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Fourth International

Building the anti-capitalist left

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A contribution regarding the roles and tasks of the Fourth International by Thomas Eisler, IC member Denmark.

Our organisational frameworks in each country differ very much and even in some countries comrades who identify with the FI have made different choices. These choices - when we for instance take the examples of Germany and Greece - are more a tactical choice. Nevertheless when we describe our tasks today we share common perspectives.

1. Towards the proletarian socialist revolution. We share the conviction that the problems that humanity can not be solved without replacing the capitalist system with another system that not only put people before profit but totally abandons the hunt for profit as a determining factor. We are convinced that such a transformation can only happen if it is lead by the working class.

2. In most countries of the world such a transformation is not on the agenda today. Our task is to contribute to a development of the class struggle in a broad sence that will put the change of society as a real possibility. In order to do so we need political forces with that perspective.

3. We strive to build a broad anticapitalist left. Such a left has the following tasks:

a. Put forward a response to the questions which are raised in the struggles and in the general debate. The response has to be concrete solutions and demands that can be directed as agitation towards the masses. Such demands and solutions should not be limited by the constraints of capitalism or what would be accepted by the ruling class. In that terrain we follow the method of the transitional programme.

b. Attract layers of radicalised people and youth. In that sense it needs to a visible pole of attraction and be able to direct its agitation towards the masses. In most countries this implies being part of the electoral process and a need to have some weight in order to be taken seriously.

4. The building of organisations to fullfill the tasks has to be based on the political environment in which we are situated and the concrete possibilities we have - or may not have.

5. In some cases we are building the section of the Fourth International and have no organisational platform with other radical left currents or we only do so in temporary alliances.

6. In some cases we build parties we consider anticapitalist. I.e. parties that put forward anticapitalist demands and solutions and put building the movements over being part of a governmental left.

7. In some cases we might be part of broader left parties with a left reformist orientation. These parties like Die Linke might have some anticapitalist rethoric but are limited by their orientation towards the institutions. In such parties we take part if it is possible to build an anticapitalist current and these parties are a pole of attraction for radicalised layers.

I think the text which is proposed by the IC in many points are unclear and partly mistaken, but I supported it because

I thought it was the best basis for our discussion that we were able to put forward.

Reformism

The text underestimates the possibilities that reformisms has to win support. This goes for the Social Democracy as well as green or left reformist parties. Also the text underestimates the possibilities that breaks in the Social Democratic and reformist parties can lead to new political organisations to the left as was the case with the formation of Die Linke in Germany. Even with the relative success of the NPA in France we have seen the continuous importance of the PCF and their alliance with the Parti de Gauche.

International organisation

I don't think that the question of a new International necessarily will be posed in new (or existing) anti-capitalist parties as it might be understood from point 7 in the document. On the contrary it is one of the fields where the FI has a specific contribution. But if the convergence of different forces on the national level is complicated this is even more the case on the international level. We should work towards international networks and alliances based on common understanding of the political tasks and which are frameworks for open exchange of experiences and discussions of political differences. This is in contradiction to international cooperation that is limited to tactical alliances and diplomatic relations where real political differences are not dealt with openly which I think is part of the problems with the ELP.

With the EACL we took the opportunity put the anticapitalist left at the center for political debate on the European left. But today the ELP exists with ressources beyond what the EACL ever had. To maintain the EACL as proposed by Mathieu and Patrick doesn't make any sense. We have to look for new opportunities for convergence and debate.