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What future society?

Future society - remarks from the LGBTIQ commission

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In 2019 the IC of the Fourth International discussed a "Proposal for a programmatic debate". Following this it decided to pursue in a broad and open way the discussion on our conception of a new society. In this light it requested three of its commissions that alongside organizing ongoing activity in the existing social movements develop our thinking on the type of society that we want. These three commissions, on Ecology, LGBTIQ questions and women's oppression and feminism, each wrote a short contribution to develop the discussion. We publish these three contributions, along with the original document, in the spirit of promoting such a discussion which is more than ever necessary today. These contributions were of course written before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thesis 1

Part of developing and explaining our vision of the socialist society we are fighting for includes integrating a vision of LGBTIQ liberation within it, opposing oppressive, limited conceptions of masculinity, femininity and sexuality - beyond the gender binary. We work towards a society in which gender will no longer be a central category for the organization of social life. and in which the concepts of 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality', to the extent they exist, will not have any legal or economic consequences.

To achieve such a transition would include actively campaigning against stereotypes perpetrated throughout society - through families, community organisations (particularly many religious ones), mass media and through state institutions - particularly education systems. Such campaigning would continue to be a task for some time after the socialist revolution.

This will also include tackling stereotypes of racialised people which are often based on derogatory images of the bodies and sexuality of racialised people - often at least to some extent on the basis that they are seen to 'deviate' from what is promoted as the 'civilised' norm as well as the erasure of the rich legacy of same sex sexuality and of challenges to the gender binary in many pre-imperialist and indigenous cultures.

It also means challenging the fact that disabled people are often denied the right to have a sexual life or are ridiculed and discriminated against when they demand the right to do so.

Thesis 2

LGBTIQ liberation is part of a broader, human sexual liberation we are fighting for. We seek to free human sexuality from what the 1979 resolution on women's liberation called 'the framework of economic compulsion, personal dependence, and sexual repression' in which it is now too often confined. Sexual activity that is freely consented and pleasurable to all those taking part in it is its own sufficient justification.

We work towards a society in which our bodies, desires and emotions are no longer things to be bought and sold, in which the range of choices for all people - as women, men, sexual beings, young people, old people - is greatly expanded, and people can develop new ways to relate sexually, live, work and raise children together.

We want a world in which people's (especially women's) bodies and sexualities are no longer viewed as possessions; in which happiness is no longer seen as hinging on acquiring the 'right' partner; in which everyday life is eroticized and sensual rather than walled off in a domain of sexualized leisure and consumption. We want a society in which all people (notably women) enjoy sexual autonomy, while being part of a community. We want a world in which love is understood as profoundly social.

It is impossible for us, who have been formed by the alienated society in which we live, to envisage how sexuality will develop in this context, and therefore it is important to avoid making predictions based on our own individual aspirations.

The fight against any form of sexual violence, physical and/or psychological, is an essential part of this struggle. The explosion of movements such as #NiUnaMenos and the greater exposure of the unspeakable sexual and other forms of violence against children and young people not only with the family but in institutions - often religious ones - can be important allies in this vision. At the same time we ally with those forces, particularly young people, fighting for a 'sex-positive' outlook.

Thesis 3

Full LGBTIQ Liberation implies a withering away of the capitalist family as an institution and challenging the heterosexual norm imposed by the capitalist state. The Fourth International sees complete equality and freedom for women, LGBTIQ people and young people as requiring socialised alternatives to the functions of the family, which can be fully achieved only with the overthrow of capitalism. '

Thesis 4

We work towards providing socialised alternatives to the different functions currently served by the family: diverse forms of collective, community responsibility for care of children and the infirm; an economy which does not force people to migrate from their local communities; diverse forms of households and of cooperation within local communities; and diverse forms of friendship, solidarity and sexual relations.

Within this overall plan we recognise that ideally individuals and small groups should be able to exercise as much choice as it is materially possible to provide. So for example the provision of communal canteens in both residential and workplace settings should not preclude an individual being able to prepare and eat breakfast on their own or share food they have prepared with a small group. Similarly while high quality communal childcare should be freely available in neighbourhoods, spending time in small groups which include children should also be possible and valued.

Thesis 5

In most cultures sexuality and sexual activity are still aspects of our being as humans which are treated as dangerous or as the 'property' of the society - often delegated to either or both male family members and religious institutions - not the individual. But revolutionary advances in reproductive technology in the 1950s and 1960s contributed greatly to the emergence of aspirations for sexual liberation and further separated sexuality from

reproduction. A cultural radicalization emerged in the 1950s and 1960s among young people and students in the imperialist countries which began to challenge, among other things, the traditional classification of gender. These new challenges to the traditional culture included new approaches to sex.

Thesis 6

The struggles for abortion rights and accessible birth control, like the struggle for LGBTIQ rights, directly challenged the traditional notion that equated acceptable sex with reproduction, marriage and the family. New perspectives on sex and sexuality promoted a new valorisation of sexual pleasure in general, but especially for women, who in many cultures were not socialised to have an expectation of sexual pleasure. When the women's movement advanced demands for women's sexual health and information, it did so with the fundamental idea that women are sexual beings, and have the right to the sexual pleasure and control of their sexual relationships men have historically enjoyed. One of the main messages promoted in this struggle for women's sexual autonomy was that there was no one right way to sexual enjoyment, but in fact there were a plurality of possibilities.

Amongst men who have sex with men, sex workers and LGBTIQ communities more generally the development of HIV changed the extent to which sexual practices between same sex people are discussed more openly than before than previously in many societies. States were forced by campaigning organisations such as Act Up in various countries and the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa to extend sex education in schools and colleges and to advertise the availability of sexual health services (which deal with a wider range of issues than HIV) and promote safer sex practices. The gains from such activism were however uneven in different parts of the world, in different communities (because of lack of material in relevant languages for example) and at different times. Today with the strengthening of far right and religious fundamentalist forces in many parts of the globe this bigger issue than at the height of AIDS activism.

Thesis 7

We are working towards a world in which the grassroots democracy of everyday life is rooted in multiple forms of self-organization. There will be the need for organisations that represent the oppressed to continue to organise in post revolutionary societies. Women's liberation movements, racialised peoples movements, disabled people's movements will need to be active alongside neighbourhood and workplace organisations, because oppressive, repressive and discriminatory ideology is more long standing than the economic structures that gave them birth as is the under representation of the most oppressed. At the same time, we fight for specific representation of LGBTIQ people alongside other oppressed groups inside neighbourhood and workplace committees to give such organisations the best possible chance of inclusivity. We also recognize that the shape of such movements will vary enormously in different parts of the globe.

PS:

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