

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5453>



Fourth International

# Social upheavals, fightbacks and alternatives

- Documents of the FI - World Congresses - 17th World Congress - 2018 -

Publication date: Wednesday 11 April 2018

---

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

---

**This resolution presented by the outgoing International Committee was adopted 108 votes for, 5 against, 1 abstention.**

### Chapters

#### *I. Some analytical elements*

1 / What is the evolution of the situation of the working class and the exploited worldwide?

2 / Evolution also of the worldwide rate of exploitation

3 / Concerted attack on peasant populations

4 / What are the consequences of the significant increase in migration?

5 / Impact of the environmental crisis

#### **II / Resistance on different fronts**

1 / The uneven development of the labour movement

2 / Self-organization and cooperatives

3 / Debt struggles

4 / Peasant struggles

5 / Place of democratic and social justice movements

6 / Place of youth without jobs in society

7 / Women's rights and mass mobilizations against violence, rape and femicide, for the right to abortion

8 / LGBT+ struggles

9 / Organizations against racism and in defence of migrants

10 / The growing movement against global warming

## Introduction

Recent years have been marked by waves of political and social mobilization that have met different fates. In the Maghreb and the Middle East, through the waves of the Arab Spring, though they are not exhausted, have faced a combination of reactionary forces. In Latin America, we have arrived at the beginning of a new cycle after the defeat of the Venezuelan PSUV in the elections. In Europe, after the capitulation of Tsipras, Syriza did not follow through on the dynamics opened by its election or the massive OXI vote of July 2015.

In 2008, Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy sparked off an international financial crisis that provoked many further crises, especially the sovereign debt crisis in Europe. It triggered new social attacks in addition to the upheavals caused since the 1990s by political, economic and social reorganization following 1989 and the new phase of capitalist globalization.

This text aims to provide a succinct analysis of social changes underway in this context and as well as the capacities and experiences of struggles of the exploited and oppressed and developments in social, trade union and political resistance movements and struggles against capitalist attacks.

The question we face is the reality of power relations between classes internationally. This means analysing:

âEurosç **The social reality of the working and other exploited classes** which have experienced many changes over the last thirty years, with globalization and global reintegration of Russia and China into a worldwide capitalist economic system.

âEurosç **The organized strength of the labour movement and social movements fighting exploitation and oppression overall**, which have undergone many upheavals at various levels. The disappearance of the USSR and the end of the USSR / China competition for "socialist" hegemony over anti-imperialist resistance movements have largely changed the political geography in what we called "the three sectors of the world revolution". But now what is the real strength of each of the movements of struggle organizing the exploited and oppressed in these sectors?

âEurosç **The new fields of radicalization in the last two decades, especially among younger generations.** Although the global justice movement is weaker now than at the beginning of the century, nevertheless the question of social justice, the need to fight the power of banks, major international corporations and institutions remains a strong vector of radicalization. There is a clear link between social justice, fair work in factories, peasants' right to farm their fields, and environmental issues. We can also see, in terms of climate change and useless major projects, the desire to exert democratic control over big decisions and against the professional system of power by a lot of uncontrolled politicians. The liberating desire to live without violence and the enforcement of unfair laws is also a strong impetus to LGBT+ and feminist mobilizations. This has also been the case in struggles against racist discrimination and violence and to put an end to the legacy of colonialist and slaveholding societies. Finally, we can observe the power of new ICT, especially social networks, as an organizer of demonstrations, as a means of information and mobilization in all parts of the world.

âEurosç **Above and beyond these demands for democracy and social justice, the degree to which these struggles take on political coherence where they can be integrated into a global struggle against the system in a situation where an "international workers' movement" no longer exists.** Refusing the consequences of

capitalist policies does not automatically provoke an anticapitalist consciousness. The social identity of workers does not create a class identity as such. What is the capacity to include these struggles in a strategic political programme of radical challenge to capitalist society and the oppressions it has created or restructured? In this context, how can we evaluate the global justice movement and various international networks that have sought to coordinate struggles in one sector or another? Finally what is the strength and direction taken by the political currents in these resistance movements, whether they define themselves as democratic, anticapitalist or revolutionary at the national, regional and international level?

## I. Some analytical elements

### 1 / What is the evolution of the situation of the working class and the exploited worldwide?

Several important phenomena should be noted. Globalization has accelerated industrial and economic growth in a number of countries (India, China, Turkey, Mexico...) a phenomenon that should logically continue and diversify.

This leads to two important phenomena in so-called "emerging" countries: urban concentration, an increase of the number of wagedworkers at a faster rate than that of the population (75% increase between 1992 and 2012 for a 30% population increase). Obviously, this corresponds to the development of new centres of economic development. Another significant feature has been the relative growth of the service sector as compared to manufacturing, together with the proletarianisation of many jobs previously seen as 'professional' such as teaching and health care, with the consequent impact of these groups being increasingly likely to participate in industrial action to defend conditions against increasing speedups, pay freezes, privatisations and other attacks.

But we must always take into consideration that, in the aggregate, a large majority of the workforce in these countries consists of workers in precarious employment according to ILO criteria (unpaid family workers or self-employed workers) and this proportion has been increasing since 2008, which is therefore a counter trend. Similarly, the ILO expects a steady increase in unemployment in the next five years in Asia, Africa and Latin America, already noted since 2008. The consequence is obvious: significant urbanization, rural populations becoming a minority with the concomitant destruction of the social fabric, (with the elimination of social services and educational institutions in the rural zones and their concentration in the big cities), obviously leading to a deterioration in living conditions, even if peasants' solidarity networks persist.

So we see a numerical increase of the working class, but with different overall characteristics shaped by the overall development of societies where this development occurs.

In the "old industrial countries", the development of the proletariat, has most generally gone hand in hand with trade union and political struggles against the bourgeoisie in a national framework and, whatever the violence of twentieth century class struggles, with obtaining social rights on the nation-state level, crystallizing power relations between classes. Recognition of working class collective rights did not only concern employment contracts at the company level but also collective social rights as part of civil society. the bourgeoisie conceding that a share of capitalist profits should finance systems of contribution and tax redistribution on which most industrial societies were built in the twentieth century. Thus there were social compromises, development of the "welfare state", related to the ideological legacy of positivism and social Christianity. These ideologies and compromises were the necessary antidote to the significant development of Marxist and socialist currents. All this is no longer required today and industrial development in emerging countries has not at all come about in the same context. For instance, the automotive production industry "moving east": except for Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, the major development areas are in Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and China. In these cases, production lines and qualifications are the

same as in old industrialized countries, but social rights and labour legislation are not at all the same. There are similar schemas in many other industrial sectors. In these new areas of industrial development, the social compromises of the last century no longer hold sway. In the old industrial countries, neoliberal austerity policies are already broadly challenging these compromises. Moreover, we can observe semi-slavery situations, especially for migrant workers, and underground factories escaping any legislation.

### **2 / Evolution of the worldwide rate of exploitation.**

The economic changes of recent years have also produced various consequences. Not only have wages stagnated in the old industrialized countries, recent years have seen an increase in productivity at the expense of wages, accentuating the trend seen since the 1980s of payroll losses for the benefit of capital. In the same vein, more precarious contracts and moves to introduce new, more restrictive labour laws have been a key element in these productivity gains in the old industrialized countries (zero-hour contracts in Britain, the Italy Jobs Act, mini-jobs in Germany....). This rise in precarious employment and the degrading of working conditions targets and affects young people so they have a fragile relationship with the labour market and. That is used as a lever for the general strategy of a global change in the labour market starting with the weakest link of the working class. Despite the sudden brake on production in 2008, in most new production areas workers have won real wage increases, especially in China. Although these have been economic strikes, carried out workplace-by-workplace or company-by-company, they have had tangible effects.

In this context, we note what has been called the "feminization" of the labor market and poverty. This can be understood in two senses: on the one hand, conditions that historically have been typical in the formal employment of women: instability and job insecurity, flexible contracts, salaries less than those necessary to pay for the family's needs, have been generalized to the whole workforce. On the other hand it also explains the increase in job opportunities for women notably in sectors that continue to be feminized, such as care work. The workday is doubled for those women who also perform tasks of unpaid domestic work.

So, elements of social tension in the labour market persist in both the "emerging" countries and in old economies, either through the increased pressure of unemployment or by a gradual deterioration of employment conditions and social protection systems. Almost half of the workers in the world live outside wage labour, in extreme precarity. And the trend is the spread of precarious contracts and legislation minimizing legal protection against layoffs. These developments increase the flexibility and ability of capitalists to alter maximum working hours and number of employees according to daily needs. This goes along with a logistical organization of chains of production and distribution that reduces costs as much as possible by resorting to myriad subcontractors. Many new treaties allow big corporations to escape national laws: TTIP, TISA, etc.... Within the European Union, every month, new laws are superseding old national laws. De facto, at the international level there are now two levels of power: state power and corporate power and the second one is stronger and stronger in terms of trade organization and workforce contracts.

The debt crisis over the past decade has shifted from the South to the advanced capitalist countries: household debt crises in many countries (USA, India,) and the sovereign debt crisis in Europe. These crises accelerate social attacks, workers' precariousness and situations of social misery. They also sharpen the requirements for auditing, increase the control of populations and can open up calls for social control to block these policies. The notion of the feminization of poverty refers to the fact that it is on this point that women also become the priority "target" of this type of policies. As mothers, they are called on to take responsibility for implementing these policies. They are also involved in the 'EurosÜbankification' and financialization of their economies, which can add an extra burden to their labor.

All these changes weaken the capacity for lasting collective organization and structuring collective resistance within companies. At the same time, they stimulate the need to fight back and the dynamics of self-organization. This also

calls for the development of local social organizations able to regroup isolated or temporary workers above and beyond the workplace level.

The processes of feminization referred to - as well as the weakening of some identities that were once collectivizing, such as union identity -also explain the emergence of "new" social actors with an unprecedented role, such as women and, in many countries, the LGBT + community

### **3 / Concerted attack on peasant populations**

Although fewer and fewer people are farmers, agriculture employs 1.3 billion men and women, 40% of the working population. Peasants are still the majority of working people in Africa and Asia. Over the past two decades, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, peasants have faced "conservative modernization" policies that have posed deep challenges to peasant societies in the attempt to adapt them to capitalist globalization. The peasantry faces many threats, over and beyond the future of food systems and environmental balance: the powerful rise of agribusiness, land grabbing, the expansion of export-based monocultures at the expense of food-producing agriculture and the pressure on natural resources. Takeover of lands is a global phenomenon, undertaken by local, national and transnational elites as well as investors and speculators, with the complicity of government and local authorities. It leads to the concentration of landownership and of natural resources in the hands of major investments funds, plantation owners and major firms involved in forestry, hydroelectric power stations and mines. It is also caused by the tourism and real estate industries, and authorities managing port and industrial infrastructure.

This concentration of property has entailed local populations facing expulsion from their lands and forced displacement - especially of the peasantry. It has brought about human rights violations, in particular of women's rights.

Financial institutions such as banks, pension funds and other investment funds have become powerful motor forces for land spoliation. Simultaneously, murderous wars and conflicts are waged at this very time to seize control of natural resources.

Land grabbing goes hand in hand with growing control by private business over agriculture and food through greater control over resources such as land, water, seeds and other natural resources. In this race for profit, the private sector has strengthened its control over food production systems, monopolising resources and gaining a dominant position in decision-making processes.

Peasant women and men, landless people and Indigenous peoples, and especially women and youths, precarious farm workers, are dispossessed of their means of subsistence. These practices also destroy the environment. The indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are chased from their lands, often by force, which makes their lives more precarious and in certain cases amounts to their enslavement.

On all continents peasant movements lead mobilizations. These acts of resistance have multiplied over the past two decades, centred on food sovereignty. Moreover, these peasant populations are at the heart of all the crises the world is facing now; economic crisis and the consequences of public and private debt, food crisis, climate change that fuels migration, attacks on the rights of women and minorities. Governments of countries in the South, most often under the pressure of debt payments, have in recent years multiplied agricultural export and extractivist policies. There again, peasant populations have borne the brunt of the consequences via environmental destruction and control over their lands by agrifood trusts.

### **4 / What are the consequences of the significant increase in migration?**

## Social upheavals, fightbacks and alternatives

---

There are significant population displacements in several regions of the world: 250 million international migrants, 750 million internal migrants (displaced persons...). These movements are often due to structural economic changes with significant regional disparities: thus South Africa and Angola attract migrants from neighbouring countries, as do Argentina and Venezuela in Latin America, Australia and Japan in East and Southeast Asia. The Gulf States attract large numbers of migrants from the Horn of Africa, Turkey, the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines. In the latter country, nearly 20% of the working population live and work abroad, 50% in the Middle East, mostly women. Two-thirds of international migration is between countries of a comparable level of development and a third turn to the USA (Mexico) and Europe, mostly from its former colonial empires. But added to these phenomena are also permanent displacements due to wars, in particular from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Afghanistan, and now climate change.

Women's migration in the current context of crisis, along with the capitalist globalization of the economy, deepens and increases their oppression and has multiple impacts in very diverse ways on the exploitation of women. The context in which migration takes place expresses the extreme impoverishment and loss of rights of large sectors of world's population.

Women migrate because they need better living conditions for themselves and their families, and because in their countries of origin they cannot find decent employment. Also they emigrate because of political persecution, or as a consequence of wars, that threaten their lives.

We also find women and their families being part of the flow of refugees heading to various countries in Europe, fleeing their original countries plagued by violence and war, notably in the case of Syria and other Middle East regions. In this case, we are faced with the brutal drama of the migrants who try to reach Germany and other countries. This tragedy is taking place on the borders of Europe, on the coasts, on the Mediterranean Sea, in Eastern Europe and the Balkan countries. In this context women face gender discrimination, racism and exploitation.

Another facet of migration is related to the trafficking of women in the countries they manage to reach: England, Denmark, the Netherlands and others.

In countries where organized crime and drug cartels are very strong, women face different risks, like getting kidnapped and 'disappeared' by the cartels who use them in the prostitution business, within the national and international networks of trafficking of women. In other cases the trafficking is organised through more sophisticated mechanisms, like matchmaking women for supposedly love relationships in which whole families of traffickers are involved. Then another method is to deceive women with promises of jobs which are a cover for forcing them into prostitution.. In some places there is a correlation between migration and the sex tourism business.

Xenophobic campaigns are used politically, to present migrants as enemies, even of the working class, as it was done during Brexit in Great Britain and then in the United States by Donald Trump. In some European countries such as Denmark, xenophobic campaigns have taken the form of a "femonationalist" rhetoric which claims that migration is undermining the rights of native women in the destination country. The discourse of "femonationalism" is closely related to "homonationalism" where the xenophobic right is claiming that migration is a threat to the rights of the LGBT community.

At the same time, another expression of the problem has to do with economically-driven migration, in which poverty, inequality, lack of jobs and opportunities due to the devastating consequences of neoliberalism pushes millions of people to leave their countries to look for a job in other places. This particularly involves young people and who are a challenge to organise in trade unions or other social organisations.

## Social upheavals, fightbacks and alternatives

---

In the case of the Philippines, more than ten million people are working outside the country, in places as far afield as Saudi Arabia and the rest of Middle East. The monetary incomes sent by Filipino workers to their families through remittances constitute a central part of the foreign currency income of the country. In this case, the predominant presence of women among Filipino migrants is supposedly because it is easier for them to get a job, even though they are often forced into prostitution, which implies deep and serious consequences for them and their families.

In the many regions of world where migrants face oppression and exploitation, women are also suffering 'new' forms of work practically akin to slavery - confinement, prostitution and being trafficked.

If we refer to the displacements and migration in Latin America, Mexico is one of the most dramatic examples and, at the same time, also the place of many experiences of resistance. This country is the obligatory route for hundreds of thousands of migrants, not only Mexicans but also Central Americans and from places as far as Africa, trying to cross over into the United States at any of the points along the more than one thousand kilometer border between Mexico and the US, seeking a job or refuge (running away from violence in Central America, for example). That is why Donald Trump runs his demagogic campaign against Mexican workers, accusing them of stealing jobs from US workers in US factories and insists all the time about building (actually to finish building) a wall along this long border.

On top of this longstanding critical situation with migration to the US, we can now add the threat of Trump's xenophobic and racist policy that intends to expel in the short term around three million Mexican workers. During Obama's presidency, in fact, three million workers were expelled; the problem now is that Trump wants to deport the same number only in 2017, which would trigger a social crisis with unpredictable consequences in Mexico, in the middle of an existing human rights and political crisis. These deportations would go alongside restrictions on Mexican workers sending money from the US to their families in Mexico.

Remittances represent the second largest foreign exchange income in the country, only surpassed by the exports of automotive companies (companies that Trump wants to take back to the US). This remittance income is greater than foreign direct investment, tourism and oil exports. Mexico is the fourth largest economy for remittance income, after China, India and the Philippines.

The consequences of these policies are especially significant for women. The new laws that Trump seeks to impose, like ending the "sanctuary cities" (where the police are not allowed to request migrant documents from somebody committing a minor offence, such as traffic violations) will lead to deportations which break up families. If an undocumented migrant woman has children in the United States, they acquire nationality and, after a long, costly and risky process, the mother can also become an American citizen. With the new legal provisions, families are split up, their children are taken and the mothers deported to Mexico. Another legal provision that Trump wants to implement is to give a 10-year jail to those undocumented immigrants who, having been deported to Mexico, are arrested in a new attempt to return to the United States.

In addition to being a bridge to the US, Mexico is also the arrival point of migrants from other countries. With restrictions in the US, thousands of migrants are stranded in Mexico, especially in border cities like Tijuana and Nuevo Laredo. Hours before leaving the government, Obama cancelled the legal order known as "dry feet" that granted immediate asylum to Cubans who arrived in the United States by land and not by sea. In February of 2017 thousands of Cubans in Nuevo Laredo were demanding to go to the US but now they had no rights, neither do they have any in Mexico.

The same situation arose in Tijuana where the crossing of the border is blocked for thousands of Haitians and Africans who pay a lot of money to traffickers from their countries to supposedly take them to the US. Among Haitians there are complete families and many qualified people.



In addition to the social and economic crisis of these thousands of stranded migrants, without jobs and without rights there is now racism among the Mexican population against Haitians and Africans who are stigmatized as delinquents. While Mexico may complain about the bad treatment that migrants receive in the US, that bad treatment also applies to the migrants that arrive in Mexico or are going towards the United States.

As well as the racism that robs and exploits them, the drug cartels (that frequently have the support of the Mexican authorities), assault buses of Central American migrants in places like San Fernando and Tamaulipas. In addition to stealing from and murdering a number of these migrants, others are recruited for quasi slave labor or as hit men, and women are taken to be used as prostitutes in their business or for the use of traffickers themselves.

The tendency of reducing the labour force, as a result of capitalist globalization, also translates into an increase in the migration of women and children in perilous conditions (including an increase of children traveling alone to the United States). According to official data, migrant women made up 44.7% of the total number of migrants in the 2004-2006 period whereas this has risen to 47.5% in the 2013-2015 period. Migrant women have also a higher rate of unemployment than men.

The migration of Mexican women shows an increase from the 1970s to the present. In 2012, women residing in the United States were about 5.5 million, representing 46% of the Mexican population residing in that country. Their conditions of labor and employment are linked to traditional gender roles.

Several organizations point out that abuse against migrant women has become normalised and that rape has become a spectacle. The roles and stereotypes that accompany these women make them more vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual violence, disappearances, prostitution, human trafficking, extortion, separation from their families (many travel with children), arbitrary detention, illness, accidents and femicide. As they are often responsible for the care of children traveling with them, they become double targets and the difficulties increase because their status as undocumented workers makes it more difficult to obtain employment, housing and resources, as well as any social services for them and their children.

This acceleration of migration is obviously an important political question and an ongoing social phenomenon. The industrialized countries are perfectly capable of welcoming migrants who wish to go there, but the latter have become the target of xenophobic campaigns in many countries including the US, Australia, Europe and South Africa. The dual challenge to the labour movement is to fight this xenophobia while helping the welcoming and organization of these migrant workers who are strengthening the working class in many old countries. That presents us with a challenge when we try and organise these workers into trade unions. Some Gulf countries and even Israel resort to reducing immigrants to a situation of semi-slavery on a mass scale to develop industrial activity.

### **5 / Impact of the environmental crisis**

We are facing environmental disasters of unprecedented scale with anthropogenic climate change as their most dangerous feature.

Desertification, salinification and floods are making large areas of the planet unsuitable for human habitation or growing food. Climate chaos is creating extreme weather events in which loss of life and destruction of dwellings and infrastructure have brought death, disease and further poverty to millions.

In many parts of the world, the last decades have also seen population movements provoked by climate change and other facets of environmental catastrophe. These will become increasingly important, involving people who are among the poorest on the planet. One of the effects of capitalist projects (mega-dams for example) and devotion to

even more extreme methods of fossil fuel extraction in many parts of the world has also taken the form of a new offensive against entire communities: in the Philippines, Canada, the Amazon, plans to transform entire regions are frontally attacking people who often belong to First Nations and other groups already facing discrimination. Fronts of popular self-organization and struggle against climate disasters and destructive projects are taking form in these areas.

The overall picture is that of a world undergoing massive changes in many regions with an increase of the number of waged workers bringing about significant social upheaval. This is happening at a time when economic development is not occurring alongside nation-states developing structures and services able to ensure better living conditions. Exactly the opposite in most cases; we observe a worsening of daily living conditions in many ways, aggravated in many regions by war and climate change. Women and young people are the most severely affected by this situation.

## II / Resistance on different fronts

### 1 / The uneven development of the labour movement

We obviously see a significant growth of trade unionism among new employment sectors, in countries where there is expanding industrialization and significant resistance to management demands through strikes. But this occurs, overall, in a situation where the social gains won by the "old working class" (pensions and social security, in particular) far from being extended to emerging countries, are being challenged in Europe and other industrialized countries in the name of austerity plans. Likewise, in China, which has experienced in a large number of local strikes in recent years, especially over wage issues, this has not led to the creation of trade unionism independent of the state apparatus.

Quantitatively, the working class is constantly growing. It should be noted that its centres of growth have strongly shifted to Asia, probably tomorrow to Africa. In these areas the development of trade-union forces follows numerical growth, the growing social weight of wage workers, lay the bases for class consciousness but in general they do not have the strong political structures that provided a political backbone to the European labour movement, although the contradiction in that model was to often delegate 'political' questions to political parties.

Powerful workers' struggles are still taking place not only in the old industrial countries, in Latin America, but also in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, in Turkey, in the Indian Subcontinent, and in Asia.

But in the era of globalization the need for trade unions to take up broader issues including racism, all forms of discrimination and housing has become greater and a spur to radicalization. While there have been some attempts to organize some of the most precarious workers, such as fast-food workers in the US and to a lesser extent in Britain, in general, in old industrialized countries, the most precarious workers (younger with a higher proportion of migrants and women) are the least organized.

Other strategic questions are also posed by the current situation. Unions in many sectors are exploring the question of whether 'chain of value' organizing should replace industrial unionism in the era of globalization, i.e., a coordination of all sectors that make a single production possible. This is all the more important as the maximization of profits leads to splintering of production processes, resorting to subcontracting, on the same site, or most often, on an international level. Further, the question of union democracy is essential in building effective organizations.

The creation of a single trade union, ITUC, bringing together the vast majority of union forces worldwide, cannot hide

wide disparities especially in terms of the capacity to defend the interests of employees and to oppose capitalist plans. The weakness of unions and political organizations with a Marxist and class-struggle background that conduct education among their membership has led to a lack of class-consciousness

The trade union movement is thus confronted with several crucial problems:

âEurosç Its ability to integrate all the social issues that arise in society (racism, homophobia and discrimination against women, housing). The need to integrate environmental dimensions is also a major imperative. The tension between safeguarding jobs and the struggle against harmful factories and production require establishing a system of demands making it possible to go beyond these contradictions.

âEurosç to take into account the reality of precarious work in all its forms and therefore stimulating and creating the structures to organize all those concerned, in particular by the development of structures beyond enterprises, in the zones of industrial activities, neighbourhoods and localities. This particularly affects young people who often themselves take the initiative for creating trade union branches.

âEurosç the imperative need to co-ordinate this organizing on an international scale, relying on the actual networks of the production chains in which the workers are competing against each other.

âEurosç the pressing need to create, out of the struggle for rights, a class identity providing resistance movements the programmes necessary to challenge the capitalist structures of society and to carry through a project of overthrowing this system.

### 2 / Self-organization and cooperatives

In many countries, in the face of layoffs and business closings, most often by major international companies, there has been a movement to take back such firms, on the model of Zanon in Argentina, where in the wake of 2002, there are now more than 300 firms taken back by the workers. In the same vein, in Europe, a network of self-managed firms is developing around Fralib, Vio-me, and Rimaflow...

Moreover, up against major companies and agrifood trusts, many struggles by peasant communities have led to the founding of production cooperatives that seek to control distribution themselves.

These experiences, albeit limited, raise the question of control, of workers taking back the means of production, and also the choice of production linked to social needs. What is missing everywhere is the power of a social connection based on the solid experience of: occasional but long struggles; embryos of alternative societies; strongholds which can withstand attacks and develop alliances; spaces of confrontation; political and cultural discourses which really raise the question of the nature of an economic and social alternative.

We must try to link up in a dialectical way, the 'for' and 'against'; models of resistance and alternatives; mutualism/cooperatives and struggles for rights. We must support and encourage experiments of new forms of the direct organisation of work both salaried and cooperative. Self-management is a tool for achieving in practice the objective of rebuilding class consciousness and putting forward a new democracy from below. We need to set up bodies that finally break the old dichotomy between spontaneity and organisation and finish with the idea that political consciousness only resides in the party form which is then imported into the struggle. Both aspects can exist beside each other in a particular phase where social practice must not be separated from theoretical and cultural analysis and discussion.

### 3 / Debt struggles

Over the past ten years and since the beginning of the financial crisis, the debt crisis has reached a scale far exceeding its previous dimensions. Beyond the North American sub-prime crisis and the sovereign debt crisis in the European Union, the populations of India, the Spanish state and many European countries have been and are affected. Especially with the more than ten million families expelled from their homes in recent years, and also, as in the US, the burden of student debts.

These illegitimate debts have been the vector of the creation of many movements and struggles for audits.

### **4 / Peasant struggles**

Many local struggles have rallied peasant and indigenous movements in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. The questions of land monopolies and of food sovereignty are at the heart of all these struggles. They have all been marked by the transversal struggles, anticapitalist, environmental, feminist, against discrimination and ethnic oppression, for migrant rights. The question of democracy, of sovereignty and the right to decide in the face of governments and multinationals is also at the heart of their demands. Via Campesina, which federates more than 160 organizations in 70 countries, has succeeded in over 20 years to bring together millions of peasant men and women, small producers. In particular it puts feminist, indigenous and environmental issues at the heart of its concerns.

In Central America, in Latin America, the struggles for the rights of Indigenous communities and the right to the land play a part, and they often face murderous repression, as in Brazil and Honduras. In Asia, in Africa - for example, in Mali - peasants mobilise against land monopolization.

### **5 / Role of democratic and social justice movements**

Starting out from the Indignad@s movement, the movement of Public Squares in major cities in the Arab regions, the Occupy movement, since 2011 a long wave of democratic struggles emerged in Africa, in Europe and in Asia, in Mexico, with a strong youth influence which linked democratic and social issues. The wave of revolutions in the Arab region, in the Maghreb and the Middle East, had its source in democratic and social justice issues. The Indignad@s and Occupy movements in the USA and in Europe had the same roots. Recent years have seen many movements in Sub-Saharan Africa to impose democratic consultations (Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso). In South Korea, President Park was brought down in March 2017 following a long democratic mobilization against corruption. Questions of dictatorships and presidents for life, postponements of elections, and corrupt regimes have been powerful motor forces for mobilization in recent years. In countries facing the emergence of authoritarian political regimes (Brazil, Eastern Europe, the Philippines...) struggles to defend democratic rights take on and will continue to occupy a central place on the political agenda.

### **6 / Place of youth without jobs in society**

In Africa, as in Latin America, young people, particularly young students, form a social stratum exposed to unemployment and the crisis. The revolts of young Brazilians against transport costs, the student strikes in Chile, Québec, 15M, and the various Occupy movements echo the strength of social mobilization in Tunisia, and in Egypt. In the many democratic and anti-corruption mobilizations that have taken place in many West African countries, the question of living conditions and the future of youth was very present.

In all these mobilizations, the strength of youth is on the scale of the structural insecurity, the mass unemployment experienced by young people in many parts of the world. Rising educational levels have raised the expectations of an improvement in living standards. But it has only exacerbated the revolt and increased demands for a better future for society as a whole. These movements highlight demands for political democracy, challenging the political system controlled by the capitalist and rentier oligarchies. Young people have been in recent years the driving force of revolutionary mobilizations, and have also played a key role in progressive political developments from the election of

Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, the birth of Podemos or the movement behind Bernie Sanders in the US.

### **7 / Women's rights and mass mobilizations against violence, rape and femicide, for the right to abortion**

In general terms, as regards the key issues of feminist struggles, the situation in recent years has been contradictory, given the growing presence of women in the labour force. The women's movement has developed multiple structures and mobilizations in all regions of the world, but faces a reactionary offensive in many countries, linked to the rise of neoconservative and fundamentalist currents. This offensive once again attacks fundamental rights: the right to live; the right to financial and social independence from men (parents, brothers or husbands); the ability to dress as they want; and the right to control reproductive capacity, especially through legal, free and safe access to abortion.

In recent years, an important factor of social mobilization has been the response to violence against women, in the first place femicide, in India, Turkey, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay or Mexico. Since the gigantic demonstrations in India in December 2012, many other mobilizations have taken place in as many cities: on 7 November 2015, 500,000 women mobilized in Madrid against the increase in violence and murders of women; in Argentina, hundreds of thousands of women mobilized in 2015 in response to several murders that impacted the country; in Mexico, the spread of murders and disappearances of women marked by drug trafficking to a hitherto unknown level also resulted in strong mobilizations in the country.

These mobilizations remind us of the high level of violence in many countries, violence that affects women in the first place and also weighs on the social reality: most of the countries of Central America, Mexico and Brazil and almost all of sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa have reached their highest level of homicides not linked to war.

Among the noticeable new factors, we find a tendency to fruitful dialogues with social subjects that until now had not felt themselves to be a full part of the women's and feminist movements: trans collectives, black women, indigenous women, lesbians, among others. New forms of mobilization are also present, which in some countries have included using methods such as the strike, in dialogue and debate with the trade union movement. For example, the 8 March 2017 mobilization that was called as the Women's International Strike, with a significant increase of mobilization, which allows us to foresee the rise of the feminist movement and the diversification of its alliances.

The election of Donald Trump provoked an international wave of protests on 21 January 2017 at the initiative of the women's movement, not only in several cities of the United States, but also in many cities of the world, placing the women's movement at the forefront of political struggles against reaction. The various reactionary governments that have come to power in the wave of liberal offensives, try to challenge the right to abortion won by the struggles of previous decades. In this situation mass mobilizations have had to defend and extend this right, notably in the Spanish State in 2014 and in Poland in 2016.

We should point out the international character of this new movement, which gives it a potential for growth. Countries like Argentina and Italy inspire in different latitudes the possibility of shaping emerging structures that connect struggles, tactics and strategies. The role that new technologies have played in this regard, particularly social networks as a platform for dissemination and communication, is undeniable.

### **8 / LGBT+ struggles**

In many countries (apart from the Muslim world and most of sub-Saharan Africa), the strength of LGBT+ organizing has made possible decriminalization of same sex relations and to limited rights for trans people. In this process, same-sex marriage has obtained recognition in many places, not just rich countries, but also for example South Africa and increasingly in Latin America with most often, a broad consensus in society. Other battles are still to be

won - particularly full rights for trans people and for LGBT+ parents.

The issue of violence and homophobic campaigns weighs heavily. The key role of the reactionary religious currents in opposition to the LGBT+ movement is evident everywhere, whether these currents are Christian - Catholic or Protestant -, Hindu or Muslim as well as the violence and bigotry of far right groups not tied to any religion. In emerging countries, anti LGBT+ violence is often justified by a discourse against European/American cultural models. At the same time in recent years a homonationalist current has developed justifying imperialism, notably US imperialism, against the Arab countries, as a force that can contribute to progress in LGBT+ rights. This also poses the question of intersectionality, the need to build links among all struggles against oppression.

### **9 / Organizations against racism and in defence of migrants**

The organization of the black-led Black Lives Matter movement in the US focused particularly against police racism but highlighting broader questions of state racism is the most significant development on racism in the US since the demise of the civil rights movement. This movement has also inspired struggles led by Black youth in many other countries such as Brazil and South Africa. In many cases this includes a reaction to the war on drugs carried out by the state which is used as a pretext for the assassination of many young people in countries like Brazil, the Philippines, the USA, Mexico, Colombia... In Europe, as the murderous effects of borders and immigration policies become more visible we have seen the growth of important movements of practical solidarity as well as political demands most notably in Greece but also in Italy, Germany, Britain and in Catalonia. The context of the struggle against terrorism as well as austerity policies have led to the resurgence of a racist discourse, a legacy of the colonial past and restructuring discriminations against racialised popular classes, the first victims of unemployment and precarity, in particular in Europe and North America.

### **10 / The growing movement against global warming**

The rise of powerful movements against climate change in many countries can and must play a leading role in the coming years in challenging the overall system. These changes are harming and will harm the lives of hundreds of millions of women and men in the coming years. Indigenous peoples, populations living in the most precarious conditions are often the first affected, as they are affected by the policies of deforestations and large capitalist projects encroaching on their living areas. In many regions, the populations organize themselves and seek to build networks integrating other social organizations.

This shows that the questions of unemployment, working conditions are intertwined in many regions with many other social issues of prime importance and perceived as such by the populations concerned.

## **III / Questions of political change, struggles and anti-capitalist strategy**

The essential question is of course emancipatory perspectives able to structure these social and political movements. The experiences of Via Campesina, of several labour union sectors, and of climate coalitions show that, especially among youth, undertaking action directly on the international field and challenging capitalist society is a natural process.

But many of the structures resulting from the rising wave of ultra-globalization (WSF, World March of Women, ATTAC, ...) experienced a brake on their development in this confrontation and entered into crisis. In recent years

Via Campesina and the CADTM have managed to ensure their development, with the central focus on the one hand on peasant resistance struggles and on the other on the debt issue as well as the process of citizen audits. The situation is difficult for the traditional labour movement on which national policies of consensus or compromise with austerity policies weigh heavily. And even the wave of alternative unions in Eastern Europe has run out of steam in recent years. Similarly, all the experiences of large-scale anti-capitalist groupings in the aftermath of the social forums were halted; also linked to the crisis of European organizations that were involved in it (SWP, SSP, LCR / NPA, etc.).

We must address new challenges in the construction of an international revolutionary movement, an anti-capitalist movement based on the defence of rights and social justice.

There is, of course, a battle of a new order in many parts of the world.

As discussed above, social attacks, austerity policies, and the fragmentation of old structures of social compromise create an increasingly powerful social anger. This anger turns against the national and international institutions, the leaders and the parties responsible for these attacks, which were often the traditional pillars of political systems. This wearing out, this erosion, poses a strategic question at the international level: it gives the revolutionaries, the currents of the social movements which fight against these reactionary policies, the responsibility of proposing a political perspective that can give a progressive, revolutionary vector to the rejection of the system. We are seeing a whole generation of young socialists who have been mobilising on issues such as the climate, the women's movement, etc. That will help develop our organisations as well as the trade union and student organisations. This facilitates a better gender balance and encourages the raising of political questions in these movements (this also applies to Europe where the emergence of young women's organisations in various universities can be a basis for an international network of student movements).

Struggles for democracy and social justice as such do not automatically lead to a struggle for the overthrow of the systems of oppression.

The last few years have brought forth a clear political question. Confronted with the challenge to the dictatorships in Tunisia and the Middle East, the progressive regimes in Central America or the anti-austerity social eruptions, reactionary forces have taken an offensive course everywhere, notably by strengthening authoritarian regimes capable of confronting these movements of emancipation. This calls for implementation of a strategy capable of both organizing popular mobilization and being able to confront reactionary counter-offensives.

Moreover, a struggle is resurfacing among the popular classes, between class struggle or clearly socialist currents, and reactionary religious or fascistic far-right currents. The influence of religion has always been very strong in popular milieus; often when they organize, rural or urban communities use religious references in putting forward demands for social justice against the rich and the powerful. Cohabitation with organizations with such references is of course possible for revolutionary socialist organizations. But the problem we face in various regions is reactionary religious currents and far right currents. In Europe and the USA, these currents in working class communities play on the usual mechanisms in times of crisis to deflect the anti-capitalist struggle (fear of immigrants and foreigners, nationalist nostalgia...) plus, notably in Europe, on rampant Islamophobia. In other traditionally Muslim regions, organizations have built hegemony over a section of the popular classes that diverts aspirations for social justice or the fight against the imperialist countries to a mythologizing of the ancient times of Islam. All these ideologies are based on the popular anger provoked by the crisis and / or the disappearance of the systems of social protection, of public services, the rise of precarious work. They divert people from an anti-capitalist struggle towards the return to religious order, an imaginary identity or a nation, carrying all the ready-made reactionary submission to natural order, the patriarchal family, homophobia and misogyny. Often, identity-based issues thus become a structural framework both in imperialist metropolises as well as in dominated countries, which can lead to an infinite logic of falling back on

confessional identities.

But this competition for the popular audience makes it necessary for anti-capitalist organizations in the social and political movements to give a new life and energy to the perspective of social equality in a society free from capitalism and exploitation.

But on another level, we must answer another challenge: building mass organizations in the social movement to face the attacks and aggressions of the system, and at the same time constructing all the links necessary to bring together resistance on all fronts. The dangers of falling back on identities, the weakness of political responses advocating social change can become a common reference, imposing intersectionality more than ever, to work towards convergence of anti-oppression movements, as in the example of the dynamics of Black Lives Matter in the USA.

On the political terrain, the whole question is how to build political strategies which, far from being limited to institutional perspectives, provide the space needed for self-organization of social movements. Such forces must champion popular demands; and put experiences of institutional administration at the service of this social movement, while directly addressing the capitalists' economic power. On this point, the latest experiences are hardly positive.

In the first decade of this century, only Latin America witnessed the election of governments identified as the extension of these social movements, but without transforming the living conditions of the populations so as to revitalize prospects for social emancipation. The evolution of the Ecuadorean, Bolivian, and Venezuelan governments has not brought about a change of cycle and the need to break with perspectives based on, in particular, extractivist policies. Trade unions and social movements find themselves having to resist politicians who have not kept their promises.

In another way in the Maghreb (North Africa) and Egypt, popular movements, based on the mobilization of youth and trade union forces, made it possible to overthrow dictatorial regimes. They also now find themselves in a stance of resistance. However, we can see the emergence of elements of regional dynamics between movements in the Maghreb countries and those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Greece, the betrayal by the Tsipras government brought to power by the rejection of austerity policies is now leaving the social movement with the responsibility of rebuilding a political alternative with the radical left political currents. In the Spanish State, Podemos, a direct outcome of the Indignad@s social mobilizations, is today confronting the social movement with a similar situation. The strategic discussions in Podemos carried by Anticapitalistas for a direct confrontation with austerity policies is in resonance with the demands carried by the social movement from which it emerged.

Finally, in the various regions where political changes have taken place through social mobilization, social movements are facing a defensive situation in a context of the development of strong fightbacks that are signs of hope.

The key issue in the coming years will not only be organizing adequately to counter the attacks sustained, but also the political capacity to build, alongside the social mobilizations, a political movement for emancipation capable of frontally challenging capitalism.

PS:

*If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#)*



## Social upheavals, fightbacks and alternatives

---

then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning.