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# Contribution for the International Committee, February 2014

- Debate - Building new parties of the left -

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## **I- The situation: new positive elements**

### **The balance of power between classes is moving**

“The balance of power between classes is negative”. This expression has been forced upon us for years. But it is crucial to make out the evolutions of the situation and of the balance of power with the impact of the crisis; otherwise we might be so mesmerized by our own expression that we wouldn't be able to take advantage of the new positive elements.

The crisis doesn't strike every continent and country equally and according to the same rhythm, but it reveals everywhere how the world's transformations in the last thirty years led it to its current political and social problems. The simultaneous struggles, resistances, strikes, rebellions, uprisings and revolutions that burst all around the world share obviously a common origin.

The impact of the “Arab spring” went beyond the Arab region frontiers as soon as 2011, Tunisia and Egypt then Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, Syria... The “Indignados” who draw their inspiration from Egyptians, Occupy Wall Street... and many activists in Turkey, Brazil, Canada, Bangladesh, and Bosnia openly draw their inspiration from one another. The weaknesses of all these movements were protruding from the very start, particularly the weak cohesion in terms of goals and of social forces involved, of the working people who can best carry them on, in terms of political independence of our class.

In the past thirty years, capitalist answers to the over-production and over-accumulation crisis that rose in the seventies have deeply reshaped the world economy: industrial globalization and the increased socialization of productive forces (particularly of telecommunication networks but also of production itself), global competition between the workers of the world, gatherings within regional economic entities (EEUU, Mercosur, Asean, CGC, NAFTA...), financialization of the economy, attacks against workers' rights and public services. Ways of life have also been disrupted: urbanization phenomena, real estate speculation, the size of migrations and marital revolutions that followed... certainly were instrumental to the very fast extension of the process. All this remains widely to be studied, understood.

The appearance of revolutionary processes in the South Mediterranean region was the first obvious sign of the speeding up of workers and oppressed masses' struggles. Even if today, whether in Egypt, Tunisia or Syria, reaction and counter-revolution resumed the offensive, the movement threw out dictatorships, and (at least in Tunisia and Egypt) the working class and the organized workers' movement played a significant role in it. Of course these are non-linear processes, we must avoid the trap of a euphoric vision and understand that these revolutionary processes that continue are made of steps further and steps back.

In any case, the situation of these countries is not a limited anomaly in a world situation that would be globally negative. It is the neatest manifestation of working-class and popular struggles going up a notch in every continent: right now in China and in the new capitalist hub in Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia...), among a series of regional

powers (Brazil, South Africa), in Eastern Europe (Bosnia - Herzegovina), and even in the United States where a new pauperized working class starts to shake in the services sector ("fight for 15").

### **First victories**

But we are not only witnessing more massive and internationalized struggles. There also are first victories: since the overthrow of dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, which matter, it is no longer true that mass struggles do not win. The situation in the Spanish State, with the victories of the mass movements of Gamonal, the White Tide in the Health sector and the cleaning workers in Madrid, show at a mass scale that collective struggle, confrontational politics can gain results, even in the midst of austerity. Since 2010, China has been affected by a wave of offensive strikes that often win salary raises from 50 to 100 %, to such a degree that sectors of the ruling class are openly wondering whether it is necessary to change the development model of capitalism in China and reconsider the model based upon low wages and priority to exports. It is too soon to make predictions on possible evolutions but, when our social class collects its first victories, the role we play cannot be the one of spectators.

### **The revolutionaries can make themselves heard at a political level**

One of the changes since 2009 is the propagation of the idea that capitalism does not function and that it is unfair. Everywhere today it is difficult for capitalism champions to explain that capitalism is going to ensure a harmonious and positive development for the biggest part of mankind. The revolutionary socialists do not automatically benefit from this discredit. Globally, so far, reactionary forces are the ones that take advantage of the political crisis.

However, a fact such as the recent election results in Argentina, where the FIT achieved a success on a socialist and class-struggle political basis, but also, in the United States, campaigns led by revolutionaries (in that case members of the CWI led by the British SP) in Seattle and Minneapolis, or by combative trade-unionists who break with the Democratic Party, prove that anticapitalist and revolutionary ideas can have a mass echo in the current situation.

In Bolivia and in South Africa, radicalized mass sectors try to build workers' parties, relying on unions that break with the governments that are supposed to represent popular interests.

In this situation, reformist leaderships – political and from the trade unions – lead a catastrophic politics. In most situations, they ignore or directly confront with mobilizations and radicalization processes: CP and COSATU in South Africa, main unions in the Spanish State, Peronist "left-centre" in Argentina, Syriza facing the Greek teachers' strike in May 2013, Nasserites who support the new military regime in Egypt, etc. For us, more than ever, this implies building parties that are independent from reformist leaderships, but also able to lead a politics of confrontation with them.

## **II: Building parties with a priority implementation within the working class and the youth**

### **The working class, old and new sectors**

About social forces who have weight in the uprisings in the South Mediterranean region: it is striking to see that, if the political forms of the movement are often dominated by democratic issues, their engine is essentially social, reaffirming and reactualizing the issue of permanent revolution. Bouazizi's suicide was a symbol of the

proletarianization of many middle class layers, but traditional industrial sectors also play a decisive role: the mines in Tunisia, the textile and others in Egypt or Bangladesh, the mines again in the Spanish State, the car industry in China (Honda in 2010) or the metal workers in Italy, the oil refineries in France in 2010... But also the biggest strike in History last summer in India, the workers' mobilizations in Indonesia... In France in 2013, it was also a strike in a car factory (PSA-Aulnay) that had the potential to unite struggles beyond the car industry unionists.

It's not surprising: all the false prophets of the disappearance or the historic weakening of the working class had forgotten a little quickly that the capitalist globalization didn't mean a disappearance but a massive and worldwide redeployment of the industry and, consequently, of the working class.

However, what's more seldom underlined, is that the « new » sectors of the working class, mixing the proletarianization of urban middle class and the access of Third World poor countryside layers to the proletariat, have also begun to undergo a process of organizing and mobilizing.

For example, the longest and most important strike in France in the last 15 or 20 years (apart from cross-sectoral mobilizations like for the pensions reforms) was the undocumented workers' strike between October 2009 and July 2010, with 6000 workers involved, men and women, (including 1500 temporary workers), organized with daily general assemblies and strike committees. If undocumented temporary workers manage a self-organized strike for nearly a year, it means that something is happening... And even more so, if similar struggles burst in a country like the Netherlands, where the 2 longest strikes since the 30's took place in 2010 and 2012 (100 and 135 days strikes), led by men and women cleaning workers, with struggle methods very close to those of the undocumented strikers in France: gathering of strikers in occupied places no matter their employers, precarious sectors, foreign workers, the role of revolutionary activists, support won in the public opinion and in organized sectors of the working class...

In France, the most combative strikes of the postal workers, the teachers' and parents' movements, the movement about the pensions reform in 2010, but also the Tides in the Spanish State, show similar characteristics: dynamics of extension and gathering of various sites and categories, outside supports, role of the youth, role of political activists...

Facing the geographical redeployment of industry and the generalization of sub-contracting / division of statuses in the imperialist countries, we are witnessing in the most advanced sectors of the working class, even if at various degrees, the building of a common consciousness where each one understands that we will only manage through struggle, through common and massive struggle, mixing generations and categories, regrouping beyond union, political and organizational borders, and with some kind of distrust towards the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement as towards any self-proclaimed leadership.

### **Building and implementation tasks to discuss**

If we want to play a role, it is vital to try and implement in the working class, which is the only one with the capacity to oppose the ongoing ruling class attacks. And it's the working class that has, today maybe more than ever, the potential to build a society freed from every exploitation and oppression. It's not a task that we can differ, whatever the size of the organization we're building. Discussions between militants at an international level must also lead to exchanges on the matter of building in the decisive social sectors.

A characteristic of almost every important struggle is the important, often central, role played by young generations. And it's within them that the idea of revolution, to which the processes in the Arab region gave a new actuality, is gaining ground today. More than ever, intervention and building in the youth must be a priority, linked to intervention and building towards workplaces.

### **III: Resuming the debate between revolutionaries, taking common initiatives to support struggles, revolutions and revolutionaries**

Revolutionaries remain not only very much a minority within the workers' movement, but also very divided, at both national and international levels. Trying to (re)unify them is a very important specific task, that is even often a condition for them to be able to play a political role facing the new stakes of the situation. Many national examples show it, for example Argentina today with the political and electoral breakthrough of the FIT (composed of several organizations, including 3 with a nation-wide implementation, often in opposition to one another), or the situation of the British far left in the context of the crisis and explosion of the SWP.

The FI can play a key role in the necessary regroupment of revolutionaries, because it is fully conscious that it doesn't embody revolutionary Marxism by itself and that its linear growth wouldn't be enough to answer to the actual stakes.

The great revolutionary processes (the French Revolution, 1848, 1917-1923, 1934-1938, 1943-1949, the Cuban Revolution, 1968...) always had an international aspect and impact. They always determined alliances, alignments and realignments among revolutionary forces. The ongoing worldwide revolt against the consequences of the capitalist crisis, the neoliberal policies and the exploitation share the same characteristics and confront us with the same challenges.

We think that the FI should take initiatives to try and answer to this situation and to the subsequent need for building revolutionary leaderships in each country and a revolutionary coordination at the international level.

A first step in this direction could be launching, and proposing to other existing revolutionary sectors at both national and international levels, common campaigns to support and publicize the most advanced processes. For example, even if it's clear that choices should be made, in support of the Egyptian revolution, where a revolutionary Marxist organization (the SR) plays a very minority but brave and necessary role today; in support of the Argentinean workers' struggles and of the FIT, that represents for them the first draw of a political alternative; or in support of the potentially anticapitalist movement that is emerging these days in Bosnia. With this goal, the FI should propose at once, to all these sectors and currents, to organize a common international conference.

If done without illusions and without sectarianism, such a proposition would not only strengthen the FI, its sections and linked organizations, but could also set new conditions for collaboration with other currents, opening new perspectives for the unity of revolutionaries.