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Fourth International

Our International

- Documents of the FI -

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Ours is the Fourth International. The fourth, "Trotskyist", because the other three disappeared - by political abdication, or organisational collapse.

So far so good. But in fact the Fourth International has a much broader historical, theoretical and practical foundation.

A direct continuity with the socialist left which existed before the first world war, and the democratic communist left which existed afterwards. If citing our historical references helps clarify who we are, we identify with Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, V I Lenin and Leon Trotsky. The many others who have enriched our analysis and theoretical work include Tchernichevsky, Plekhanov, Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Gramsci, Georg Lukacs, Pannekoek, Alexandra Kollontai, Che Guevara, and our leading comrade Ernest Mandel, who passed away in 1995.

Naturally, one can only build organisations which can fight for socialist revolution by rooting oneself in each national context, and drawing on the best traditions of all the currents of the local workers movement.

It also means participating in, and learning from, the main revolutionary experiences of this century: Castrism, Maoism, Sandinismo, revolutionary populism, liberation theology, and others.

Open, critical Marxism

The Fourth International is characterised by an open, critical approach to Marxist theory. As a result, we have absorbed and adapted to face the economic, social, political and cultural transformations which, over the last 20 years, have changed the face of the world.

We live in a world based on exploitation and oppression, inequality and social injustice. Less than ever can the "class struggle" be reduced to a simplistic confrontation between Labour and Capital inside the workplace. This is certainly where the working class, the only social force capable of overthrowing capitalism and leading all of society towards emancipation, establishes a balance of forces with capital. But, more than ever, the proletarian movement works in association with other social movements: feminist, ecological, "third-worldist", anti-racist, multi-ethnic, cultural and scientific. Movements for equal rights, against racial, sexual and national discrimination.

Movements all of which confront the generalised commodification of life, which devalues things, people, ideas and values.

The Fourth International was born in the 1930s, at the darkest point of the 20th Century. Stalinism had taken power in the Soviet Union and in all the Communist Parties abroad. Fascist or authoritarian regimes were in power in Italy, Portugal, Germany, Spain and France. A militarist, warmongering wave was sweeping through the Socialist Parties. All this was leading towards a terrible world war.

Determined resistance

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The Fourth International recognised this situation, and resisted. We made many sacrifices, because we never did a deal with the rulers of the world: the despotic Soviet bureaucracy, or western capitalism, in either its fascist or democratic variants. We held tight to our double motto: democratic "the emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves," and internationalist, "socialism will be international, or it will not exist."

Today, the Fourth International is present in over 40 countries. Not from nostalgia, but because of militant, political convictions. Wherever there is exploitation and oppression, there is resistance and struggle. These permanent struggles take their full power whenever they carry the perspective of a socialist emancipation of humanity. They will have a chance to succeed if and when the most conscious and energetic militants group themselves in a revolutionary socialist party, which discusses, reflects, acts, and builds roots.

Stalinism has disappeared, and the social democrats have gone over to neo-liberalism. This leaves a large space on the left. To fill this space, and go forward, we need practical co-operation and frank debate between all the anti-capitalist currents, despite their differing historical origins, trajectories, and political cultures. Such co-operation is possible, and urgently necessary. In this non-sectarian, radical spirit of unity, the Fourth International is preparing for the struggles to come. Join us!