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Pre-Congress

A Reply to the Opposition Platform

- Fourth International resolutions - World Congresses - 17th World Congress - 2018 - 17th World Congress discussion -

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The opposition platform touches on a wide range of political issues, especially the question of socialist strategy and the potential for socialist forces to grow in the current world situation. Those are issues that are being debated in meetings of the Fourth International, such as the International Committee (IC) meetings.

The opposition platform however intervenes not only in the debate around strategy, but also raises a number of cases of what it calls '*a serious democratic problem*'. This brief reply focuses on the latter - it is not meant to exhaust the political points raised. We do not intend to enter here the debate on the evaluation of past experiences such as those in the PT or Rifondazione Comunista. The FI has been making balance-sheets of the very different experiences of FI-members in the last decades in very different parties and contexts. These are ongoing debates and to the extent of its abilities, the FI publishes in its websites and journals articles and resolutions on these debates. Such debates are intended to create a shared perspective among the sections of the FI while avoiding the illusion that it is possible to formulate some kind of 'model' that ought to be adopted universally.

Rather, this first reply is meant only to address a number of factual issues raised by the Opposition Platform. The platform makes a number of allegations concerning procedures in the FI, especially in the section titled 'C. A militant deficiency and a serious democratic problem' which we want to address here.

To clarify the episodes mentioned here, requires some clarification on the structure of the FI. The highest body is the world congress. In between those, the IC gathers once a year and consists of representatives of the sections of the FI. In between IC-meetings, there are regular meetings of the FI Bureau to ensure continuity and follow-up between these yearly meetings. The statement refers to a 'FI leadership' but does not specify whether it refers to the IC – of which some comrades who signed the statement are part - the World Congress, or the Bureau.

Spanish state

The Platform claims that '*in the Spanish state, Anticapitalistas is preparing to form a joint majority with Pablo Iglesias*' and that 'the FI-leadership' is allied with Pablo Iglesias. This paints a distorted picture of the politics of FI-comrades. In the Podemos congress of February there were 3 platforms. One of the lists was animated by Álvaro Errejón, another by Pablo Iglesias and the third, which received around 13 per cent of the votes, by Anticapitalistas. Each lists presented its own platform and perspectives.

The Platform mentions '*a recent expulsion by the majority of the Spanish State section of the Anticapitalistas minority, which enjoyed 20 per cent support at the last congress, and which now constitutes IZAR*'. IZAR came out of a break in the organisation of Anticapitalistas, the FI section in the Spanish state. Anticapitalistas is organized as a federation of organisations in the different regions of the Spanish state. At the end of 2014, early 2015 there was a break in the organisation in Andalusia. In elections for the leadership of Podemos, a minority of the Andalusian branch organised an alternative list, contesting the list supported by the majority. The majority of the organisation in Andalusia considered it impossible to continue to work together with the minority under these circumstances. It asked the federal leadership of Anticapitalistas to be recognised as the Andalusian chapter of Anticapitalistas and so it was. The minority went on to form its own separate organisation: IZAR. The debate during the IC didn't concern an appeal against the so-called "expulsion" but for recognition of IZAR as observer to the FI, a request that was denied

by the IC on the request of the FI's section in the Spanish state.

The national sections of the FI have a decisive say on whether other organisations are invited to IC meetings and other activities organised by the International. Obviously, the IC can not decide to establish such ongoing ties with organisations if the local section objects to this. Observers not only participate in the IC meetings but are also invited to international activities organized by the FI such as its international educational courses, seminars or the European youth-camp. The rejection of the request of IZAR to become an observer also explains why it was not invited to the FI youth-camp.

The opposition platform confuses IZAR's rejected request to become an observer with appealing the decision of the federal structure of Anticapitalistas on membership. A line like "the recent expulsion by the majority of the Spanish State section of the Anticapitalistas minority" however could be read as if the break with the people of who went on to form IZAR was an international decision while it was an internal development in the section in the Spanish state.

Canada

"Our Socialist Action Canada comrades were expelled, and still are victims of the same kind of exclusion now. Of course there is a political logic at work behind those expulsions."

This could be interpreted as if the FI expelled an organisation. In the early nineties, a comrade was expelled from the pan-Canadian organisation. This comrade then appealed his expulsion at the FI World Congress of 1995 but the world congress upheld his expulsion. The person in question then proceeded to build Socialist Action, an organisation that has requested to become an observer in the FI. This request was refused on the basis that there is no collective organisation or action between Socialist Action and the section.

Denmark

"Facing our own imperialism, it is not our role to create illusions on the theme: arms, not bombs. That is exactly what happened when the Red Green Alliance members of parliament voted for the war budget on the pretext that it would allow sending weapons, but who were very quickly faced with the second step, the only important one for the Danish government, and the others, sending Danish F-16 jets which are today bombing Iraq, in alliance with France and the United States."

This confuses separate things. The RGA voted for the selling and transporting of weapons to Kurdish forces in 2014. This was unrelated to the later decision by the Danish government and majority of parliament to engage in a bombing campaign. The RGA never voted for bombing Iraq.

The RGA is not part of the majority coalition. There is no 'war budget' as such to vote on. On another occasion the RGA has voted for the state budget - this is the complete budget, which indeed includes the defence budget. The RGA has never been part of the defence conciliation in parliament. It did in the past give support to a minority government coalition of social-liberal and progressive parties, while remaining outside the executive. The RGA's decision to vote for the 2013 budget was part of this tactic to avoid the fall of the government. This step was criticized in a resolution of SAP, the Danish FI-section; 'Budget 2013: A major mistake by the Red-Green Alliance'.

France

The statement claims that *'forbidding the participation of the NPA youth sector in the last camp shows a worrisome theoretical and practical/political weakness.'*

In fact, the NPA organized a delegation of 100 young comrades at the camp. The youth-camp is organised yearly by the Fourth International, in solidarity with the positions of the Fourth International. Considering the importance of currents in the NPA youth sector that do not have ties with the FI, in 2016 the invitation to the camp was addressed to a delegation organised and led by comrades identifying with the Fourth International. There was no ban of 'the NPA youth sector' from the camp. The decision to limit participation in the camp of people from the current linked to the Argentinian PTS to three was an internal decision of the NPA leadership.

Criticism

The statement claims on to declare *'the leadership refuses to allow criticism of the majority orientation of the Fourth International'* but the orientation of the FI is continuously discussed. FI-organisations who signed the Opposition Platform are invited to be part of our international activities and are of course represented in the IC where comrades defend different points of view. During one such discussion, an individual IC-member did call the approach of the Greek section, OKDE-Spartakos, 'counter revolutionary'. Comrades with different views on the issues discussed criticized this accusation.

To suggest, as the opposition statement does, that over two decades breaks of the FI with people who would form Socialist Action Canada and IZAR is motivated by a desire to silence 'criticism of the majority approach' is incorrect. The discussion on strategic perspectives and the roles of the FI in the socialist movement continues in different forms such as in the discussion on a draft resolution on 'role and tasks' of the FI for the next world congress. Questions of organisational democracy can not be separated from political questions, but a debate needs to be based on facts.

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