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Youth Camp

Youth against capitalist globalisation

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Plans to hold the 18th camp of youth organizations in solidarity with the Fourth International in Italy were first made in 1998. Initially the idea was to build on the work done by comrades in the Bandiera Rossa current of the Giovani Comunisti (the youth organization of the Party of Communist Refoundation - PRC) by giving them an opportunity to introduce the Fourth International in flesh and blood to their sympathizers and also to introduce their political work inside this mass youth organization to young people from other countries.

The development of the movement against capitalist globalisation has given a completely new meaning to this encounter. As the camp was scheduled for the week following the mobilization for the G8 meeting at Genoa, the challenge, to the Italian comrades primarily, but also to all the delegations - whether they came from Poland or Portugal, Sweden or Greece - was to link the two mobilizations and make the camp an indispensable meeting point for the resolutely anti-capitalist current beginning to emerge inside the movement.

Already, during the preparatory meeting for the camp in April, the opportunities and problems stemming from this coincidence of dates had been widely debated. How could mobilization for the camp be combined with participation in the broad unitary mobilizations underway in various countries? How would the numerous technical and financial problems posed by the necessity of spending one, indeed two or three days in Genoa on the way to the camp be dealt with? More money, time and effort would be needed by all the delegations.

Nonetheless, they met the challenge. More than 400 youth from 18 countries met up on Sunday July 23, 2001 in the Lazio region north of Rome to begin a week of forums, commissions and parties, based on the theme of the struggles against capitalist globalisation.

It's true that getting there was hard. After demonstrating in the very demanding conditions of Genoa, with little sleep and less food, the Spartan conditions of camp life had some grinding their teeth.

However, after 18 years habits have been developed and passed on from one generation to the other and, very rapidly, everybody got on with setting up the camp. Throughout the week facilities included a marquee with simultaneous translation in seven languages for the forums, a big covered tunnel which served as an international village by day and a discotheque by night, a non-mixed women's space and a lesbian and gay space, an infirmary, a "leadership" space for the secretariat and meetings of the camp coordination and a bar with tables in the shade - a welcome relief with the average temperature around 35Â°.

Unhappily, there was no shady space for the tents so everyone was obliged to be up early! Preferable, though, to the three days of rain in Portugal last year. Once everything was set up and the teams who were to take charge for the week of cleaning, security and the bar were established, the politics began.

The camp was opened by Livio Maitan, a longstanding leader of the Fourth International and its Italian section and today a member of the national leadership of the PRC. He sketched a picture of the political situation today and gave an initial analysis of the mobilization and repression that had just taken place in Genoa.

This theme would be deepened throughout the week.

Christophe Aguiton, a leader of the movement against capitalist globalisation and ATTAC France [campaign for

global financial reform-ed.], situated the Genoa events in the context of the international movement. Gigi Malabarba, trade union leader, PRC senator and one of the organizers of the Italian movement against capitalist globalisation, spoke more particularly of Genoa in the Italian political context.

In addition to the analyses of the evolution of the movement and its political context, some of the mechanisms of globalisation were explored in more detail; the debt - through a talk by Eric Toussaint of the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt of Belgium (CADTM) - and the military aspect - dealt with by Catherine Samary, also a leader of the Fourth International and a Balkans specialist.

In order for a strong anti-capitalist current to emerge in the mobilizations, the movements that face all the inegalitarian and unjust effects of capitalist globalisation, must participate in these mobilizations.

Nadia from Mond of Italy stressed the necessity of a feminist movement defending the rights of women inside this movement and through its own mobilizations.

Internationalism

It must also be international and internationalist and the contributions of comrades from South Africa and Latin America on the forms of the movement in their countries - against the debt in South Africa; against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Mexico; the initiative of the World Social Forum in Brazil - were much appreciated. In the movement in Europe, reference to the Zapatista movement in Mexico is very strong. More than 60 youth joined Braulio Moro to discuss the struggle and reality of the Zapatistas.

So it was a very rich political program, with participants who brought a wealth of experience based on a great deal of work around these questions and other essential themes like ecology and sexual liberation. On the latter question, always of a great theoretical and everyday importance, the lesbian and gay space is open to all who wanted to pose questions on their sexuality and always organizes one of the best fêtes of the camp - it was heavily frequented and its activities were very successful.

Five or six parallel commissions on the theme of the day, debates and other meetings in the spaces, delegation meetings to prepare the debates of the day or draw up the balance sheets, meetings between delegations to exchange experiences or information, taking advantage of the heat of the afternoon to take a little siesta and get in shape for the exertions of the evening - it all meant there was very little time to waste.

A small group of comrades, representing the different delegations, were charged with pursuing the discussion on common work in the movement against the capitalist globalisation. This permanent commission set itself a program of discussions involving a balance sheet of the mobilization for Genoa, the forms of radicalisation of the youth in this movement, how to combine building the movement with a specific activity and profile for our organizations, international solidarity (with Palestine, against Plan Colombia) in the movement as well as more practical questions around the mobilization for the European summit in Brussels in December.

Inequalities

During the preparatory meeting for the camp at Easter, we noted significant inequalities between countries so far as

the state of the movement against capitalist globalisation was concerned. There were countries like Portugal where it was practically non-existent, others where it was primarily a phenomena of a movement largely influenced by the churches against the debt (as in Germany), others where ATTAC seemed to involve above all "old timers" who had rediscovered political activity, with youth finding it hard to get a look in (the experience of the Danish comrades).

On the other hand, notably in Italy but also in the Spanish state and France, this movement had already begun to involve youth. In the few months between April and the camp (in July) it could be seen that the movement had developed at great speed and even if our comrades from Portugal formed the only organized delegation from their country everybody participated in the frameworks of unitary mobilization for Genoa.

Obviously a very significant advance, above all where these unitary collectives involve youth groups and organizations and our comrades in the different countries will do all they can to strengthen them.

Many young people who begin to radicalise on the question of globalisation orientate naturally towards forms of direct action and civil disobedience. This leads to discussion in the movement, not only between generations but also amongst youth.

Groupings like the *marche rose* and *tute bianche* in Italy are important factors in this movement. The "black block" obviously represents another dimension of the debate altogether. Questions are posed that we must continue to discuss among ourselves and in the movement.

A "movement"?

However, in what sense precisely can one speak of a "movement"? The movement against capitalist globalisation is in fact plural, composed of a whole series of movements, collectives, trade unions, feminist groups, ecologist groups, and national and international initiatives.

How can we strengthen all these movements and thus the overall movement while building our youth organizations? What is the link between our solidarity work with those who are in struggle elsewhere and the movement against capitalist globalisation? How do we mobilize against the effects of globalisation at the military level?

Nobody claims to have come up with complete replies to all these questions, but there has been an initial attempt at common reflection that should be pursued both at the national level and in international meetings.

Still, politics isn't only about discussions, there is also the practical side. So e-mail coordination was set up for the Brussels demo, with the aim of producing a common leaflet and maximizing the presence of youth in this mobilization.

Before that, there are other tasks: solidarity with the Kabyle youth of Algeria, whose movement was introduced and analysed by five young comrades from the Algerian Socialist Workers Party who had made tremendous efforts to be at the camp, as well as solidarity with Palestine, where the French comrades have organized a delegation of solidarity and witness.

In other countries the new political developments have opened possibilities for strengthening the radical anti-capitalist left. One can cite the Left Bloc in Portugal or the youth organization in Denmark - which are already new

organizational formations.

There is also the possibility of common work between different organizations beginning to find new convergences. The delegation from Greece was an example; as well as supporter of the Fourth International, it included six other organizations, some political, others anti-globalisation groups. The presence of delegations of youth from the British Socialist Workers Party or the Polish Socialist Party were also evidence of this search for convergence.

In France youth comrades are already mobilizing around the candidacy of 27 year old postal worker, Olivier Besancenot, who will be standing for the LCR (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire - French section of the Fourth International) in the presidential elections of June 2002.

They hope that a successful campaign around this candidacy will provide an ideal basis for the 19th youth camp in France in July 2002.