

# Labour Internationalist

Monthly publication of the British supporters of the Organising Committee  
for the Reconstitution of the Fourth International (OCRFI)

Special issue – March 2020

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## Who we are, What we stand for

We believe that the working class needs to rely on its own efforts, both at home and around the world, to defend its interests against a capitalist system that is determined to extract maximum profit regardless of the human and environmental cost.

We believe that the capitalist system, based on private ownership of the means of production, cannot be reformed and has to be abolished by means of a proletarian revolution that will introduce socialism.

We stand on the founding programme of the Fourth International, the *Transitional Programme*, which says in particular: "It is necessary to help the masses, in the process of their daily struggles, to find the bridge between their current demands and the programme of the socialist revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands which stem from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class, and invariably lead to the same conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

The working class's struggle against the capitalist system – on its own account as well as on behalf of all of the oppressed – needs to be united and based on class independence from capital and its national and international institutions.

This means defending the organisations which the workers have built, and helping the workers themselves to build new forms of organisation to carry out their struggle in ways which they decide on freely and which they control.

Often, this also means opposing those in the labour movement who ignore the mandate of their membership and co-operate with capitalism's plans, at the workplace, institutional or State level.

*Labour Internationalist* aims to be part of the fight against that process of integrating the working-class organisations into capitalism's plans.

*Labour Internationalist* therefore focuses on helping to advance the struggle by the working class in its own interests – locally, nationally and internationally.

Consistent with this view, *Labour Internationalist* defines itself as a forum of class struggle that is open to all individuals, groups and currents in the labour movement that are committed to political independence of the working class and to internationalism.

**The failed  
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## Organising Committee for the Reconstitution of the Fourth International (CORQI)

### **The failed capitalist system and the governments that serve its interests: they are guilty and responsible for the growth of the coronavirus pandemic!**

**A**t the time of writing, no-one can predict the inevitably disastrous outcome of the coronavirus pandemic that is threatening the lives of millions of men, women and children around the world. On the other hand, the conditions that have allowed and are allowing the pandemic to take on catastrophic proportions, the conditions that are allowing it to spread rapidly across the whole planet, these are known by the workers and peoples of the whole world.

Because they are the result of all the political decisions taken and implemented for decades by the governments of the big capitalist powers, but also by the governments of the dominated countries on every continent, all of them guided only by championing the interests of the big multinationals, the big banks and speculation. The political decisions that flow from subordinating the whole of human civilisation to the law of capitalist profit.

The political decisions by capitalist governments – whether they call themselves “left-wing”, “progressive” or right-wing – that are dismantling social welfare systems which the workers had won through their class struggle.

The political decisions by capitalist governments that are dismantling and privatising public healthcare systems, cutting hundreds of thousands of medical and hospital staff jobs, as well as hundreds of thousands of hospital beds, thousands of hospitals, medical units and local health centres.

The political decisions by capitalist governments that are financially strangling public basic research, rendering scientists powerless in their research into emerging viruses.

The political decisions by capitalist governments that are allowing pharmaceutical corporations to accumulate enormous profits through production at the lowest possible “labour cost”, resulting in the current shortage of products as simple as masks, testing kits and disinfectant products.

The political decisions by capitalist governments, like those of the United States, Britain, Germany, France and Canada that are organising the pillage of the nations of Africa, Latin America and Asia. Pillage that, according to UNICEF, has resulted in 3 billion human beings (40 per cent of the world’s population) not having access to soap or running water, and so cannot wash their hands several times a day to limit transmission of the virus. Not to mention the billions of human beings who can only feed themselves once a day.

To the dramatic consequences of those decisions can now be added the social consequences of the new financial crash, which for months was clearly imminent

as a continuation of the 2008-9 crisis and the onset of which has been speeded by the pandemic. Already, this is being expressed in the announcement of plans for massive lay-offs and job-cuts in the automotive, aviation, banking, retail, garment, private power-loom and service sectors, to mention just a few.

Today, most of the capitalist governments – beginning with the US administration and the governments of the main European powers and their European Union – have been seized by panic and are being led to announce exceptional measures in an attempt to deal with the situation. More determined than ever to “bail out the economy”, in other words to offer billions of dollars or euros to the capitalists, some are announcing that they are “challenging the policies for limiting budget deficits”, others are talking of temporary nationalisation of businesses and a freeze on evictions and home repossessions during the crisis. Everything that was considered to be impossible yesterday is today being conjured up by frantic governments.

But the workers are not being fooled!

They know that those governments devoted to the capitalists’ interests, those anti-working-class governments, have not changed their nature.

They know that, even though these measures are being conjured up, and even though these measures or some of them are being implemented partially and temporarily, those governments will in the future take back a hundredfold what they have pretended to give over a few weeks.

The truth is that not one of those governments, whatever the political label – right or “left” – of the parties that comprise them, is taking the least of the genuine measures for safeguarding the population that are needed today to beat the pandemic! (1)

Because, what measures appropriate to the situation would a government take if it was genuinely concerned to protect the health of the vast majority?

Such a government would place the entire production apparatus under state control and immediately direct it towards producing goods that are indispensable for stamping out the epidemic: masks, testing kits, disinfectant products, medicines, etc. It would organise the systematic testing of the whole population. To do so, it would not hesitate to requisition the big enterprises (starting with the pharmaceutical corporations) and the banks’ assets.

Such a government would immediately reopen all hospital facilities that have been closed down, it would requisition all available premises needed to house as soon as possible the hospital facilities and life support

units that are indispensable for meeting current and future needs.

Such a government would take the billions from where they are today, in order to ensure that medical care is free to all, and that the funding is there for all the medical staff and equipment that are needed to run hospitals properly.

Such a government would organise the containment of the whole population, in particular by obliging businesses to guarantee the payment of wages to all employees who are isolating themselves at home. And in the dominated countries, where the vast majority of the workforce are in the “informal sector”, without regular wages or guarantees, such a government would guarantee to each worker an income to live on satisfactorily during the period of confinement. It would organise the distribution of the foodstuffs and basic subsistence products needed by the population.

Such a government would nationalise or renationalise basic research, and would allocate to scientific teams the funds needed for research into emerging viruses and other diseases.

Such a government would proceed immediately with the requisition of residential buildings and would house all homeless and badly-housed people, for whom the “containment” measures that have been announced are meaningless as long as they do not have a home.

Such a government would decree an immediate halt to evictions, it would declare a moratorium on the payment of rent and rental charges, it would decide to immediately ban lay-offs and job-cuts. Such a government would order price controls on basic necessities and medicines, in view of the fact that the major retail chains and pharmacy chains are pushing up prices everywhere on the pretext of the pandemic and the economic crisis.

Especially in order to do this, such a government would requisition the big powers’ military budgets, which today continue to fund imperialism’s military interventions against the peoples. More generally and irrespective of the country, such a government would redirect credits allocated to the military towards the needs of the hospitals.

Such a government would immediately stop servicing both the domestic and external debt. It would confiscate the billions tied up in speculation (especially the speculation currently being carried out by the big corporations in relation to the fall in the value of their own shares!) and apply them to servicing the healthcare needs of the vast majority.

Because a government that would take such measures which are needed for the survival of working people, measures that are contradictory to the demands of the capitalist class, would not hesitate to break with that class.

For our part, organised in the OCRFI and fighting for the reconstitution of the Fourth International, in each of our countries we declare ourselves in favour of forming such governments that will exclusively serve the interests of the vast majority, and we will support any step by the working-class organisations in this direction. Governments that will not hesitate to requisition the pharmaceutical corporations, large companies and the enormous assets of the banks in order to fund measures

for protecting the urban workers, rural workers and the youth.

But it must be recognised that today, not one of the current capitalist governments – of whichever political label – wants to go down this path.

Rather, even as they talk of “waging war” on the pandemic, they are all refusing to tackle the sacrosanct private ownership of the means of production, because as far as they are concerned, protecting private ownership takes priority way ahead of the needs of working people.

Not only are they not taking the necessary measures, they are using the pandemic and the crisis to reinforce all existing anti-working-class and anti-democratic measures.

The US administration in particular, by maintaining and ramping up its criminal sanctions against Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, Zimbabwe and other countries, is taking advantage of the pandemic in an attempt to increase the pressure on the nations.

And what is there to say about the open-air prison that is the Gaza Strip, one of the world’s most densely populated territories, where, as the result of 14 years of murderous blockade imposed with the complicity of the “international community”, more than 2 million Palestinians have barely 50 testing kits and 100 protection masks available to them?

And what is there to say about the millions of refugees who have been driven from their homes by imperialism’s wars, with tens of thousands of them penned inside unhealthy camps in the Greek islands, to whom the European Union and all of its governments are refusing to grant asylum and thus delivering them up to illness?

So, despite their resounding declarations and their current promises, all of the capitalist governments are guilty and responsible for the barbarism that is being revealed by the pandemic.

In these conditions, is it not shameful to see the leaders of the political organisations that speak in the workers’ name rally round in a Sacred Union (2) with the capitalist governments in several countries around the world?

Is it not shameful to see parties that speak in the workers’ name support the existing capitalist governments, precisely at a time when the latter are passing “state of emergency” measures in the various parliaments, measures that are extending the capitalist governments’ offensive against social gains and democratic rights?

Although they know that the health measures for slowing down the pandemic are necessary, nevertheless the workers do not conclude from this that they must fall into the trap that is being set for them in the form of a Sacred Union with the exploiters and their governments.

The workers are entitled to demand of every organisation that speaks in their name that it immediately breaks with the Sacred Union which their leaders have established with the capitalist governments.

By contrast, in recent days we have seen a big increase in strikes, wildcat strikes, work stoppages, threats of strike action, collective workers’ initiatives and other class-based action in the United States, Italy, France, Algeria, Chile, Peru and other countries, where the workers

together with their trade union organisations are refusing to be forced to carry on working without any protection from the pandemic.

In many countries, we have seen the workers refuse to allow the capitalist governments to use the current crisis to increase all of the attacks on the gains won through the class struggle and on democratic rights, just as they are rejecting the capitalists' calls to make them pay for "their" crisis and its consequences.

In China, as soon as the pandemic started to slow down, we have seen the workers resume strike action and mass protests to impose their rights.

More than ever, the workers can only count on their own strength, as stated in the words of the workers' international song, *The Internationale*: "Our own right hand the chains must shiver: Chains of hatred, greed and fear."

For our part, organised in the OCRFI and fighting for the reconstitution of the Fourth International, we affirm that the events which humankind is living through today confirm the validity of the class struggle, the fight to put an end to the failed system of capitalism based on private ownership of the means of production.

The events confirm the validity of the fight for a government that will safeguard working people that will carry out the structural changes which are needed for the benefit of the vast majority, in other words the fight for socialism.

No more and no less, we are dealing with defending and preserving human civilisation.

The organisations, groups and activists around the world that are fighting for the reconstitution of the Fourth International know that in that fight, they are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the workers, activists, youth,

and the political tendencies and currents that are seeking to preserve the independence of the working class and its organisations.

And in particular, they are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with all those who, in more than 50 countries, are preparing the success of the World Conference Against War and Exploitation, For a Workers' International, which will take place on 5-6 November 2020 in Paris.

For an end to war and exploitation!

For an end to capitalist barbarism!

For the defence of humankind and civilisation!

Join the struggle of the Fourth International, join the ranks of the OCRFI organisations!

**24 March 2020**

(1) The OCRFI condemns in the strongest possible terms the racist statements by Trump and his acolytes, accusing China of being responsible for the coronavirus. The truth is that the Chinese bureaucracy, after denying the epidemic and repressing those who sounded the alarm, was forced to mobilise the vast resources under state ownership, building new hospitals in a matter of days and taking measures to contain epidemic, an objective that is currently being reached in China...which is not the case in any of the main capitalist powers in Europe and North America.

Similarly, whatever point of view one might have regarding the policy of the Cuban bureaucracy, the fact remains that Cuban doctors have been sent to the countries that have been worst hit, despite decades of the criminal blockade to which Cuba has been subjected.

(2) Translator's note: The *union sacrée* or Sacred Union was a political truce in France during the First World War, in which a significant part of the socialist movement agreed not to oppose the government or call any strike, in the name of patriotism.

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### **This statement is endorsed by:**

**Afghanistan:** OCRFI activists in Afghanistan

**Algeria:** Organising Committee of International Socialists of Algeria (COSI)

**Azania-South Africa:** Azanian section of the Fourth International (AS-FI)

**Bangladesh:** Bangladeshi section of the Fourth International

**Belgium:** Internationalist Socialist Organisation (OSI), Belgian section of the Fourth International

**Benin:** Liaison Committee of Benin Trotskyists (CLTB)

**Brazil:** Internationalist Communist Organisation (OCI), Brazilian organisation linked with the OCRFI

**Britain:** Charles Charalambous, editor of *Labour Internationalist*, publication of the British supporters of the OCRFI

**Burundi:** Burundian section of the Fourth International

**Canada:** Liaison Committee of Trotskyists in Canada – OCRFI

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**France:** Internationalist Communist Tendency (TCI) of the POID, French section of the Fourth International (member of the OCRFI)

**Germany:** German section of the OCRFI

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**Haiti:** Berthony Dupont, *Haiti Liberté* [Haiti Freedom], member of the IWC

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**India:** *Spark* group, Franklyn D'Souza, Subhas Naik

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**Switzerland:** Wolfgang Eichenberger, on behalf of *Tribune ouvrière* [Labour Tribune]

**Togo:** Steve, Togolese activist of the Fourth International  
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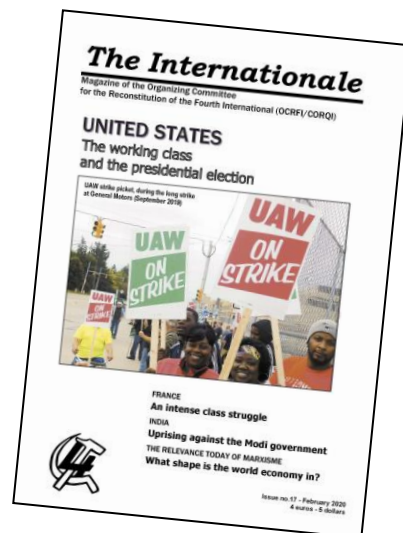
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