

The global youth radicalization and the fight for socialism

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30 October 2019

Across the world, in countries as culturally distinct as Ecuador, Lebanon, France, Germany, the US, Iraq, Chile and Haiti, a new generation of working class youth is making its powerful entrance onto the battlefield of the global class struggle.

Citing the international scope of recent mass demonstrations, the *Guardian's* Simon Tisdall recently wrote: “Each country’s protests differ in detail, but recent upheavals do appear to share one key factor: youth ... This global phenomenon of unfulfilled youthful aspirations is producing political time bombs. Each month in India, one million people turn 18 and can register to vote. In the Middle East and North Africa, an estimated 27 million youngsters will enter the workforce in the next five years.”

The political awakening of the most educated, urbanized and technologically interconnected generation in history is of critical strategic significance for the entire working class.

Born beginning in the 1990s, today's youth share experiences that refute all the claims that the dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the “end of history” and that young people would grow up in a world marked by the triumph of liberal democracy and the absence of class struggle and war.

Young people are demonstrating by the millions because the capitalist status quo has become intolerable. They are demonstrating not over questions of race, gender or personal identity, but over how society’s resources are allocated. They are rejecting sectarian divisions and risking their lives against state repression because they confront the same unresolved historical questions that were posed in the 20th century: imperialist war, fascist reaction, financial crises and massive social inequality. Above all of this hangs the specter of a climate catastrophe.

Young people under 30 now comprise over half the world’s population and over 65 percent of the population in the world’s fastest growing regions—Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South and South East Asia.

The process of youth radicalization is not relegated to the developing world. Technological transformations epitomized by cell phones and social media are harmonizing the political outlook of working class youth across the globe.

In the US, a poll by the anti-communist Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation this week reported that 70 percent of young people aged 23 to 38 said they would likely support a socialist candidate for office. Polls across Europe show growing support among young people for social revolution. This summer, millions participated across North America and Europe in demonstrations against environmental disaster.

The ruling class views the radicalizing young generation of workers as an existential threat to the capitalist system. The capitalist class employs an army of experts and analysts to defend the system against the fact that “young adults in the 20-29 age cohort are particularly susceptible to radicalization,” in the words of one 2013 think tank strategy document.

Another think tank study from 2018 titled, “Economic Development and Sociopolitical Destabilization,” similarly warns:

“The impetuous growth of the young population requires the creation of enormous numbers of new jobs, which is a serious economic problem, while the youth unemployment growth can have a particularly strong destabilizing effect, creating an ‘army’ of potential participants for various political upheavals, including civil wars, revolutions, and state breakdowns.”

But the financial aristocracy is hoarding the world’s

wealth and makes no provisions for sufficient jobs, free education, health care or housing. The same 2018 study continues: “Young people make up the majority of rural-urban migrants, so the ‘youth bulge’ and intensive urbanization factors act together, producing a particularly strong destabilizing effect” on the working class as a whole. “Not only does the most radically inclined part of the population increase in numbers, but it also becomes concentrated in major cities/political centers.”

US imperialism is carefully preparing to suppress the growing radicalization of the working class.

A section of the 2018 US Army Future Studies Group titled, “Governance Challenges in The World of 2030 to 2050: Young, Unemployed, Urban and Angry,” argues that “demographic characteristics, the growth of inequality, the influence of megacities and the possibility of renewed, or at least increased, resources competition” means there is a “real possibility of further state failures” in the near future.

The social power and ingenuity of the world’s youth and students are a great source of strength for the working class in the coming revolutionary struggle for power. The youth are a barometer. After decades of the suppression of the class struggle, the radicalization of the youth is a clear sign that a broad movement of the working class is developing on an international scale.

The critical question is the development of a revolutionary leadership and the imparting of a political and historical perspective to these emerging struggles. Young people must base their revolutionary activity on the crucial revolutionary and counterrevolutionary historical experiences of the working class in the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st.

The Trotskyist movement—today represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the Socialist Equality Parties—is the only political tendency in the world that embodies this history. The ICFI traces its history to the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the working class, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, seized power for the first time in history.

Today, millions of young people are rebelling against policies enacted by Stalinist, Social Democratic, bourgeois nationalist, ex-guerrilla and Maoist parties that have dropped all but the thinnest of references to

socialism. Workers and youth rightly reject their pro-capitalist, nationalist programs. As Trotsky foresaw, “the great events that rush upon mankind will not leave of these outlived organizations one stone upon another.”

Another force—the working class—is returning to the historical stage. The revolutionary youth must turn toward this force, arming themselves by assimilating the lessons of the past struggles and developing the necessary revolutionary leadership on this basis. The *World Socialist Web Site* urges all young people to take up the fight for socialism by joining the International Youth and Students for Social Equality today.



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