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Some points of debate with the platform “Let's seize the opportunities...”

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This text was submitted by: Christian V, Janek M, Léon C, Penny D, Pierre R, members of the Bureau and of the NPA.

We have already answered several elements in the comrades' text “[Let's seize the opportunities, and build an international for revolution and communism](#)”. (See “[A Reply to the Opposition Platform](#)”.)

This is a more general response to the comrades' approach and orientation.

Their text consists of two parts :

â€¢ a frontal criticism of our orientation, where it became possible, to build broader parties rather than independent sections based on the full programme of the Fourth International as we did in the 1970s,.

â€¢ another develops their proposals (“to building revolutionary vanguard parties : the relevance of Leninism”)

Their starting point is simple :

The majority has obviously abandoned the perspective of building revolutionary parties in order to immerse itself in reformist regroupments. There follows a long litany of “failures” of this line over almost 20 years, from the early 2000s, in the Spanish state, Greece, Brazil, Italy, Portugal.

For decades, many currents have denounced the permanent drift of the “United Secretariat” toward liquidation into reformist positions, so much so that one wonders how revolutionary organizations can still be found inside our International (... and one wonders, by the way, if the comrades of the platform think that's the case). But it is unfortunate that the internal debate for this World Congress is being focused on positions like this.

The peremptory record decreed on these experiences is at best ridiculous and at worst slanderous. Ridiculous when people are talking about “balance sheet of a catastrophe... dissolution in reformist coalitions...FI sections disappear, dissolve or adapt ”.

Revolutionary Marxist organizations and currents, like the whole of the workers' movement, have been seriously weakened internationally since the 1990s. All currents have suffered from this numerical and political decline. It is an objective fact that the comrades themselves recognize in their text and it is particularly due to the defensive situation in which we find ourselves. It is true that in many countries we have gone through and are going through setbacks. This is not exclusive to sections of the FI. So it requires a certain bad faith to make our international orientation the cause of this weakening.

This is particularly true when the cases the comrades cite are situations in which our comrades, far from “dissolving,” have fought effective battles on anti-capitalist and revolutionary positions in a range of otherwise very broad organizations (new mass workers' parties, anti-capitalist groups, etc.). Thus, more than ten years ago the current militants of the FI in Brazil went from the battle in the PT against Lula's orientation to the regrouping in the PSOL of a large part of the comrades of the DS (the section at the time). The social-liberal drift of the Lula current abandoned the foundations of the PT built in 1980 as a political expression of the workers' struggle against dictatorship.

According to the comrades of the platform, the betrayal by Lula of this fight reflects, a posteriori, on the entire history of the PT and should have justified our abstaining from the building of this party. The PT was a party through which our comrades (and those of other currents like the MES) acquired a mass audience and enabled the regrouping of thousands of revolutionary activists. This charge of original sin is as absurd as indicting the German revolutionaries of the 1920s for having been in the same party as Scheidemann before the 1914 war.

On the other hand, there are real balance sheets to be made of the capacities and conditions in which to be active in parties like the PT and how in particular to resist the bureaucratic and clientelist drift. Our comrades had these discussions themselves and they were the subject of debate in the FI. There is no one royal road to the building of effective activist instruments. How to build these instruments is the subject of current debates in Brazil within the PSOL, including the experience of comrades of the MES who had taken a different path with the construction of the PSTU. We could also discuss the differences that led to the present division of our comrades of Marea Socialista in Venezuela. This could probably lead the comrades of the opposition platform to say that it was never correct to participate in building the PSUV. In any case, these debates deserve more than a few peremptory sentences.

As for Rifondazione (Communist Refoundation Party - PRC), slander prevails over ridicule. In 2006, Sinistra Critica, then a minority in Rifondazione, opposed the participation of the PRC in the Prodi government. It was precisely our comrade Franco Turigliatto, who, by his refusal to vote for the intervention in Afghanistan, provoked Prodi's fall to a minority in the Senate in February 2007, followed by his resignation, and then his direct alliance with the right. While Franco respected the discipline of the PRC group and voted confidence once in July 2006, during the formation of the Prodi government, how can we dare claim this single incident expresses the political position of the comrades? That would be tantamount to saying that Liebknecht's first vote for war credits in 1914 expressed the USPD line! The votes of our comrades Franco in the Senate and Salvatore Cannavo in the Assembly against the intervention in Afghanistan, and the expulsion of Franco from the PRC that followed, led to the creation of Sinistra Critica with nearly 1000 activists from Rifondazione gaining the sympathy of the whole anti-war movement and all active forces in the social movements in Italy at the time.

Contrary to the blanket assertions of the platform text, these two examples illustrate the determined action of revolutionary anticapitalist tendencies within broad parties to build these parties, to fight against class collaboration orientations, and to organize a split when necessary. It is obvious that this battle is always fraught with pitfalls and contradictions. The question that obviously deserves debate is, over a period of time, the comparative assessment with currents in these same countries that preserve an alleged revolutionary "purity." Not only can they not claim to have built genuine revolutionary mass parties, but even, in general, they have no record of building revolutionary organizations of any significant size. The only proposal of the comrades of the platform would undoubtedly have been to continue building sections outside these parties or pass through them only briefly without participating in their construction as such, thereby constituting a self-affirming faction.

The experience in the Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal is also present with an assessment of nearly twenty years of an anti-capitalist party that occupies a central political position in Portugal and in which the comrades of the FI play a key role. The tactical choices made by Bloco and the PCP (Portuguese Communist Party) two years ago to enable the formation of a minority PSP (Portuguese Socialist Party) government on the basis of bilateral agreements would be difficult to label as "treason". On the contrary, the comrades have strengthened their political position and made clearer the need for a front line of opposition to the liberal policies of the European Union, in opposition to the orientation of the Portuguese PS.

These three experiences, like many others, obviously deserve serious discussion, not blanket condemnation. They confirm our orientation and the need "far from "dissolving" in broad parties when such experiments are conducted "to keep a political framework for organizing our comrades.

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These debates have been conducted regularly at the meetings of the Bureau and IC of the Fourth International, especially since the previous World Congress, as part of the cycle of debates on the experiences of building new parties. The comrades of the FI who are signatories of the platform text are well aware of this and were present during these debates. So it is completely false to claim as they do in their text “no balance sheet has been drawn” from these experiences. The real issue is that they disagree with the balance sheets we have drawn from these experiences, the balance sheets that the comrades themselves have made in the countries concerned.

It is on the basis of these reports that the IC has submitted to the vote of the Congress a resolution on our role and tasks that summarizes our experiences and our axes of construction, a resolution in opposition to which the comrades have constituted their platform.

On the other experiences mentioned (Spanish State, Greece, Canada, Denmark), the Bureau text ([“A Reply to the Opposition Platform”](#)) has already made the necessary factual corrections, as has Leon's text on Greece ([“Our line on Greece without prism or omission”](#)).

In any case, we are far from “is the support of political forces or governments acting in the framework of capitalist management, resulting in the dislocation of the FI sections.”. This kind of caricature prevents serious debate, including a critical one if necessary.

The comrades continue with the caricature explaining that this “liquidationist” line is obviously due to relegating any revolutionary perspective to the distant horizon, which would render useless any construction of a current defending a revolutionary programme.

The comrades' positions lead us to ask ourselves a simple question. They make such a negative balance sheet of the Fourth International, of its orientations for many years and of its mode of operation and internal debate, that one begins to wonder if they see any positive aspects in their assessment of the FI that would justify them continuing to be active within it.

It is obviously disdainful to say that “for the FI leadership [and therefore, we could add for a very large majority of its sections that support this policy], there is no need for a revolutionary compass, no need for an organized battle for a transitional program, and no need for a communist program.”

Disdainful, because in all the countries where we exist, the comrades have as a permanent concern, whether they are in a broad party or in independent sections such as in Belgium or the Philippines, to develop an anti-capitalist programme, transitional demands.

There is, however, a real debate with the comrades. Everyone recognizes that we are, in most countries, in defensive situations, in retreat, faced with increasing aggressiveness of capitalist forces.

The question is not the quantitative force, even the growth on a world scale of the working class. We wrote and described this reality at the 2015 International Committee meeting. On the other hand, the weakening of the working class and the labour movement in the old capitalist countries has not been qualitatively replaced in terms of political weight by the increase in new industrial zones, and social rights are tending, on the whole, to be restricted rather than strengthened. Therefore, the rebuilding of class consciousness and the movement of a class for itself is a fundamental task.

As seen today on a mass scale, the double failure of “building socialism in one country” and “reforms leading to

socialism through the “welfare state” is at the heart of the setbacks of the historic labour movement and in particular of its political parties. It gives rise to doubt about the socialist project and revolution, about the possibility of an aspiration to another society. To affirm the necessity of revolutionary parties is not enough to fight and overcome this doubt, to rebuild among working people a “class for itself” consciousness.. It is necessary at the same time to demonstrate the possibility of even partial victories of the proletariat and renew the legitimacy of communism, the idea that “another world is possible.”.

The issue is not pushing the perspective of revolutionary crises to the distant future. In recent decades there have been and there will be political crises in many countries with mass mobilizations sweeping away the regimes in place. In recent years, these upheavals have never led to revolutionary crises that begin to challenge the capitalist system. This reality does not in any way mean abandoning the revolutionary struggle. On the contrary, it argues for putting forward transitional demands which, starting from the situation of exploitation and oppression, trace the path to a challenge of capitalist society. The ecological crisis, climate change, is the most recent expression of this urgency and this approach, as evidenced by the text of our ecology commission for this Congress.

The same holds true for Europe, where the aggressive structural adjustment policy led by the EU shows that we can not oppose austerity policies without challenging the EU, without taking control of the banking system and the main economic sectors, without direct confrontation with the capitalists at national and European levels.

There are other examples, but this approach is detailed in the three texts we submitted to the Congress. The transitional approach is not a propaganda policy linked to the mere affirmation of the party and the call for the development of struggles. An anticapitalist and revolutionary approach requires participating in the creation and development of social movements for all struggles against exploitation, oppression and discrimination. This is linked to the need to build united-front mobilizations around social, democratic or anti-imperialist objectives based on the demands of the day, social needs and the fight for peace. This strategic approach of building social movements and a united front is strangely absent from the text of the comrades who, while talking about the need to develop the struggles, do not elaborate much on the policy for our sections.

It is obviously the same with regard to the political question, the fight against capitalist governments. Talking of a defensive situation should not limit us to talking about existing or developing social struggles. The political struggle also demands answers in terms of who is in power, in terms of a transitional approach, starting from the level of consciousness.

The demands for anti-austerity governments, for breaking with the employers' policies, for challenging capitalist power, are completely absent from the comrades' text. There can be many debates on the question of governments of workers, the exploited and oppressed. But obviously we cannot ignore an orientation in this direction.

To conclude, our process of building useful parties as we develop in the text presented on the issue, (as developed also the important article by Pierre Rousset on the question of the party [“Reflections on the “party question” \(expanded version\) – an overview”](#)) is consistent. Precisely for a revolutionary purpose, we want to regroup or to participate in the regrouping of anti-austerity, anticapitalist currents in formations able to lead the social and political fight, to take our full place in the organization of social action and mobilizations and also to advance perspectives of a governmental alternative against capitalist policies. In these formations, far from dissolving ourselves, we insist on the necessity of the organization of our comrades, to defend our proposals, to train the militants, to fight for an effective anti-capitalist orientation. This is the antithesis of fatalistic defeatism, but consistent with an analysis of reality.

PS:

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