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# Building the International today

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## **Description:**

Since our 13th World Congress in 1991, the balance of forces has continued to deteriorate for the toiling masses, in the framework of the general trends noted and analysed in the resolution on the world situation that we adopted at that congress. The international dialectic of struggles has had a negative effect, bringing about setbacks, defeats or isolation of many emancipation movements.

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**1. Since our 13th World Congress in 1991, the balance of forces has continued to deteriorate for the toiling masses, in the framework of the general trends noted and analysed in the resolution on the world situation that we adopted at that congress. The international dialectic of struggles has had a negative effect, bringing about setbacks, defeats or isolation of many emancipation movements. Our own current has been affected and weakened by this negative dialectic, a result that could hardly be avoided in an organization unprotected by any sectarian shell to protect it from the contagion of the real course of social and political struggles.**

The final collapse of the Stalinist system in the USSR led to a broad offensive of pro-capitalist sections of the bureaucracy and other supporters of the generalization of the market economy and privatizations. The chauvinistic and bellicose drift of most of the national movements proliferating in the debris of bureaucratic "socialism" has been accentuated. This reactionary evolution is explained in large measure by the decline of the workers' movement and the radicalization in the imperialist countries, since the recession of the mid-1970s.

More generally, all the social movements which are still developing at different rates in different countries-against imperialist oppression, austerity, the harmful effects of the market economy, environmental dangers, women's oppression, militarism, etc.-are still very fragmented. The project of a socialist society offering an alternative both to capitalism and to the disastrous experiences of bureaucratic "socialism", lacks credibility: it is severely hampered by the balance sheet of Stalinism, of social democracy, and of populist nationalism in the "third world", as well as by the weakness of those who put it forward today.

In a large number of dominated countries, broad vanguard forces are now sceptical about the chances of success of a revolutionary break with imperialism; and sceptical about the possibilities of taking power and keeping it, given the new world balance of power. Other forces, and not the least important, have broken openly with this perspective: in Latin America alone, this is true for parts of the former leadership of the ERP/FMLN and of the FSLN leadership, as well as one current in the Brazilian PT.

In such a context, the main trend is adaptation and compromise in the name of realism. Under the impact of the crisis and of the inadequacy or sheer lack of perspectives, a chain reaction of political forces moving rightward has turned into a landslide. This is the result both of transformations resulting from changes that have accumulated over a long period, particularly affecting the mass base of the big parties, and of more or less sudden turns by movements whose kind of social roots makes drifts in any direction possible. Thus bourgeois populism, like social democracy, has veered toward a "social" version of neo-liberalism; the Stalinist parties have completed their social-democratization; and many ex-revolutionaries have adopted the most right-wing, stageist Stalinist positions, when they have not actually "leaped over stages" in their own way in order to merge into the "social" neo-liberal haze.

In these circumstances, revolutionary internationalism appears as utopia. But the historically unprecedented globalization of the world economy-capital internationalization, role of multinationals, globalization of the market which functions now simultaneously under the development of communication technology, growing share of international exchange in relation to national economies, etc.-; the globalization of labour, whether it is brought about through work-force migration or through the movement of capital and industries; the globalization of politics and of imperialist war, in the epoch of grand coalitions under the leadership of the US world cop: all of this combines powerfully to make the need for a workers' International, engaged in the fight against planetary capital and its local detachments, more compelling than ever.

Since political cycles are never entirely detached from socio-economic cycles, intransigent revolutionary hopes can draw sustenance from the strong tendency toward worsening social tensions, in the context of a capitalism which will be incapable of preventing impoverishment from being immediately seen for what it is. Illusions about a triumphant neo-liberalism rising up over the ruins of the Berlin Wall have thus already largely given way to a deep scepticism, which today is turning against really existing capitalism. The swaggering vainglory of imperialisms that, without the slightest danger to themselves, defeated the mirage of "the world's fourth largest army" in Iraq, has largely been dissipated today by the impotence that they have shown in Bosnia, Somalia and even Haiti. Bush buried the Vietnam syndrome too soon. The advantage gained from the impressive mobilization against US aggression in Vietnam continues to restrict the interventionist capacity of the greatest military power of all time.

So there is no lack of reasons for keeping the flame of revolutionary hope burning. But a new accumulation of mass experiences, partial victories and radicalization of new generations is needed to bring together all the conditions for a new leap forward in building vanguard organizations that will be both revolutionary and internationalist. The crisis of the revolutionary vanguard can in fact no longer be posed in the terms of the 1930s. Today it is not only a matter of changing the bankrupt leaderships. The necessary recomposition will not be limited to a change in the balance of power within the organized workers' movement as it exists today. It has to go through the gradual reorganization of the different emancipatory social movements internationally. This will be a long process, which may be accelerated by certain big events in the world class struggle.

2. Nonetheless, the general trends of the global situation weigh on the different national situations in an unequal manner, combining with the local structural or temporary specificities.

What is in any event certain is that a world without mass struggles or big social clashes is a chimera. The-often catastrophic-social and environmental impact of the world crisis of capitalism both in the advanced and in the under-developed countries, the breakthrough of new generations in the arena of social struggles as well as the emergence of relatively young workers' movements in the newly industrialized countries or the countries undergoing partial industrialization, the catastrophic consequences of the transition to a market economy for the inhabitants of the post-Stalinist countries, are all factors of struggle which, far from withering away, are growing.

The collapse of the Stalinist system has had the positive effect of seriously shaking sectarian prejudices against us in the ranks of working-class, trade-union and political vanguards. The triumphalism of capital has also had the effect of encouraging the unification of all anti-capitalists, who are now conscious of their weakness. We are better able today to build up relationships of activist solidarity and unity in struggle with forces who until quite recently balked at the very idea of talking to us, particularly in the industrialized countries. Our international network gives us the advantage of being able to make a decisive contribution to the coming-together of anti-capitalist forces-particularly at the European level, where the need for such a coming-together has become completely obvious in face of the capitalist unification taking place, whatever its stops and starts. But our weakness is still a serious hindrance in this area, and social-democratic reformism, which is involved in building up capitalist Europe, still has a credibility that is incomparably greater than ours, despite its rebuffs in dealing with the crisis.

Besides, insofar as, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has not existed a state which can be presented in any credible way as a "rearguard" or a "big brother" of the anti-imperialist movement, it will be possible to enter into a renewed and-hopefully-more serene debate with our revolutionary interlocutors in the dependent countries on the definition of a new internationalism, free of any bureaucratic or paternalistic domination. It is true, however, that in the current situation, after experiences such as the isolation of the Nicaraguan revolution, the process of partial and negotiated solutions in South Africa or the suffocation of Cuba, social-democracy will not fail to use its diplomatic networks and its position in national and international institutions to undermine the traditions of militant solidarity.

So, we should grasp the scope of this contradiction: the current situation combines a crisis of the international

workers' movement, which opens new perspectives for discussions and political recomposition in the medium term, and a social and ideological balance of power which blocks, for the time being, all possibilities of a qualitative growing over in building a revolutionary vanguard on a world scale. This contradiction is what should guide our policy for building the International today.

3. Many organizations coming from traditions other than ours and which maintain their revolutionary aims are led to revise their historic reference points in the light of the final balance-sheet of Stalinism and the crumbling of the so-called "socialist camp". Even though we are convinced that our own analysis of Stalinism has, essentially, stood the test of time and done it better than any other theory, we do not deny the fact that the global political turmoil has affected, on this question, the considerations which in the past served to historically delimit the "Trotskyist" current from the others within the far left of which we are a part.

Thus, the analysis of the Stalinist Soviet Union, the identification with the historical struggle of the Russian Left Opposition, and with the trajectory of the Fourth International since the Second World War will little by little lose their distinguishing character in the constitution of revolutionary organizations. Although for us this is still a considerable political asset, it is however losing an important part of its direct and determinant relevance for the future fights, insofar as new militant generations are educated in a radically changed world context. On the contrary, our analysis of Stalinism, of the bureaucracy as a social layer with specific interests and our conception of socialist democracy have imposed themselves as unavoidable elements in any comprehensive study of the bureaucratic and substitutionist phenomena which can always threaten to corrupt the social emancipation movements before and/or after the revolution. This is now a decisive question in the formation of revolutionary organizations.

Thus, such a marker which in the past could seem a singularity of "Trotskyism" can in the future be considered in a totally different way. Certain historical references to splits and complex cracks within the communist movement of the 1930s will become relative, yielding to a reevaluation of the classical and fundamental division between "revolutionaries" and "reformists", if not between social-democrats and anti-capitalists.

This tends thus to change the possibilities of certain groups and currents joining the International, as well as the conditions for a political and/or organizational convergence with others in the long run. Currents, groups or factions of Maoist, Castroist or even neo-Stalinist origin could move closer to our positions. We can now envisage more easily winning them to our project and programme, meaning for them a deeper break with the Stalinist part of their heritage, without their necessarily having to identify with "Trotskyism" or fit themselves into its continuity. However, we should be aware of the fact that current changes in world politics are not leading in most cases to adoption of more revolutionary positions, but to capitulation and rapid integration into dominant bourgeois ideology.

We should also take up the new topics of political thought that interest the young generations, which will develop, from now on, in a "post-Stalinist" context, where new ideological concerns and experiences must be combined with the century old lessons once more confirmed by capitalism in crisis. Taking up new topics is not simply a question of "pedagogy" towards the struggling youth, but much more a fundamental question of our capacity to elaborate theory, update our programme and assimilate the new political experiences, original forms and themes of struggle, socio-economic changes, etc.

We hope to carry out a real mutation of the Fourth International. We hope to develop the Fourth International further, while at the same time carefully keeping its conquests from almost 60 years of existence. We want to change, but not as most left organizations have changed in the past years: retreating faster and faster backwards from positions as they are challenged by the aggressive bourgeois offensive. We would like to confirm and deepen an advantage that our anti-sectarian attitude has increasingly allowed us to have during the last years: no longer to be simply perceived as one "Trotskyist" grouping among others, but as a component of the world revolutionary movement, putting internationalist solidarity and the interests of the struggle against the oppressors over any factional calculation or any

ideological difference. We hope to welcome into our ranks revolutionary Marxist organizations which do not necessarily claim to be "Trotskyist" nor identify with our history, but which join us on the basis of a real programmatic coming together. In the longer term, we hope to assert ourselves as a pole of attraction and international regroupment for all the healthy, militant, radically anti-capitalist vanguard forces which continue or are renewed in an original way through the current turmoil in the world workers' movement.

4. The Fourth International is still, today, the only organic international grouping of revolutionary formations sharing a same general programmatic orientation.

This orientation includes fighting:

- ▶ For the immediate and transitional demands of the wage-earners.
- ▶ For democratic rights and public freedoms.
- ▶ For a revolutionary break with capitalism; for the replacement of the bourgeois state by producers' own state administration; for the growing over, in the dominated countries, of democratic and national struggles into revolutionary, anti-capitalist ones.
- ▶ For democratic socialism based on the social property of the social means of production, the self-organization of workers, the self-determination of peoples and the protection of public liberties, with the separation of parties and the state.
- ▶ For the unity of the mass, people's and working class movement on democratic basis, respecting multi-partyism, the diversity of tendencies and ensuring independence vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie and the state.
- ▶ For extending self-organization and respect for democratic rights in the struggles.
- ▶ Against all parasitic bureaucracies (Stalinist, social-democrat, trade-union, nationalist...) dominating mass organizations.
- ▶ Against women's oppression and for an autonomous women's movement.
- ▶ Against oppression of lesbians and gays and all forms of sexual oppression.
- ▶ Against national oppression, for the respect of the right to self-determination and the independence of oppressed peoples.
- ▶ Against racism and all forms of chauvinism.
- ▶ Against religious particularisms and for the separation of religion and state.
- ▶ For the environment from an anti-capitalist and anti-bureaucratic perspective.
- ▶

For active internationalism and international anti-imperialist solidarity, for the defense of the working masses' interests in every country, with no exclusions, no sectarianism, without any submission to diplomatic or utilitarian considerations.

- ▶ To build revolutionary, proletarian, feminist, democratic parties of active members in which the rights to free expression and tendency are granted and guaranteed.
- ▶ To build a mass, pluralistic, revolutionary International.

This programmatic orientation includes as many elements resulting from the new revolutionary and protest experiences of the last thirty years as from previous periods, from the revolutionary assets of the Third International and the Trotskyist current from 1925 to 1940. Our political coherence has thus been forged along the years by continuously taking in new gains and re-assessing the old ones. Of course, new problems and experiences arise all the time, demanding a continuous effort of understanding and elaboration. That is the only way in which the revolutionary Marxist heritage can avoid sclerosis, and become enriched in order to serve as a guide for mass action.

**5.** Based on this common programmatic orientation, the revolutionary organizations in the Fourth International today work together to build it.

Our International is still very modest, given the tasks needed from the world revolutionary movement. It constitutes however an indispensable and irreplaceable instrument for sharing the very diverse political experiences of national organizations with a not insignificant militant existence, especially in relation to the rest of the revolutionary movement. This capacity for synthesis is one of the *raisons d'être* of an International. It is one of the best remedies against national isolation and theorizing from local experience alone. In this sense, the decision to contribute building the International is, for the organizations which form it, an aspect of their own "national" party-building and a way of limiting the constant national pressures and the deformed vision that these can induce.

Of course, the International is not in itself a sufficient guarantee for having a correct view of world reality, and thus of the national situation which is part of it. A mistake can also be collective, but it is the less likely to occur the more there are different points of view participating in the discussion and development of positions. Seeing and correcting mistakes are also easier. In that sense, the International is a necessary condition for having a balanced grasp of world reality.

Only an organic framework, with collective discussion rules and means of elaboration, really offers this advantage, and does so in a much more systematic and general manner than bilateral dialogues between organizations. By such a process, the member parties give as much to the International as a whole as the latter to each of them.

**6.** The effort to strengthen the International must begin by strengthening and broadening our parties in each single country. Just as in the separate countries the building of the International is a question of reorganizing the labour movement. There is no ready network in place, just waiting to be used by revolutionary groups.

The two mass Internationals were built in periods of upsurge. For the Second, Social Democratic, International its base was the rise of a new million headed labour movement. For the Third, Communist, International it was the Russian revolution that attracted workers throughout the world.

The Fourth International experienced on a much smaller scale a similar upturn in the years after 1968. But the differences were great. The upturn was more limited, especially among workers. The labour movement had already

gone through several splits and the Fourth International seemed to be just one of many possible forms of organizing. There is also an immense difference between building an international organization based on a theoretical program and an organization with a program that is continuously tested in practice.

To build a stronger and broader International today implies different kinds of unity work, both in different countries and across the borders. But what do we mean by "unity"? We distinguish three different kinds of united work:

### **a) The united front in concrete struggles and mass movements**

This is and has always been the most important level of unity. When we work within a trade union, when we form a committee to stop an environmentally harmful road construction, when we help organize a student demonstration, then we seek the broadest, concrete unity.

The fundamental question is always: what is best for the advancement of the cause? Rather than seeking the most "revolutionary" platforms, we try to build movements with a broad participation of working people, rallied around their own interests. In these struggles we participate with our parties and the Fourth International but with humility and respect for those who fight on our side, not manipulatively or in a sectarian way. This kind of unity work is the most important level of our daily work - and even with more restricted party building aims it is the most important. For given the fact that our task today is to reorganize and reconstruct the workers movement, this can only be done as this movement is formed in today's and tomorrow's struggles.

### **b) Unity with other revolutionary organizations**

The Fourth International has never pretended to have the monopoly on revolutionary thought and action. Other revolutionary organizations exist around the world; some lead heroic combats that we support totally. The fact is nevertheless that no big organization outside our ranks shares with us, for the time being, both in theory and practice, the whole programmatic framework listed above.

Nonetheless, some organizations would tick off almost all these points, with an exception or a nuance (generally on the conception of the national or international organization). In general we seek to hold friendly and solidarity relations with these organizations, excluding the ultra-sectarians. That they do not join our International can derive from the fact that they come from a political tradition other than Trotskyism, from another historical evolution or other experiences... If that is the only problem, we can have no doubt that with the current political shake-out we should work towards unifying our forces.

Nothing can justify maintaining an organizational division on the sole basis of how to interpret the degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Stalinist phenomenon to which it gave rise-that is to say, if these differences of interpretation do not in fact hide contradictory programmatic orientations in current struggles (for example the attitude towards the ongoing privatization in the post-Stalinist societies). Any approach which tries to take analytical conformity as the condition for organizational convergence, without demonstrating the existence of important political consequences flowing from theoretical differences, stems from a dogmatic, sectarian and monolithic conception of the organization, often related to a not very democratic internal functioning and to manipulative practices.

Political coming together in concrete struggles and the pluralistic and democratic conception of the revolutionary party that we have to build are, as we see it, much more important than common adherence to a whole theoretical programme taken abstractly. From that point of view, we do not identify with a so-called international "Trotskyist movement" which would constitute a separate entity encompassing the constellation of organizations labelling themselves as such. Therefore we definitely do not see as a priority the "reunification of the Trotskyist movement" on

the sole basis of common references; we submit our relations with the other claiming-to-be-Trotskyist organizations to the above mentioned general considerations.

In the last decade there are however very few examples of successful projects of unity with other revolutionary organizations. It is no hazard that our experiences of joining other, much broader class struggle forces with a mass influence have been so far more positive. The pressures on small organizations with few members and too few possibilities to really have common experience testing out lines in practice are much stronger.

In general we think there are reasons to be particularly cautious in joining with other small left forces in a period like this. Things like common historical references, organizational culture and language which we would like to overcome, do however play a significant role in times of decline and defensive struggles. History shows that they can-and must-be more easily overcome in periods of upturn, when organizations are welded together by imperative needs to answer the problems of class struggles and to cooperate.

This should not be taken as an argument for sectarian attitudes. But it is an argument for seeing parties not as robots that can be made to perform the most efficient motions, but as living organisms held together by "subjective" things like pride, self-esteem, common experience and habits. In a period like this of a harsh offensive from our enemies we must understand the risk of losing all that.

### **c) Broader regroupment with other left organizations**

This kind of cooperation is not meant to replace our work in mass organizations like trade unions, student organizations, women's movements, etc. Broad regroupment with other left organizations can have different purposes. Firstly, we get in touch with the membership of the other organizations and have common experiences with them. Secondly, we increase our common audience in society, and become more credible and powerful. Even where our forces are numerically weak, the crisis of the workers movement, of the other social movements and of the traditional leaderships-in a context where the still important social resistance puts a political outcome on the agenda-creates a situation in which it could become possible to unite forces, in order to weigh together on political life and to impose ourselves as participants in the debate on strategy within the workers movement and the left.

The conditions that could allow these kinds of regroupment to take place can obviously not be determined in advance, neither in their scope, their political platform nor their organizational forms, all of which depend on national realities, if not on regional and local realities. It could be a question of either new political movements, regrouping anti-capitalist vanguard forces in a non-party framework, or of unitarian electoral initiatives leading to a collaboration beyond the elections; or of joining parties coming out from the crisis of the workers movement, which have kept a mass influence and develop in practice a line of resistance to neo-conservative policies. In all cases, it is a matter of developing a view of the recomposition of the left and the workers movement, as a dynamic process in which not only politically organized forces intervene, but also individuals (trade-unionists, feminists, intellectuals, social workers, etc.). The Fourth International commits itself to taking such initiatives of unity and to answering others' initiatives favourably, every time that we find it possible to establish links between radical forces on concrete tasks.

On the international level, we take part in all forums held with the stated aim of allowing the left political forces to debate, even if the forces involved are far from being all anti-capitalist or anti-imperialist. Such is the case, for instance, of the Latin American Left meetings. Such could be the case, tomorrow, with European, African or other meetings. Despite the fact that they are very heterogeneous in their composition, these meetings are nonetheless useful landmarks for the redefinition of the revolutionary current in the new period. We can ourselves also promote these kinds of meetings in areas like Eastern Europe, the Indian sub-continent, Black Africa or the Arab region. But when doing this, we constantly give the priority to bringing together the forces and tendencies with whom we are in strategic convergence. The important thing is to have clear and visible goals with such campaigns and meetings. It is

also decisive that the initiatives are democratic and not just run from the top down.

### **7. Could these forms of unity work lead to the formation of a new and broader International?**

Successive Internationals corresponded, each time, to new tasks linked to very big socio-political evolutions. Now, the least one can say about the turmoil in the global situation since 1989 is that it has deeply changed the framework in which the problems of the revolution, and thus previous differences, were posed. To start with, we have to evaluate such mutations and agree both on the general lessons to draw and their consequences for revolutionary activity. It will also be necessary to test in action the political agreements which could flow from a reaction to events. Thus, it will be perhaps possible some time to define the tasks and structure of a new International, qualitatively broader than what we have now.

For the time being, a world conference of revolutionary forces with no precise aims-such as solidarity with an endangered revolution, for instance-would only be, at best, a futureless cacophonous gathering. For it to be something else, participants in such a meeting should have a minimum of programmatic and political homogeneity, and a true interest in pursuing a common organizational goal. What is more, to bring together all the possible candidates for such a gathering, without discriminating against the poorest, there would have to be a prior agreement on equal distribution of the financial burden that such an initiative would imply, which would not be easy.

The actually existing world revolutionary movement is the result of decades marked by Stalinism and its decomposition. Its components are much less homogeneous than were the participants in the Kienthal and Zimmerwald conferences during World War I, all of whom came from the Second International and its tradition. So a long genesis will be required, with common debates and experiences allowing it to develop reciprocal confidence, before the conditions for a large regroupment of revolutionary forces mature, something that we very much want.

For now, in this historical perspective, we commit ourselves to taking initiatives or to answering others' initiatives favourably, every time that we find it possible to establish links between revolutionary forces on concrete tasks and take their discussions forward. This can apply to new forces as well as to revolutionary organizations of different origins evolving under the impact of the current world developments. This concerns as much a mass force like the Brazilian PT as embryonic revolutionary currents like the radical socialist left from Eastern Europe and the former USSR. It can be expressed at first in political campaigns, or else in public meetings. It can take the form of regional meetings, national regroupments, or close bilateral or multilateral relations. With this same outlook, we have regularly opened our international cadre school to other forces of the revolutionary movement.

**8.** Not only is there no contradiction between building our own current, the Fourth International, and working for setting up in the future a broad international regroupment of revolutionary forces, but there is a complementarity which is, we think, essential. We reject any sectarian approach to building our own movement, we also reject any monolithic, non-pluralistic view of the international regroupment to be built, be it a simple forum or even a new International.

We recognize and defend tendency rights at both levels, national and international. Besides, the heterogeneity of the world revolutionary movement is such that the broader an international regroupment is today, the greater chance there is that we will be led to maintain our international tendency-this free choice will depend, in the last analysis, on our assessment of the common platform of the regroupment and the weight of our current's specificity in relation to our allies.

In any case, a discussion on this point is absolutely premature. What is essential is to agree first on the principle itself of a world revolutionary regroupment on the basis of democratic pluralism. Today, even though it is possible to make

progress in the unity of the revolutionary movement in one country or another, the unevenness of these processes is such that the world-wide regroupment of revolutionaries unfortunately will not be on the agenda in the coming years. This, of course, should not stop us from continuing our efforts in that direction. But one should not confuse what can be achieved nationally with what is possible beyond state borders or continents: there is an obvious qualitative difference, an essential discontinuity between the two levels, weighing on both sides.

To sum up, we should always avoid two sorts of errors:

- ▶ Taking only into account building the International and hence turning our backs to the possibilities of fusion of the revolutionary left which can appear in some countries;
- ▶ Taking only into account the national framework and thus watering down, or abandoning, our specific and intangible programmatic principle of the international organization of revolutionaries.

Moreover, our rejection of monolithism is not limited to a defense of the right of tendency. In a broader sense, pluralism is the inclusion of new methods of functioning that are not simply juridical rights. Issues raised by attempts to feminize our organizations (irrespective of the degree of success in any individual case) represent a means of responding to the diversity of experience. The emphasis on feminization is never simply a drive to improve women's statistical standing in the organization. We have learned to introduce new internal traditions and methods of integrating and valuing the contributions of all members and their sectoral experiences in a single organization which depart from the models of previous generations.

Continuing to enrich our understanding of pluralism in this broad sense will be critical to the urgent task of renewing our ranks from the present new generation. Given the objective situation and the prevailing lack of belief in the socialist project, young militants do not (and should not) judge the anti-bureaucratic, democratic traditions of a revolutionary organization on the basis of tendency rights alone. These are seen as an integral part, which is necessary but insufficient, of a modern conception of organizational democracy and pluralism.

**9.** The main feature of today's international context for our party-building tasks cannot be the weakening of immediate revolutionary perspectives, real and undeniable fact though this is. By definition, immediate revolutionary perspectives fluctuate enormously, depending in large part on volatile political phenomena. On the other hand, the general recomposition of the political landscape of the world left affects a much more important structural factor. In that sense, and regardless of the main trend which appeared immediately after it, the downfall of Stalinism is, first of all, the freeing of an immense class potential chained for many years by Stalinist bureaucracies in power or in the opposition. It was also followed by the ruin of the anti-Trotskyist prejudices propagated by the Stalinists. A real, although modest, expansion of our movement is still possible, both in the countries where the International could not work in the past and in those where our sections can gain credit and influence among the vanguard and in the mass movement, despite the present difficulties in recruiting.

In the cases where we join other forces in a common party building, we involve ourselves-unlike in the purely "entryist" intervention in the mass reformist parties-in the long term building of a common organization, on the basis of a real militant experience. However, for this process to run smoothly, it is indispensable for us to have a mechanism whereby we can monitor, in a democratic framework, the progression of political and strategic agreements with our allies. This is why we demand for the supporters of our current the right to confer and maintain their Fourth International membership in ways which of course can be negotiated, but which must allow them to participate fully in the International's life-while being entirely loyal to the common national organization and its own discipline. Only political homogenization at the highest level-that of the platform laid out above, for which we will always fight untiringly-could justify the complete elimination of our distinct existence in the framework of a common organization. But in that case the common organization should be able to be closely associated with our

International, if not to join it. When these conditions are not fulfilled, premature self-dissolution is always a very risky and dangerous gamble. The failure of the experiment by our comrades in the Spanish state bears witness to this.

At the same time, we need to convince our partners that ongoing membership to the International should not be a source of tension in the unified framework; it is rather a pre-condition for healthy and frank relations. We should be able to convince them that our International membership is not moved by some sort of dogmatism nor sectarianism, but that for us it is a critical aspect of the general revolutionary socialist project to which we adhere and that there is no way we can abandon it. An aspect that we cannot be asked to abandon in the name of the fusion without putting into danger the inviolable principle of democratic pluralism in a united revolutionary organization.

The proof of our loyalty and revolutionary frankness lies precisely in the fact that we push for the tightest teamwork possible between the unified organization and our International. It is with this aim, in particular, that we invite our allies in the united organizations to attend our international meetings as observers. And the International as a whole has to show its usefulness, and convince the united organization that the participation of Fourth International members as such in a national organization is a plus and not a handicap.

Certainly, each national case is different from the rest. The political conditions in which the local recompositions take place are always different. The programmatic, political and organizational process is thus always specific. We do not want, in any way whatsoever, to elaborate a general theory of regroupments and fusions. Besides, the international situation nowadays does not favour the homogeneity of national regroupment processes (that could have been the case, for example, if building a new International was to be articulated around a victorious revolution in a big country, as in the historical precedent of the Third International).

**10.** True, the whole argument above is only valid and credible when related to our own conception of the Fourth International such as it has been shaped through the years, by its experiences and mistakes.

Especially in our 12th World Congress in 1985 we again rejected the idea of an International in which the national party-building policies were decided centrally and the sections had to apply the same universal or regional orientation. We have rejected the pretension, born in other times, of being the "world party of revolution" in favour of a much more sober self-definition as a minority, though specific and essential, tributary of the world revolutionary movement; a framework for common thinking and political and militant coordination of national organizations; an international grouping with a flexible, democratic and pluralist functioning.

The Fourth International is not formed of local agencies in thrall to a "centre". Its national organizations are anchored in the real class struggle of their countries, though working together to build the International, and even allocating members and material means to it. International democratic centralism is not-and cannot without falling into bureaucratic centralism-be the replica of it in a national organization. The defence of majority positions by Fourth International sections is not imperative; it is consented freely. It is not imposed through discipline, and sections can publicly express their own opinions when in minority, insofar they do not breach the limits of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, which would be tantamount to breaking with the International.

In fact, we have practised pluralism within our organization for a very long time, and we claim it to be an integral part of the current revolutionary programme. Far from being a handicap for us, the democratic diversity of points of view in the Fourth International is one of our main strong points. This plurality is exercised in the framework of a strategic convergence which naturally flows from our common programmatic orientation, and which shows through the essentially identical reactions by our sections on different major global political events, often before any consultation.

**11.** Even though the centralist conception of the International, even that of the Comintern of the first period, has to be

abandoned nowadays, revolutionary internationalism cannot be limited to simply promoting solidarity and exchange networks. The foundation of proletarian internationalism has always been, and is more than ever, the need for the working class from all countries to unite to jointly confront capitalism, which has an increasingly global concrete existence. This is even clearer when the international institutions dominated by imperialism, be they political like the UN or economic like the IMF, are more active than ever; at a time when capitalist institutions are being set up in vast global areas, such as Maastricht Europe, or the North American Free Trade Agreement.

At present, and taking into account historical evolution, what is needed is not less internationalist practice, nor simply maintaining what has existed up to now, but more internationalism, more political and organizational coordination, activities conceived and organized jointly by revolutionary organizations beyond state borderlines. This demand becomes even more urgent and acute with the disastrous rise of narrow nationalisms and ethnic particularisms, and the ravaging series of insane massacres and destruction that they bring about. Internationalism is today, once again in the century, the outright antithesis of barbarism. However, an adequate internationalist consciousness cannot wholly flourish without an adequate political and organizational practice, without taking part in building an international organization at the same time as building national organizations.

The International that we should build must be:

- ▶ An organic instrument, capable of making commitments to joint work, setting up political campaigns and activities of several sorts at the level of the whole world, the main areas, and groups of countries;
- ▶ An instrument with the means and cadres to offer solid aid for building the revolutionary movement in many countries where it is still embryonic;
- ▶ An organized instrument to work for developing revolutionary socialist currents within the reformist-led workers' movements or in nationalist-run national movements, etc.

The delay accumulated by the world revolutionary movement is immense. Unfortunately, it is not the revolution which is making the most progress in today's world but the right-wing extremism which is emerging all around the world in this new and terrible epoch of capitalist decay. It would be a crime to rely on mere spontaneity or simple solidarity to cope with all the above mentioned tasks, using the alibi of respecting national specificities. We should consciously work for this, and to achieve it an international organization is needed.

**12.** That is why-regardless of the present possibilities for regroupment in some countries and the necessary debate with our allies on building an international regroupment, or even a new International-we must unbendingly pursue-on the national and world levels-our task of building the Fourth International, the only "really existing" one. We must pursue the effort we started to improve its inner functioning, as well as the solidity and efficiency of its structures and bodies.

We must keep up the effort to help the development of new organizations tied to our International in the countries where we do not exist and where the independent constitution of such organizations would constitute a step forward in the revolutionary struggle. It is appropriate here to quote the resolution on organisational functioning that we adopted in 1991:

"... deciding to build a section proclaiming itself as such, as an immediate task in a country, is not a timeless, dogmatic principle. This is the method of sects, who consider sections as "local agencies" of a world centre (which is often, de facto, an all-powerful national leadership). For us, sections are determined first of all in relation to the revolutionary tasks in their country; it is according to these tasks that sections will build themselves. Outside of the

problem of choosing between autonomous party-building or building a tendency in a larger party when it is possible to do this in an open way, in some countries there is also the problem of making a judgement about a revolutionary organization that actually exists: is it on a trajectory of responding to revolutionary tasks in its country and therefore converging with the tasks that we have set ourselves? Or is it degenerating? In the latter case, has it reached a point of no return?

"Thus, the decision to build a section is not automatic in the short- or medium-term in every country. On the other hand, any decision to the contrary must necessarily be accompanied by an effort to diffuse our programmatic gains and our press in the countries concerned, notably among revolutionaries, with the goal of convincing the greatest possible numbers of our ideas. In the same way the International has to develop collaborative and trustworthy relations with revolutionary organizations existing in a number of countries that can help win them to the perspective of reconstituting a mass, revolutionary International."

It could in fact be much more positive for the future of the revolutionary movement and for a positive change of our own International to be linked to the fate of revolutionary or radical currents which already have a real social implantation, in order to help them, learn from them, and finally to envisage together building a revolutionary organization - rather than rushing to plant a flag in what could turn out to be a barren little allotment.

**13.** The organizational challenges in this period of far-reaching political recomposition raise another related aspect: theoretical and programmatic elaboration take on a particular importance. This flows from our conception of open and critical Marxism, from the conviction that we do not have the answers to everything, that a re-examination of the old concepts is necessary. The documents that we have written on women's oppression (1979) and on socialist democracy (1985), our Manifesto (1992) as well as the document now being developed on socialist ecology, bear witness to this wish to bring our programme up to date. So does the document on socialist ecology that we are currently drafting.

There are very many questions-sometimes very complex ones-opened by the evolution of the world in the last decades which are today open fields of work for Marxism. We should contribute with all other energy to this research and to this effort of programmatic updating. This effort will be all the more fruitful to the extent that it is a collective effort. Collective in our own ranks, which is neither obvious nor automatic, but also collective with our allies in the world revolutionary movement and with our privileged partners in the milieu of research of Marxist orientation. Our International Education - and Research! - Institute, through its different study sessions and seminars (on women, economics...) is already modestly but surely the place of such a collective effort in both senses.

We have to demonstrate that an International is an irreplaceable instrument on this terrain as well.

**14.** The credibility of a new international socialist project, in today's world, will largely depend on the demonstration made in the main imperialist countries of the capacity to relaunch mass anti-capitalist struggles and to embody a revolutionary social and political project faced with capitalism and its state structure. The countries of the "centre" remain the decisive link in any world-wide anti-capitalist strategy. The balance of power between the classes which are established there are of major importance for the outcome of struggles throughout the world. The only ally which can hamper to or paralyse the action of the imperialist powers on which the struggles in the dominated countries can call is the mass movement in these same imperialist countries. The Gulf War was a striking and tragic demonstration of this reality.

► For the International to be seen as a pole of reference it has to be able to assert itself as a credibly political force in the main imperialist countries. But at the present time, and not unrelated to the socio-economic changes in these countries over the last decade, the organizations of the International there are very weak. In Germany, Japan, and in the United States our sections are very weak and divided. In Britain we are largely outstripped by two revolutionary

organizations which have traditionally been sectarian towards us. In France our organization has been weakened during the 1980s and suffers from internal divisions.

It is an urgent priority to reverse this trend. Great attention should be given to this question because we cannot claim to exist as an International in the world today without a significant presence in the main industrialized countries. Our organizations in the dominated countries will themselves rapidly be threatened, given the usefulness of the contribution constantly made to them by the sections in the imperialist countries through the International.

- ▶ Another factor which will weigh heavily in the fight to give back credibility to the socialist project is the emergence of a significant socialist current, both anti-capitalist and anti-Stalinist, in the post-Stalinist societies. We have put party-building in these countries, conceived in a non-sectarian fashion, among the priority tasks of the International. Our balance sheet, like that of the anti-capitalist left in general, remains overall very limited. The first reason is that it is precisely in these countries, for obvious reasons, that the loss of credibility of socialism has been the greatest and that illusions in capitalism are most wide-spread. But sooner rather than later these will fade away confronted with the concrete experience of the torments of capitalist restoration. That is to say that above all we must not give up our efforts in that part of the world. We should, on the other hand, discuss with our comrades in the countries concerned on the methods of propaganda and party-building the most appropriate to their countries—a frequent error is to reproduce the traditional forms used in capitalist countries.
- ▶ It is still the dominated countries which are today the weakest links in the world imperialist system. It is still in these countries, at the present time, that there are the biggest possibilities for building revolutionary or potentially revolutionary mass parties. It is in the direction of the dominated countries that our International has directed the greatest share of central resources, both material and human. It will continue in this direction, exploring in particular the possibilities offered in countries experiencing a new radicalization.

**15.** The emergence of a credible socialist current will also rely on its ability to be seen as representing the aspirations of all sectors of the exploited and oppressed populations. This is not a simple banality that it is enough to repeat.

The Fourth International has progressed in its understanding of women's struggles and the mass women's and feminist movements. For the first time at the last World Congress, there was a specific resolution concerning the dynamic of women's exclusion from the political process and political parties and its effects within the Fourth International. The Congress adopted this resolution, thus specifying the positive action needed for women to take their place within the Fourth International.

This resolution represented an important advance in our understanding of how to build our organizations, and relate them to mass movements etc.

However, we have not adequately explored the implications of how the struggles of women express the changes taking place in society, and how the priority given to feminization is directly linked with the new tasks and renewed forms and themes of struggles that we have and will encounter.

In analysing the potential outcome of any given social and political situation, we must integrate a number of elements that arise from women's specific situation as women, combined with their class, ethnic or age status.

A starting point should be the continuing mass integration of women into the workforce—whether formal, informal or unemployed workers—although in sharply gender-defined forms. This in turn increasingly involves women in social struggles, whether as workers, urban dwellers, peasants, consumers, etc.

However, the recent arrival of women in the workforce, and indeed in social movements in general, combined with the general trend of women's exclusion from public and collective life, tends to place women in a marginal situation within the traditional organisations of social and political life. They can thus, at times, be pushed in a more radical direction and act in defiance of the traditional leaderships.

The continuing penetration of general ideas of women's equality and rights, as a result of battles fought by the women's movement, throughout the population, influences the way in which women raise and defend "traditional" demands (for example linking the fight for pay rises with a fight to increase the status accorded to what is seen as a specifically "female" job). However this wide-spread acceptance of women's right to equality is not unchallenged. The right-wing, and in particular the growing religious fundamentalist movements, target questions of women and the family particularly. Without a determined response from women such attacks will not be defeated.

This determined response is however not guaranteed, given the decline of a radical, organised feminist movement. The growing institutionalisation of the movement through recuperation by sections of bourgeois political formations or integration into NGOs, as well as the ideological attacks of the "post-feminists", has weakened the revolutionary, subversive aspect of feminism that played such an important role in winning women to revolutionary perspectives in an earlier period. The failure to renew feminist discourse, demands and ideals makes this situation worse.

This is not however simply the result of developments specific to the feminist movement, but a reflection of the general decline of revolutionary radicalism and the lack of a liberation perspective. In certain cases it could be the reaction by women to attacks on them that stimulates a general political radicalisation. The contradiction, especially for the younger generations, between the prevailing ideas of women's rights and specific attacks, for example on abortion rights, could be such a spark.

For the organisations of the workers' movement, including revolutionary organizations, to be able to attract these potential new radicalising layers, they must overcome the specific dissatisfaction expressed by radical women with traditional forms of political and social organisation and rebuild themselves on a different basis, including the idea of parity, i.e. that women should have their full place in decision-making. Such a programmatic and organisational renewal is vital for these organisations in the present period. Without such an effort including the integration of women's contributions it will be impossible to develop a fully-rounded socialist alternative.

Our commitment to integrating these parameters into our analysis is not simply an abstract one. It should determine how we understand the priorities for revolutionary intervention. This should be one of the major elements of the profile of all the sections and sympathising organisations of the Fourth International; but this will be impossible unless we act on the proposals contained in the resolution of the last World Congress, both at an international level and within all our national organisations.

**16.** A good number of today's revolutionary organizations, including those of the Fourth International, were built under the impetus of the struggles and discussions of the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. Not only has this impetus died away now but the political generation which it produced desperately needs to be renewed. This will depend essentially on a new wave of youth radicalization. But this does not relieve us, quite the contrary, from the need to make an urgent and priority effort to recruit youth, to educate young political cadres and to rejuvenate our leaderships. "Give their place to women and to youth" are principles that are more relevant than ever.

Certainly is it not simply a question of renewing leaderships. The struggles and revolts which develop among women and young people express the change in society in the most striking fashion. The priority given to our organizations' feminization and rejuvenation will also thus be a way of putting us more in tune with the new tasks and renewed forms and themes of struggles and emancipation movements.