The message of the front-page statement was clear: the international ruling class will answer the worsening economic crisis with draconian measures directed against the working class.

10. The crisis facing international capitalism is of a historic and systemic character. Amid all the triumphalism that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the profusion of the ruling elites’ self-justifying propaganda, it has been largely forgotten that the events of 1989-91 took place under conditions where world capitalism was wracked by extreme economic, social and political instability. During the mid-1980s, as Reagan in the United States and Gorbachev in the Soviet Union wrestled with the escalating crises of their respective regimes, it was legitimate to ask (as the ICFI did) which system would collapse first. The erosion of US imperialism’s dominant post-World War II global position was already far advanced. Moreover, the extraordinary technological developments associated with computerization were driving the processes of economic globalization, which were steadily undermining the entire foundation of the US-dominated imperialist system, rooted in the political unit of the national state.

11. Despite the political advantages provided to US imperialism by its Cold War “victory” and the betrayal of the working class by its old leaderships, the underlying crisis of world capitalism persisted. As only the ICFI recognized at the time, the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist bureaucracies in China, Eastern Europe and the USSR—which had all pursued hopelessly anachronistic autarchic and anti-Marxist policies—was the sharpest manifestation of the collapse of all the post-World War II programs of national economic and social regulation.

12. The principal means employed by the US ruling elite during the past three decades to sustain its global dominance has been the reckless use of military power. This has resulted in failures that have served only to exacerbate the crisis of the global system. The “War on Terror,” which was used to justify the illegal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and a frontal assault on democratic rights, has not only exposed the limitations of American military power. The endless neo-colonial operations have also generated mass discontent in the US and sowed deep divisions among the major imperialist powers and within the American ruling elite itself.

13. International alliances between the major capitalist powers that served as the foundation of world geopolitics after the Second World War are dissolving. Longtime allies are turning into enemies and building up their military forces. More than ten years after the financial collapse of 2008, the global economy is riven by growing national tensions and trade war. Notwithstanding the recovery of the stock market over the past decade—which is itself now being reversed—the policies pursued by the ruling elites in response to the crash have resolved none of the underlying contradictions. The methods employed by the financial oligarchy to contain the crisis and enrich itself have only delayed the day of reckoning.

14. At the center of the global breakdown is the United States, which is in the midst of its greatest political crisis since the end of the Civil War in 1865. Trump is not a demon from hell, but rather the politically malignant

manifestation of the putrefaction of American democracy. As the Socialist Equality Party (US) has repeatedly insisted, the conflict between Trump and his political opponents is between various reactionary factions of the ruling elite, centered on differences over the best means to secure US global dominance. There are no democratic or progressive sides in this conflict. The paroxysms of rage from both Democrats and Republicans over Trump’s proposed (but, as yet, unimplemented) withdrawal of troops from Syria and Afghanistan expose the character of the conflict in Washington.

15. The Democratic Party represents an alliance of finance and major corporate interests, the military and intelligence agencies, and dominant sections of the foreign policy establishment, which are convinced that the inevitable conflict with China must be prepared first through the removal of Russia as an obstacle to US control of Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East. For the past two years, the Democrats have focused their opposition to Trump on a hysterical neo-McCarthyite campaign alleging Russian “meddling” in US politics to “sow discord.” The purpose has been not only to demand more aggressive action against the Putin government in Russia, but also to establish the framework for criminalizing opposition within the United States. The methods of Trump’s ruling class critics, who are terrified of and opposed to anything that could mobilize mass opposition to the Trump administration, are those of palace coup intrigue.

16. For its part, the Trump administration is pursuing its own “America First” imperialist strategy, centered on provoking a confrontation with China. Citing Trump’s former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, the *New York Times* explained that Trump “wanted to end these military campaigns [in Syria and Afghanistan] so he could focus on the economic and geopolitical contest with China, which he views as America’s biggest foreign threat. ‘This is not about a return to isolationism,’ Mr. Bannon said. ‘It’s the pivot away from the humanitarian expeditionary mentality of the internationalists.’”

17. All major political factions of the American ruling class are committed to a policy of world domination, using military force to offset the long-term decline of American capitalism. A quarter-century of unending regional conflicts and interventions, centered on the Middle East and Central Asia, is being superseded by “great power” rivalries, not only between the US and China and Russia, but also between the US and Europe. In the process, all the previous justifications for war—including human rights and the “War on Terror”—are being abandoned in favor of the naked assertion of imperialist ambitions.

18. The European imperialist powers attempt at times to portray themselves as bastions of global stability against the unilateralism and destabilizing actions of American imperialism. But they are no less ruthless and no less willing to use all means, including war, in pursuit of their predatory economic and geopolitical ambitions. The German ruling class is remilitarizing. Chancellor Angela Merkel declared in an end-of-the-year speech that Germany would assume a more active (i.e., militarily aggressive) role in pursuit of its global interests. In France, Macron’s efforts to rehabilitate Marshal Petain, who led the fascist Vichy regime that was allied with Nazi Germany during World War II, is linked inextricably to his promotion of French imperialism and domestic authoritarianism.

19. In Germany, the neo-Nazis in the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) have emerged as a significant political force, with high-level support from within the state and academia. The past year has seen fascist demonstrations in Chemnitz, Germany and in Warsaw, Poland. In Italy, the neo-fascistic Lega party is part of a coalition government. In Brazil, the fascist Jair Bolsonaro heads the most right-wing government since the end of the military dictatorship. The ultra-rightwing government of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel is establishing the closest relations with extreme rightwing regimes and parties throughout the world. These alliances reflect the growing strength of fascist forces within Israel itself.

In a column published in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on December 31, columnist Michael Sfard warned:

We have to face reality. We are witnessing the flourishing of a Jewish Ku Klux Klan movement. Like its American counterpart, the Jewish version also drinks from the polluted springs of religious fanaticism and separatism, only replacing the Christian iconography with its Jewish equivalent. Like white racism's modus operandi, this Jewish racism is also based on fear mongering and violence against its equivalent of Blacks—the Palestinians.

20. The growth of far-right and fascistic movements, including the revival of anti-Semitism, poses immense danger to the working class. Under conditions of deepening capitalist crisis, unprecedented levels of social inequality and preparations for world war, the ruling elites are resurrecting all the political filth responsible for the worst crimes of the 20th century. The fact that fascism is growing rapidly within Israel—which has the highest proportion of poor of any country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—is demonstrative proof that this political disease develops within a climate of extreme inequality, and especially in the absence of a political movement fighting for a socialist alternative to capitalism.

21. Fascism is not yet, as it was in the 1930s, a mass movement. But to ignore the growing danger would be politically irresponsible. With the support of sections of the ruling class and the state, right-wing movements have been able to exploit demagogically the frustration and anger felt by the broad mass of the population. In this situation, the fight against the resurgence of extreme right-wing and fascistic movements is an urgent political task.

The fight against fascism and the lessons of history

22. All historical experience—and, in particular, the events of the 1930s—demonstrates that the fight against fascism can be developed only on the basis of the independent mobilization of the working class against capitalism. The coming to power of Hitler's Nazis in 1933 was possible only because of the betrayals of the two mass parties of the German working class, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD).

23. Hitler's victory produced shock within the European working class and an immense growth of anti-capitalist and anti-fascist militancy. But the initial advances of the working class in France and Spain ended in demoralization and defeat. The political instrument of these defeats was the "Popular Front"—that is, the alliance of the Stalinist and social democratic parties and trade unions with the capitalists. The explicit basis of this alliance was the defense of capitalist interests against the revolutionary aspirations of the working class, on the false pretense of defending democracy against fascism.

24. Today, a new version of Popular Front politics is being revived under the banner of "left populism." A leading theoretician of this "left populism" is Chantal Mouffe—the mentor of Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and Jean-Luc Melenchon in France. "What is urgently needed is a left populist strategy aimed at the construction of a 'people,' combining the variety of democratic resistances against post-democracy in order to establish a more democratic hegemonic formation," Mouffe writes in *For a Left Populism*. "I contend that it does not require a 'revolutionary'

break with the liberal democratic regime."

25. In 1936, Trotsky explained the significance of the subordination of the working class to the capitalist class and its state machine:

The political alliance of the working class leaders with the bourgeoisie is disguised as the defense of the "republic." The experiences of Spain show what this defense is in actuality. The word "republican," like the word "democrat," is a deliberate charlatanism that serves to cover up class contradictions. The bourgeoisie is republican so long as the republic defends private property. [*Lessons of Spain*, 1936]

26. Left populism is not merely a repetition of the Popular Front politics of the 1930s. While bearing certain similarities to the politics of popular frontism—particularly in its subservience to the capitalists—it has no historical, let alone political, connection to the working class. It specifically opposes, in the words of Mouffe, those "who keep reducing politics to the contradiction of capital/labor and attribute an ontological privilege to the working class, presented as the vehicle for socialist revolution." That is, it repudiates the entire foundation of Marxist politics.

27. In opposition to Marxism and socialism, the politics of Mouffe and the pseudo-left advocates the formation of an amorphous, programmatically undefined, supra-class and nationalist movement. As Mouffe explicitly states, the left-populist movement neither identifies itself as socialist nor calls for a struggle against the capitalist state. It envisions the possibility of finding points of agreement and collaboration with the extreme right, as Syriza has done in Greece and Podemos in Spain. Opposing the fight to win the working class to a socialist program, the left populism of the pseudo-left advocates the utilization of myths and other forms of irrationalist politics.

28. Left populism is one expression of the politics of the pseudo-left, which has its theoretical origins in the demoralized denial of the revolutionary role of the working class by the theoreticians of the Frankfurt School and the postmodernist denial of objective truth and the Marxist and Trotskyist "grand narrative" of the revolutionary class struggle. Pseudo-left politics, based on the elevation of race, gender, sexual identity and the "people," is the politics of a privileged layer of the middle class, the top 10 percent of the population, which is covered over with left phraseology and slogans like the "Party of the 99 Percent."

29. Connected to the soaring stock market and the staggering concentration of wealth in the richest 10 percent, the interests of this layer and its mode of life are entirely divorced from the concerns of the great mass of working people. Substantial sections of academia, in a manner reminiscent of the period preceding World War I, have moved sharply to the right, throwing their support behind imperialism and censorship. This finds specific expression in the support of the pseudo-left organizations for imperialist militarism (i.e., the interventions in Syria and Libya, support for "human rights" interventions, anti-Russia hysteria, etc.).

30. The politics of racial, gender and sexual identity promoted by the organizations of the pseudo-left is bound up with conflicts within the top 10 percent over the distribution of wealth and access to positions within corporations, universities, the trade unions and the state apparatus. The weaponization of identity politics—which has found particularly vicious expression in the reactionary and anti-democratic #MeToo movement and, for example, support for the persecution of Julian Assange—is not only a means of securing wealth and status. It is a specific component of bourgeois-imperialist politics, reflecting the alignment of a substantial stratum of the very affluent middle class (the top 90 to 99 percent) with the ruling elite. Of course, exceptions to this rule are always to be found. In periods of intensifying social conflict, there will be individuals who

will break away from their class milieu and give their support, and with considerable personal commitment and courage, to the revolutionary socialist cause. But political strategy cannot be based on the activities of exceptional individuals, i.e., the “traitors to their class.” Thus, when the pseudo-left calls for a “Party of the 99 Percent,” asserting an identity of class and economic interests between the wealthy denizens of the 90 to 99 percent income bracket with the lower 90 percent, it is perpetrating a political fraud. A “Party of the 99 Percent” could be nothing other than a political organization in which the interests of the overwhelming mass of the working class population are subordinated to the economic and social interests of the capitalist elite.

31. While more affluent sections of the middle class are moving to the right, lower strata are moving to the left. The Yellow Vest movement in France attracted forces not only from the working class, but also from small businessmen and farmers. Predictably, the trade union bureaucracy and representatives of the affluent pseudo-left in France (i.e., Alain Krivine of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA), Jean-Luc Mélenchon of Unsubmissive France) seized upon the presence of segments of the middle class in the Yellow Vest protests in order to slander it as “fascist.” But the fact that sections of the middle class have been drawn to the working class and are protesting over issues of social inequality is a positive development of immense significance. It indicates that *at this stage* of the developing social movement, important elements of the middle class are prepared to align themselves with the working class against capitalism.

32. Thus, the urgent task for the working class is to demonstrate its ability to provide leadership in this fight. In a complex and socially heterogeneous society, in which the working population is composed of diverse strata encompassing a wide range of income groups, the necessity of unifying this vast social force is an immense political task. This task can be successfully accomplished only to the extent that the working class is armed with a clear and uncompromising anti-capitalist program. On this basis, it can win over to its side not only the more affluent strata of professionals that comprise an important segment of the working class population in all advanced capitalist societies, but also layers of the middle class that are oppressed by oligarchic capitalism. Trotsky’s analysis of the social psychology of the middle class, written 80 years ago when this stratum constituted a more distinct “non-working class” element in society than it does today, retains immense relevance:

Political developments in the coming period will move at a febrile rhythm. The petty bourgeoisie will reject the demagoguery of Fascism only if it puts its faith in the reality of another road. That other road is the road of proletarian revolution...

To bring the petty bourgeoisie to its side, the proletariat must win its confidence. And for that it must have confidence in its own strength.

It must have a clear program of action and must be ready to struggle for power by all possible means. [*Whither France?*, 1934]

The ICFI and the strategy of world socialist revolution

33. The alternatives that confront the working class are not “Reform or Revolution,” but rather “Revolution or Counterrevolution.” How the death agony of the capitalist system is resolved—whether by the capitalist methods of dictatorship, fascism, imperialist war and a collapse into barbarism, or through the revolutionary conquest of power by the international working class and the transition to a socialist society—will be determined by the outcome of the class struggle on a world scale. The

historical perspective first elaborated by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* has acquired an acute actuality. The escalating conflict between the capitalist elite and the working class will end “either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

34. The past 40 years have been marked by a constant attack on the social and democratic rights of the working class. This assault has been aided and abetted by the very organizations—especially the trade unions—to which workers once gave support.

35. The decades-long period of social counterrevolution, however, is now encountering mass opposition. The struggles that developed in the past year were objective indications of a significant change in the social and political orientation of the working class. While still in its initial stages, a mood of militancy, conducive to intransigent struggle, is spreading rapidly. Of course, there remain many ideological and political problems that need to be overcome in order for this mood to assume the form of an open struggle against capitalism and for socialism. But broad sections of the working class are coming to understand that direct struggle is unavoidable. Moreover, the fact that the struggles in 2018 occurred outside the control of the official state-sponsored unions demonstrates a critical loss of confidence among workers in these reactionary organizations. As the ICFI anticipated, the fight for social equality and world socialism will take the initial form of a global rebellion against these discredited, pro-capitalist apparatuses.

36. It is impossible to predict the exact tempo of events, which are influenced by a vast and interacting complex of national and, above all, global factors. However, what can be predicted with certainty is that the upswing in militant struggles of the working class will continue in 2019. But the transformation of this intensifying social militancy into a conscious movement of the international working class for socialism depends upon the building of Marxist-Trotskyist parties in the working class—that is, national sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

37. In 2018, the ICFI celebrated the 80th anniversary of Leon Trotsky’s founding of the Fourth International to continue the fight for Marxism against the Stalinist betrayal of the Russian Revolution and socialist internationalism. At lectures and meetings held in Sri Lanka, across the United States, in Europe and in Australia and New Zealand, the question was answered: What accounts for the historical persistence of the Fourth International? Above all, it is the correspondence of the internationalist perspective of the Fourth International with the objective character of the epoch.

38. All the nationalist organizations and parties that exercised political influence in the post-World War II period—from Stalinism and its Maoist variant, to social democratic and trade union reformism, to petty-bourgeois movements such as Castroism—have collapsed or been transformed into principal instruments of capitalist rule. In the case of the Chinese regime, despite the immense economic development in China over the past four decades, it has failed to resolve the historic problems of countries with a belated development. The Chinese working class and rural masses are still confronted with the reality of imperialist encirclement and face the threat of a devastating attack by the US and its allies. The Maoist Communist Party apparatus is a principal bulwark of world capitalism and incapable of making any credible appeal to the working class internationally to oppose the war agenda of the imperialist powers.

39. During the past year the Chinese working class has resorted to strikes to register its protest against the consequences of capitalist restoration. These struggles have won the support of sections of student youth. It is unquestionable that the expansion of social struggles in China—and, for that matter, throughout all countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, which have seen a massive growth of the

working class during the past four decades—will lead to a resurgence of interest in and support for Trotskyism. Conditions that exist in the contemporary world, no less than the historical experiences of the last century, confirm the essential tenets of the theory of permanent revolution elaborated by Leon Trotsky:

The completion of the socialist revolution within national limits is unthinkable. One of the basic reasons for the crisis in bourgeois society is the fact that the productive forces created by it can no longer be reconciled with the framework of the national state. From this follows, on the one hand, imperialist wars, on the other, the utopia of a bourgeois United States of Europe. The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena. Thus, the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader sense of the word; it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet. [*What is the Permanent Revolution?* 1931]

40. It was to defend this perspective that the International Committee was established in 1953, following the “Open Letter” issued by Socialist Workers Party leader James P. Cannon in opposition to the Pabloite revisionist tendency, which sought to destroy the Trotskyist movement and liquidate the Fourth International into Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism. The defense of Trotsky’s political heritage has been fought out over a vast terrain, encompassing the defense of dialectical and historical materialist theory against pragmatism and its various subjective idealist and irrationalist offshoots (i.e., the Frankfurt School and Postmodernism), and intransigent opposition to Stalinism, Pabloite revisionism (and its Morenoite variant), and all forms of bourgeois nationalism. The critical milestone in the history of the ICFI was its struggle between 1982 and 1986 against the national opportunism of the British Workers Revolutionary Party, which secured the unification of sections of the IC on the basis of Trotskyism.

41. The struggle of the ICFI did not unfold only in the realm of theory and program. The investigation conducted between 1975 and 1983, known as *Security and the Fourth International*, into the deployment of agents by imperialism and the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy demonstrated in practice the revolutionary intransigence of the International Committee. This investigation was conducted in the face of the bitter opposition of the Pabloite organizations, which openly defended the agents, including those who played critical roles in preparing the assassination of Trotsky, such as Mark Zborowski, Sylvia Caldwell and Joseph Hansen. Even to this day, the Pabloites and their pseudo-left allies continue to defend these agents and denounce the findings of *Security and the Fourth International* in the most vehement terms. But they are incapable of refuting a single fact established in the course of the investigation. During the past five years, documents have emerged that further substantiate the findings of *Security and the Fourth International*. The International Committee has incorporated this new information into its earlier findings. Under conditions of mounting state attacks on the working class and its democratic rights, the findings of *Security and the Fourth International* acquire renewed historical and contemporary political significance.

42. Events are now demonstrating the historical and political significance of the struggle waged by the ICFI in defense of Trotskyism. Theoretically and in practice, the ICFI has established that it is the sole revolutionary political party of the international working class and the sole representative of genuine Marxism. There is not a political tendency in the world outside of the ICFI that can plausibly claim to represent the continuity of the international party founded by Trotsky in 1938.

43. The ICFI has waged a continuous campaign against all attempts to falsify the history of the Russian Revolution and to defend the intellectual and political legacy of Leon Trotsky against numerous slanders and attacks. In 2017, to mark the centenary of the Russian Revolution, the ICFI carried out a thorough study of its immense strategic lessons. These lessons are being brought into the political situation today.

44. The ICFI is leading the fight for the political independence of the working class, establishing that the logic of workers’ struggles is a rebellion against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic apparatuses and the necessity to form new, democratically controlled rank-and-file factory and shop floor organizations that assume responsibility, independently of the pro-corporate unions, for the defense of workers’ interests. In the final weeks of 2018, auto workers in the United States and tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka, under the influence of the ICFI, took pioneering steps, forming rank-and-file committees to plan out action in defense of jobs, wages and conditions. This work will continue and expand in the course of 2019. The independent and uncompromising struggles of the working class will win the confidence and support of ruined sections of the middle classes, which might otherwise be drawn behind the demagoguery of the extreme right. As the impact of the economic and political crises drives ever broader sections of the working class into struggle, the task of Socialist Equality Parties in the United States, Sri Lanka and in all the countries in which they are active is to provide organization and political direction to the mass movement. The objective impulse toward a general political strike, drawing together all sections of the working class in a fight for power, must be consciously identified and explained by the International Committee and its sections.

45. At its December 9 conference of rank-and-file workers in Detroit, representatives of the Socialist Equality Party were asked two critical questions: 1) Will the *World Socialist Web Site* serve as an instrument for facilitating contact among all sections of workers engaged in struggle; and 2) Will the WSWS assist workers in the international coordination of their struggles? The answer given to both questions was, unequivocally, “Yes.” The *World Socialist Web Site*, the Internet publication of the ICFI, will provide the increasingly insurgent and militant movement of the international working class with historical education, political analysis and a voice and forum for discussion. The WSWS will continue to be at the forefront of the fight against Internet censorship and for the defense of WikiLeaks’ founder Julian Assange and all persecuted journalists, whistleblowers, artists and principled critics of the ruling class.

46. The most crucial task in 2019 is to work systematically for a significant expansion of the International Committee. Ever more directly, the theoretical and political work of the International Committee is intersecting with the objective movement of the working class. Its critical-practical revolutionary activity is becoming an essential factor in the development and outcome of the revolutionary class struggle. The theoretically and historically informed analysis of the ICFI is acquiring immense political and practical significance. The International Committee of the Fourth International must meet the challenge of this new situation. In its analysis of world developments and through the political work of its adherents active in the Socialist Equality Parties and their affiliated youth movements, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the ICFI must impart to the struggles of the international working class the necessary consciousness of its goals and assist in the development of the practical initiatives required to advance the fight for socialism.

47. As the working class breaks with the outmoded and reactionary nationalist organizations and trade unions, and their pseudo-left accomplices, the potential exists for the rapid development of internationalist revolutionary Marxist consciousness and practice. The ICFI enters 2019 with the greatest optimism, based on a scientific confidence in the heritage and program of Trotskyism, the Marxism of the

21st century, and the revolutionary capacities of the international working class.



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