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Fourth International solidarity with Chile

Solidarity with the popular uprising in Chile

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Since 18 October we have been witnessing the most powerful popular upsurge since the time of the Popular Unity in Chile (1970-1973). In a world context convulsed by great movements against neoliberalism, authoritarianism and corruption – in recent months there have been revolts in France, Puerto Rico, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti, Iraq, Sudan and Algeria – the Chilean popular uprising is of enormous importance and symbolism.

Piñera's brutal government repression, based on a state of emergency and the use of the curfew, as well as the mobilization of the army with techniques reminiscent of those of the Pinochet regime, instead of stopping the mobilization, has fed it and has generalized indignation in the country and the isolation of the government. Along with the victory of the popular mobilization in Ecuador, led by the indigenous peoples a few weeks earlier, the Chilean uprising places Latin America once again in the vanguard of the confrontation with neoliberalism.

The centrality of youth in unleashing the movement

The movement began as a response to the increase in the metro tariff by the right-wing government of Sebastián Piñera on 4 October. On 7 October high school students mobilized under the slogan "Evade, don't pay, another way to fight," traveling without paying. This gesture of rebellion has lit the fuse after years of social unrest, but also of resignation and depression of the popular sectors. The "awakening" is one of the most present slogans in the mobilizations. We must underline the fact that the student's struggles – in particular the ones that took place in 2006 and 2011 – have played a key role in the radicalization of the youth and in the molecular process of social remobilization that has hatched out with the current movement.

On 14 October, the "evasion" in transport was already massive and subway stations were being closed. On the 18th the direct conflict with the government forces broke out, with the first confrontations with the carabineros, the first pots and pans. That same day, Piñera (who is also one of the richest men in the country) decreed a State of Emergency, which limits freedom of movement and assembly, in response to the fires in subway stations and some supermarkets, something that ignited spirits even more. At that moment Santiago was paralyzed and the movement spread to the regions. Then the government imposed a curfew. The masses did not abide by the prohibitions and a savage repression was unleashed.

Brutality of repression

According to data from Chile's National Institute of Human Rights, in just 15 days, 1,574 people were injured in hospitals, including 473 shot by pellets, 305 by unidentified firearms, 40 by bullets, 30 by bullets and 157 with eye injuries. The agency has filed 179 lawsuits, including five for homicide and 18 for sexual violence. In addition, 4,271 arrests have been recorded throughout the country. What's more, some sources have already counted 42 dead and 141 disappeared in the protests on October 27. These figures give an idea of the intensity of the repression. In spite of it, the popular indignation only increases the mobilization, that after the general strike of the days 23 and 24 of October, has known another peak moment in the march of the last Friday day 1 of November.

Rebellion against neoliberalism in its first laboratory

Rage, discontent, anguish accumulated over many years. Peaceful protests were ignored. Chile is the pioneering country in the application of the neoliberal model and is characterized by one of its structural consequences: overwhelming social inequality as a consequence of a highly regressive distribution of national income (near to OECD countries, on the other hand). Submissive to the International Monetary Fund and to the conditions imposed by free trade agreements, a path chosen for the subordinate integration of the country to the world market and to the interests of transnational companies. A model that deepened extractivism and agribusiness, with all its destructive environmental consequences. For years, Chile was cited as an example of the "good that neoliberalism does to countries that want to develop". Thousands of Latin Americans migrate to Chile in the hope of integrating into the paradise of consumption.

The neoliberal order privatized and turned into commodities all social rights and the elements that allow life and its reproduction. Health, education, housing, social security, road traffic, electricity, water, etc. All privatized and working with market logic. In a context of insufficient salaries, there are only two ways to obtain the necessary goods and to integrate as consumers to this expanding market. One way is to work twice as hard and the other is indebtedness. Either way is a time bomb.

Institutional crisis

The end of Pinochet's military dictatorship and its replacement by democratic governments did not put an end to neoliberalism. The Concertación, Nueva Mayoría and right-wing governments have maintained the essence of the social, economic and constitutional regime established during the dictatorship. The working people, the students, the women, the pensioners, the native peoples, have struggled for years to put an end to this order of things. Those who promised changes in order to be elected with popular votes - the Concertación and the New Majority - betrayed in all respects the hopes that the people had of recovering in democracy the rights taken away by the dictatorship.

The distance between the people and the political parties that led the transition to democracy grew day by day. Today, an abyss separates them. The model of limited democracy contemplated mechanisms that deepened the divorce between the people and the political elite.

Today the people rise up not only against neoliberalism and its consequences, but also against the political regime inaugurated in 1990, which maintained the political power of the Pinochet's military unchanged. Today the hatred of these thirty years of democracy designed to enrich the richest and to keep the people atomized, fragmented, alienated at work, in consumption and in drugs is manifested. The fragmentation of the popular subject is encouraged by legal mechanisms and by the model of labor relations also inherited from the dictatorship. Preventing the rearticulation of forces that allow the development of the class struggle is a strategic objective of the ruling class.

Corruption and abuse cross the state apparatus, businesses, and Catholic and evangelical churches. Carabineros, military, senators, deputies have stolen billions of pesos, businessmen pay legislators to dictate laws in their favor and have been discovered. Important figures in the churches have sexually abused children. And the country has found out. Rage and distrust of all institutions is growing. "Not due to 30 pesos, due to 30 years" claims a viral content on the social media, referred to the 30 pesos of the increase of the metro fare versus 30 years of "transition to democracy", through a deal between the parties and the military regime in the plebiscite to reform the 1989 Constitution. Precisely this agreed and monitored democracy on the dictatorial pillars consecrated in the pinochetist constitution still in force in the country is one of the reasons of the enormous restrained unrest. And this also explains

the importance of the extension of the demand for a Constituent Assembly among broad layers of the popular movement.

Popular self-organization

Without a doubt, the popular struggles of recent years have prepared in Chile the substratum on which new forms of popular self-organization are being developed. The uprising of students for the right to public education in 2011 (the "penguin rebellion"), the anti-extractivist socio-environmental struggles, the struggles of native peoples for their rights, the uprising of university and high school students against discrimination and the harassment, the strikes and women's organization on March 8, 2018 and 2019, have created the objective and subjective conditions for the current social outburst, which is led by the working classes, the women organized in their local and regional committees, the impoverished middle classes and the most impoverished sectors. It is as if the unique experiences of each sector in struggle in recent years have been channelled into a national movement against the oppressive and exploitative regime.

Piñera has dismissed a good part of his cabinet without the maneuver having any effect and is maintained to a large extent by the passivity of a very broad sector of the parliamentary opposition. But the radicalization of the process and the growing antagonism with the Executive is opening up dynamics of neighborhood and local self-organization, here lie the so called "cabildos populares". The massiveness and duration of the protests, together with the aforementioned dynamics of self-organization, seem to be laying the foundations for a joint recomposition of the Chilean workers' and popular movement, which still has not been able to reconstruct itself after the terrible blows of the dictatorship, the neoliberal atomization and the precarious labor relations that accompany it. The intense politicization of these days makes the idea grow among the people that it is necessary to put an end to the current Constitution, but that the necessary Constituent Assembly be Popular, that is to say, that it not be restricted to a representation detached from the self-organization of the people. The Popular Constituent, therefore, must be based on a national debate between workers, in local assemblies and neighborhoods, among the original peoples, women's organizations, youth and trade unions.

Solidarity with the popular struggle in Chile!

From the IV International we want to send all our solidarity to the Chilean popular movement, denounce the brutal repression of Piñera and demand his resignation as a previous step to a real political change in Chile. We believe that the popular mobilization is allowing a true democratic rupture with the legacies of the dictatorship and is a key point of support to block and overcome the neoliberal policies in the country where they were applied for the first time.

We especially support the anti-capitalist, ecosocialist and feminist sectors of the Chilean popular movement that are encouraging the most advanced processes of self-organization and that are struggling to raise an anti-capitalist and revolutionary program capable of articulating a breakaway block that is both radical and unitary, capable of providing elements of orientation and a strategic horizon to the ongoing process.

Solidarity with the Chilean people!

Stop the repression!

Solidarity with the popular uprising in Chile

Down with Piñera!

Forward to self-organization and popular power!

For a Popular Constituent Assembly, based on the self-organization of the people!

All our support to the anti-capitalist, ecosocialist, feminist and revolutionary left in Chile!

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

8 November 2019

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