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Fourth International

The meaning of the 16th World Congress

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World congresses are always significant moments in the history of the Fourth International. Delegates from all the organisations, currents, and militants meet to discuss the international situation, key questions of the revolutionary Marxist programme, and the significant and diverse experiences of construction of anti-capitalist, socialist and revolutionary parties.

The 16th Congress of the Fourth International, which will be held in February 2010, already constitutes an event for revolutionary Marxists. Delegations from around sixty countries from every continent will be present. Evidence of the capacities of the Fourth International to participate in unitary processes and pluralist political debate on the radical left, this congress will also involve a significant number of guest organisations which are not members of the Fourth International.

This congress takes place at a specific time in the world situation marked by a global crisis, a “crisis of civilisation” of the capitalist world. A crisis which combines economic, social, ecological and food-related elements, in short a crisis which every day shows the increasingly higher human cost of the functioning of the capitalist system. The fiasco of the Copenhagen summit is a striking illustration of it. Contrary to all the talk of a “green capitalism” or an “ecological refoundation of capitalism”, the basic logic of the system, namely the search for profit, is opposed to the fundamental interests of the peoples and workers of the world. One of the tasks of this next congress will be to review the current developments of the world economic crisis and to update a transitional programme in the face of the capitalist crisis.

This programmatic work will find new dimensions, precisely faced with the ecological ravaging of the planet. This is the meaning of the presentation to the discussion of a resolution on the ecological crisis and the broad axes of an “ecosocialist response”. This desire for updating or programmatic innovation in the context of the general references of revolutionary Marxism is one of the qualities of the revolutionary Marxist current represented in the Fourth International. This responsiveness in elaboration has been a fundamental attribute for analysing the developments of capitalism after the second world war, grasping the dynamics of the revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, orienting revolutionary Marxists in the fight against women’s oppression, or that against the oppression of lesbians and gays, to understanding the broad features of the new historic period determined by capitalist globalisation, the fall of Stalinism, the social liberal development and the structural modifications experienced by the workers’ movement in the developed capitalist countries.

It is in this context that the next congress will be one of the places for exchanges on the new experiences of construction of movements, revolutionary currents or anti-capitalist parties in the broad sense. Belonging to an international current which has ensured a certain historic continuity in the struggle against the capitalist system but also against all systems of oppression, in particular the bureaucratic states of the East, and which relates to a project of self-emancipation provides a series of theoretical and political tools to forge a certain vision of the world. These gains should be preserved, maintained, enriched.

This is the meaning of the Fourth International, its publications, activities and international formations. But today it is also about discussing a new, broader perspective of regroupment corresponding to the new historic period. We must work for the convergence of a series of experiences and social and political currents on the basis of “a common understanding of events and tasks”. The Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the PSOL in Brazil, the currents for the construction of a new workers’ party in South Korea, the LPP in Pakistan, the PPP (Polish Party of Labour), the left currents of Die Linke in Germany or the NPA in France, each constitute in their way forms of organisations of this anti-capitalist left.

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In some Latin American or African countries this question can be posed through relations with the forces of radical or revolutionary indigenous nationalism through anti-imperialist fronts. These forms are moments or spaces of regroupment for revolutionary forces.

This approach, which we discussed at the 15th World Congress of the Fourth International in 2003, has been one of the references to orient us in the processes of reorganisation of the workers' movement. It should today be deepened in a situation marked by global crisis. That means taking into account the emergence of organisers of mobilisation and movements against capitalist exploitation, the new trade unionism of struggle, the political reorganisations underway on the left, the revival of the global justice movement through the struggle to "change the system, not the climate", to create a new anti-capitalist left independent of social democracy and the centre left.

Of course such a goal cannot be summed up in a series of recipes or models of organisation. Each organisation has its history, its own traditions taking into account each national reality, but the search for convergence should be at the centre of discussions on the construction of new anti-capitalist forces. The history of the Fourth International teaches us also that, if general discussions on programme take place on the international level, the national tactical choices are made by national organisations or parties. Each, thus, brings their own contribution, enriching the general discussion. This also is the meaning of a congress of the Fourth International.