



## 17th World Congress discussion

# On the world situation and the tasks of internationalists in Latin America

14 March 2018

### By way of introduction and synthesis

This text is a contribution focused on the tasks facing socialists in the western hemisphere during the coming years. To this end we begin with some reflections on the global situation, which are critical for understanding Latin American politics.

Trump's presidency is a reflection of the decline of US hegemony. His government has deepened political instability and intensified geopolitical chaos. But at the same time a strong resistance has emerged to confront him within the United States. The greatest world power (though in decline) has turned out in the last years to be a center of global contradictions, as well as one of the central fields of class struggle in the world.

This occurs in the middle of a global "long interregnum" (using Harvey's expression) that is a consequence of the great contradiction that exists when capitalism faces a grave structural crisis, but when no socialist alternative has arisen in opposition to it. We see no revolutionary, mass-based socialist alternative on the near

horizon that can resolve or overcome this contradiction conclusively.

In this context, the working class faces major difficulties transforming itself into a conscious, organized, international class. While objectively socialist politics should be on the political agenda during a period of severe economic crisis, this has not occurred during the present crisis because the working class has not developed a socialist consciousness. It has not developed a socialist consciousness because no organizations exist that in the short term are capable of developing into a revolutionary alternative adequate to the task of resolving this fundamental contradiction of our time.

As a consequence, we see few decisive triumphs against the bourgeoisie, particularly with respect to the expropriation and socialization of means of production. But nor do we see elites capable of implementing counterrevolutionary programs against the working class with impunity. These two facts explain the current interregnum. Yet this does not mean in any way that reality is static; to the contrary, everything is in flux. Global elites launch successive attacks on the livelihoods of workers and peoples around the world. They have embarked upon a permanent economic counterrevolution against

the working class, the result of which is the globalization of misery. They do so at the cost of provoking still deeper crises and at the risk of their governments losing even more legitimacy among the masses, in response to which governments will employ increasingly authoritarian and repressive measures.

The movement of the masses, however, has not been paralyzed by these attacks. Around the world we see strong resistance to the economic counterrevolution among the working class, powerful movements against creeping authoritarianism, and strong movements in defense of hard-won democratic gains. To illustrate these three examples, in Europe we can look to the Catalan separatist rebellion; in Tunis massive mobilizations (primarily of the youth) recently arose against austerity, and in Iran the people once again took to the streets in defiance of the rule of Ayatollah Khamenei. Moving to Latin America, the Argentine we have recently seen massive protests against Macri's proposed pension reforms, we have seen large scale resistance to the coup in Honduras and in Peru the shameful pardoning of ex-dictator Alberto Fujimori has generated huge protests calling for the resignation of current President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

Although serious mass socialist

alternatives are yet to emerge, the present moment is characterized by new political processes guided by intermediary alternatives that oscillate between adaptation to and rupture with the status quo. Specifically, we are talking about the Bernie Sanders phenomenon and the growth of the DSA in the USA, of the renewal of Labor with Corbyn, the Left Bloc of Portugal, Podemos of Spain, the MNP of Peru, the Broad Front (Frente Amplio) of Chile and the PSOL of Brazil.

As revolutionaries we must continue participating in these movements. To take one instructive example: the capitulation of Podemos in the face of the Catalan separatist rebellion shows clearly that there are oscillations between adaptation and rupture within these intermediary processes and, consequently, that the participation of anti-capitalists and internationalists is crucial in defending both the radicalization of internal democracy within these movements, as well as promoting a program of fundamental rupture with the existing order. Our participation is essential to put these movements on an anti-capitalist track.

Latin America is part of this world situation, a world that from the perspective of the masses is more unified than ever, since misery and poverty are growing around the globe, and since the current ecological crisis affects all of humanity. The convergence of the North and the South of our continent is accelerating rapidly during the Trump Presidency.

In Latin America, we are witnessing the end of one political and economic cycle, and the beginning of another. The great mobilizations at the beginning of the century (from the water and gas wars in Bolivia to the Piqueteros in Argentina) brought down pro-imperial neoliberal governments across the regime and inaugurated a new political cycle dominated by the leaders of Bolivarianism and Lulism, which, despite often falling together under the broad umbrella of "the Pink Tide" were very different processes (one radical nationalist and the other neoliberalism with a human face). As these movements faltered, new

neoliberal governments emerged (with Temer in Brazil, Macri in Argentina, etc.) that have been applying brutal structural adjustment plans upon their peoples. The frontal assault against these governments is a central feature of contemporary Latin American struggles.

At the same time, in South America we see new, broad-based political movements emerging, from among which we would highlight the MPN in Peru, the Broad Front in Chile, and the PSOL in Brazil. Each of these movements have very different roles and impacts in the politics and class struggles of their respective countries. As socialists our primary task is to be a part of the development of these movements, always defending an anticapitalist program, class struggle and internal democracy. Another critical task of internationalist socialists in Latin America is to build strong ties to the rich political process unfolding in the United States. We must link the resistance struggles on both sides of the Rio Grande by tearing down Trump's wall and building in its place strong bonds of solidarity between anti-imperialists and anti-capitalists across the hemisphere.

## **The economic counterrevolution of the elites**

In recent years have witnessed a partial economic recovery in the core countries of Europe and North America, and resumed economic growth in many Asian countries. This recovery exists within a secular decline in economic growth rates that began several decades ago started several decades ago. This partial recovery can be explained primarily by the advance of the economic counterrevolution that mercilessly squeezes the already low incomes of the working class and the poor, particularly in the global south. It is a partial recovery that has done nothing to address structural problems in the capitalist economy, and has served only to deepen the inequalities and contradictions of this historical stage.

Full scale recovery of previous rates of capitalist accumulation is impossible because no new modes of accumulation have emerged that would permit such a recovery. Capital accumulation is an increasingly deformed process, dominated more and more by financialization and by the destruction of society and nature, particularly in the global south. As François Chesnais, citing Marx, has written in his analysis of the world capitalist crisis, citing Marx, capitalism collides with its own insurmountable barriers.

OXFAM data on the explosion of inequality around the globe are convincing. A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco argues that "the unending inequality already pointed out by Piketty between the wealth of the rich, and the growth of GDP can explode earlier than expected. Innumerable charts demonstrate the high rate of wealth accumulation among the rich compared to GDP and wage growth. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that the crisis is unequal between countries.

The global economic counterrevolution against the working class and most vulnerable sectors of society advances with three models of reform in the service of capital: labor reforms aimed at liquidating practically all the historical gains of the working class; pension reforms that pose a direct threat to workers' incomes by transferring part of their income to capitalist profits, and tax reforms that exempt the big bourgeoisie from paying taxes, while penalizing the middle and working classes.

To the austerity plans we must add the neocolonialist policies carried out in the global south. This time the plundering imperialists are not just the old Western powers, but also China (economically more aggressive) and Russia (to a lesser extent), who seek to expand their economic spheres of influence.

Dependence on international financial capital translates into payments of insurmountable foreign debts. We must also add the aggressive policy of extractivist dispossession of natural resources (mining, agriculture, oil

prospecting, etc.) carried out by neocolonialist powers, in a process David Harvey identifies as a new form of primitive accumulation.

It is undeniable that capitalism works in an increasingly deformed manner, and with more contradictions. The sickness of the capitalist system can only mean greater agony, poverty and suffering workers and the poor, generating grave risks for the future on human life.

The worldwide exploitation of the working class and the poor, in addition to our shared experience of climate change, brings together the masses of all countries in an increasingly singular experience of global capitalism.

In this global context it would be a mistake to place China or Russia as a progressive field against imperialism; they are neo imperialisms, part of the global economic counterrevolution. The economic decline of the U.S, in addition to the protectionist policies of the Trump administration, have opened up space for China, which occupies an increasingly strong place in the world economy, and with its president Xi Jinping has become the world's greatest defender of globalization. Massive Chinese investments in our continent do not benefit Latin Americans in any way: the objective of these investments are as imperialistic as those of the United States, and the consequences are analogous for our countries: submission and economic dependence, appropriation of material resources through predatory extrativism, etc. The Chinese bureaucracy is part of world capitalism. It is organically associated with the big corporations that dominate the world.

Trump accelerates the geopolitical chaos as the US becomes an important political center of class struggle

The United States has become a political center for the world class struggle. That has occurred since wretched figure of Donald Trump fumbled his way into the White House. Scandalously, Trump's government is the clearest expression of the period of American decline, a fact that accelerates geopolitical chaos, a point

made nicely by Pierre Rousset. // The current US president bears striking similarities to Rome's leaders during the decline of that great empire. It is reminiscent of a deranged fireman who throws attempts to distinguish the fire by throwing more wood on it!

Trump's international policies (such as his proposal to construct a Border Wall with Mexico, transfer the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, his childish exchange of threats with Kim Jong-Un, his attempts to break the nuclear agreement with Iran, etc.) are generating more conflicts, more unpredictability and contradictions within imperialism. Trump has made strong bets, some of which are mediated by the staff that surrounds him, perhaps the most important of which is the transfer of the embassy to Jerusalem. This separated him from other key imperial powers, but at the same time it represented a major strengthening of the relationship between the U.S. government and Netanyahu/Zionism.

We see a similar divergence between U.S. foreign policy and that of the other imperial powers in the cases of both Iran and North Korea. In North Korea, the US has made its most dangerous gamble yet with Trump's nuclear threat against Kim Jong-Un, which has also increased tensions between Washington and Beijing. In response China is strengthening its military capability and creating new spheres of influence in the Pacific region.

Beyond his arguably psychotic traits, Trump is the political expression of an exaggerated, extreme US nationalism known as "America First". His electoral base, white supremacist and racist, exudes bitterness and hatred against immigrants, as well as semi-colonial countries pillaged by imperialism. The essence of his histrionics is racial hatred.

The xenophobia that drove Trump also gave birth to a similar brand "leaders" in Europe. There is a social sector in the imperialist countries that blames immigrants and refugees for their deteriorating living standards.

Trump has psychotic features, but

let's not fool ourselves, he is carrying out serious policies in the service of big capital and the American bourgeoisie. For evidence, look no further than the recent tax reform that disproportionately benefited the superrich at the expense of working class and poor Americans. The traditional Republican Party and the American bourgeoisie couldn't be happier.

These policies, in addition to all the other measures that Trump has taken against immigrants, against African-Americans, against women, etc. also have the support of a significant sector of the American population. In addition, the US is experiencing a partial economic recovery (which began with Obama) which has produced a modest increased employment and consumption.

Trump's policies have produced an increasing polarization and politicization of American society. This has led a large sector of the U.S. population to reject Trump and his policies, among significant portion of whom we have witnessed increasing radicalization and politicization, which have congealed into an incipient resistance movement, democratic and bottom-up in character, and led by women, immigrants, and African-Americans, among others. Trump's tax reform leaves no more room for a radical reform of the rich bourgeoisie cut, as Bernie Sanders has argued. It was no coincidence that Sanders emerged in the context of Donald Trump. For now the working class is behind all these processes.

Trump's machista attacks are answered by the women's movement and his white supremacism by the left and the black movement. The attempt to cut the DACA program, as well as its insistent policy of raising the Wall with Mexico, radicalizes the Hispanic population against Trump. His attempt to end the DACA program, as well as his insistence on building a wall between US and Mexico, has radicalized the Latine population against him.

The decadence and crisis of the bourgeois-democratic regimes; the crisis of representation of their political parties and the dangers of the

new national-populism

Trump is the highest expression of the appearance of outsiders on the political stage that demonstrates the crisis of political representation facing the world bourgeoisie and bourgeois democratic regimes.

This crisis is expressed in the declining legitimacy of the two major U.S. political parties, which have lost contact with the needs of the masses and transformed into managers for the big bourgeoisie. In this phase of neoliberal globalization, the welfare state recedes and states are increasingly co-opted by the big bourgeoisie, and serve more and more directly as managers of the big bourgeoisie.

The discrediting of the parties is linked to the fact that generalized corruption (an essential characteristic of capitalism) is unrelenting during this stage.

Right-wing nationalisms are a great danger to humanity. They are sustained in racist sectors of the middle classes and in the desperation of a section of the working class who blame their lost jobs on immigrants. The anti-immigrant politics of right-wing nationalism centers its attacks upon the most vulnerable sector of workers and their claim to full democratic citizenship.

But right-wing nationalism is also a reaction to the advance of the democratic struggle of marginalized and oppressed groups, from the LGBTQ movement to Black Lives Matter.

It is necessary to distinguish right-wing nationalisms from progressive nationalisms that fight against imperialism, as is the case of Catalonia, and of the semi-colonial, colonial or dependent countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Right-wing nationalism is a new ideology also used by the neo-imperialism of China and Russia (who bury the revolutionary history of their peoples) with the aim of creating within their countries a chauvinist consciousness about their strength in the global order.

## **Differences within the politics of imperialism**

The politics of world imperialism is not uniform. On the one hand, there are Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May. On the other side, there are sectors that differ from Trump and its expression in European countries, namely Angela Merkel in Germany.

Trump's virulent racism conflicts with some sectors of the global bourgeoisie. For instance, the Democratic Party, Merkel, Macron in France and Pope Francis adapt to the rise of women's struggles, the LGBTQ movement and other movements of the oppressed. They also reject Trump's aggressive policy in the Middle East and Iran. These are real divisions of intra-imperialist contradictions. Let's not deceive ourselves: more "progressive" sectors of the bourgeoisie seek to instrumentalize various struggles of the oppressed to defend their imperialist policy. These sectors adopt a whole series of very progressive democratic struggles without losing their organic link with the ruling classes, whose political essence is to carry forward economic counterrevolution. On this all leftists agree.

## **The growing resistance among workers, women and communities fighting for basic democratic rights**

The advance of the right and authoritarianism is real, but this does not mean that most of the masses have migrated to the right of the political spectrum. Trump means a return of Reaganism, though with its proto-fascist ideological traits more exacerbated and more dangerous by the increase in global instability. It is a growing danger if it is not stopped. However, Trumpism does not present

the same stability and consistency that Thatcherism and Reaganism did. It happens in another economic context without the possibility of the expansion of capitalism that occurred with fall of socialist governments in Eastern Europe, and in a period of broader and more sustained grassroots resistance. Thus the consciousness of the masses is delayed in relation to the needs placed, there is resistance and a great democratic conscience.

In repressive authoritarian countries mobilizations are increasing all over the world, as can be seen in particularly courageous recent struggles in Tunisia, Iran, Argentina. The global working class continues to wage real battles against employers despite the weakness or lack of determination of bureaucratic union leaderships. In Europe, IG Metal brought together almost 4 million workers struggling to reduce the workweek from 35 to 28 hours, through a wave of work stoppages. In Greece, the hesitations of the Syriza government are almost weekly answered in the streets by Greek class organizations.

It is also worth mentioning Iran and Tunisia, where young workers flooded the streets of their respective countries, rejecting the austerity packages of their governments and pressing for more forceful criticism of these extremely corrupt political regimes. In Tunisia, the government was forced cede a series of social reforms to calm the collective anger that for more than a week reverberated across the Nation Tunisia and Iran confirm Gilbert Achcar's prognosis that the Arab revolution was a long process and that the last chapters were not written with counterrevolutionary triumphs. //

It is worth noting the role of youth and women. Students have also been facing neoliberalism in different parts of the globe over preceding decades. From Canada to Argentina, practically all of America experienced strong university and student strikes against the commodification of education. In Catalonia, the movement for independence was constantly renewed by student mobilizations.

The strike was also the method used by women to further amplify feminist banners. I haven't seen a March 8 so internationalized and class-focused for many years. A little earlier, in October 2016, the Poles defeated an anti-abortion project of the ultraconservative government unwilling the compromise. The new mobilizations of women in the US are announcing a new world strike on March 8 that will be a common internationalist action, something we have not seen for a long time.

## **A new period and a new cycle in Latin America; the relationship between Latin America and the US**

The interconnection between North and South draws ever closer, mainly after the US with Trump became the political center of the international class struggle. This means that what happens in the US impacts politically and socially all over the world; and of course, in Latin America. Latin Americans have always tended to consider the US as a country that included its peoples. Now there are concrete allies and common demands, which are linked. The task of expelling imperialism from our countries is now also associated with the same struggle within the US. A large part of the group we call "gringos" are our strategic allies.

Structurally, the US has become "Latin Americanized" because it is a country with a high rate of poverty and great social inequalities. In 2016, almost 41 million people, about 13% of the population, lived in poverty. And, because many of the "shortcomings" of our public services are present: first, the distressing problem of healthcare, dramatically underfunded public schools, as well as the soaring cost of higher education.

It has also been "Latin Americanized" by the increasing presence of Latino

immigration that has meant that 40% of the US population speaks Spanish.

The Trump Wall is more than a physical construction to separate borders and prevent the passage of immigrants. For Latin Americans it means the persecution of the large Latine population in the USA. For Americans that is also true, since latinos makeup a significant part of the working class and poor in the United States. But also, for both sides (and especially for the workers and the poor of the USA) the wall is a symbol of the power of Trump's right-wing new populism. Its fall will be a defeat of one of the symbols of right-wing populism and Trump's authoritarianism.

## **Latin America closes an historic political cycle that dominated mass movements during the 2000s**

The 2000s in South America were a period in which there was a change in the correlation of forces within imperialism in key countries of the subcontinent. The pro-imperialist neoliberal governments of Menem and then De la Rúa was overthrown in Argentina; there were successive falls of governments in Ecuador until the rise of Correa in 2007; Lula replaced FHC in Brazil. In Venezuela, the Bolivarian process was deepened and affirmed after the defeat of the 2002 coup and the defeat of the 2003 lock out.

The greatest expression of this change was the defeat of the Free Trade of the Americas Act (FTAA), a plan of imperial neo-colonization with which the US tried to secure its backyard.

This change was produced by great insurrectional mobilizations and true popular-democratic revolutionary processes, where the working class did not act as such, but as part of the spontaneous popular mobilization—that began in Ecuador in 1998 and continued with the Argentinazo in

2001, then in the water and gas wars (2003/2005) and the defeat of Lozada (2005) in Bolivia and in 2002 with the historic defeat of the coup in Venezuela.

During much of this period Latin American economies enjoyed high commodity (for oil, meat, soy, minerals) thanks to the accelerated expansion of the Chinese economy.

Supported in this process of mobilization, three types of governments emerged in Latin America. First, the governments of radical nationalism: Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Correa in Ecuador carried out anti-imperialist measures and political rupture with the bourgeoisie. Second, the new governments of Kirchner, Lula and Mujica that were not of the traditional bourgeoisie of those countries but that did not produce any political rupture with the bourgeoisie (except Kirchner partially with the rural bourgeoisie to favor the industrial one). And third, traditional right-wing governments like Uribe's in Colombia, part of this period in Chile, in Mexico, etc. In Peru (although with the mobilization of the "Cuatro Suyos" the Fujimori regime fell in 2000) Toledo rose as an exponent of the bourgeoisie and then Alan Garcia. These different types of government show how the 2000 process, although it has dominated the change with the correlation of forces, was far from uniform.

In the Bolivarian countries of Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela we see not only changes in policy with respect imperialism and their national bourgeoisies, but also profound processes of democratic deepening through constituent processes that institutionalized new constitutions.

The most profound process was that of Bolivia, where it was a true democratic revolution that conquered the multi-ethnic State, giving democratic rights to the indigenous majority of the country for the first time.

Two directions emerged in this period and were poles of great continental influence: Chavez and Lula.

Lula and Chavez are products of this stage, but they were qualitatively different. The first was anti-imperialist, and with the fall of the FTAA, it promoted the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (or ALBA), which was a trade agreement between countries and which broke the isolation to which Cuba had been subjected for decades. The second made a close alliance with the banks, the agribusiness and the big construction companies that allowed Brazilian multinationals to play a sub-imperialist role in the region, taking advantage of the relative retreat of the US with the defeat of the FTAA.

The Lula government continued the policy of former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Great exponents of the bourgeoisie (Henrique Meirelles, Luiz Fernando Furlan, Waldir Pires, Jose Alencar, etc.) were appointed ministers, privileging the relationship with the large infrastructure construction complexes (associated with petroleum, petrochemical etc.), agro-industries and the banks. Lula used the resources of the three large State Banks to favor these sectors in the country and its sub-imperialist expansion to the continent. This aspect of sub-imperialism, which was also made towards Africa, was facilitated by the withdrawal of the USA and because to a certain extent it knew how to "represent" it, playing a role of associated sub-power.

Brazil was a cushion to prevent the Bolivarian process from becoming "continentalized", meaning that ALBA and Bolivarian politics might develop on a continental scale. This was the task that was set for an independent development.

The governments of the PT and the Kirchnerism used the favorable economic conjuncture to make concessions and aid assistance, such as small education grants to poorest sectors of the population. With the favorable economic situation there was also a relative increase in purchasing power of working class and poor.

A commonality shared by these different processes is the fact after many years in government both

developed strong state apparatuses that strengthened privileged bureaucracies. In the case of Brazil, PT was an organic agent of large bourgeois sectors. In Venezuela Chavez and the PSUV also formed a bureaucratic apparatus and a "boliburguesia" (Bolivarian Bourgeoisie) that accumulated capital from this apparatus and "boliburguesía". But Chavismo was independent of the traditional Venezuelan bourgeoisie.

## **The reactionary advance**

This period of the class struggle changes course between 2012 and 2015 with several triumphs of the bourgeoisie. A precursor of this change had already occurred with the coup in Honduras (2009) and in Paraguay (2012) against Lugo.

But the most important advances of the right were the triumph of Macri in the Argentine elections of 2015 and then the parliamentary coup in Brazil (2016) against Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff. In her place arose former Vice President Michel Temer, who has accelerated neoliberal and austerity measures more rapidly and cruelly than Rousseff could ever have achieved.

The general framework for understanding these reactionary advances centers around the crisis of 2008, which was delayed in South America, and caused a sharp drop in oil prices and commodities. That crisis forced the government of Dilma to make a drastic turn toward austerity after beginning her second term in 2014. The death of Chavez (a mass leader who kept the Bolivarian revolution in force) is another fundamental element that allowed for the strengthening of the right. It is worth noting that this process is not uniform and does not occur in a similar way throughout the continent.

Thus, the conditions are created for the opening of a stage of neoliberal reactionary governments (via elections or parliamentary coup) and the opening of a new stage. The turn to Bonapartism of the Maduro

government is part of this process.

The wear and tear suffered by these governments was decisive for the bourgeoisie to advance with "characters" of the same class. In Brazil, PT suffered a major blow in its relationship with the mass movement in the big mobilization days of June 2013. Dilma tried manage her declining popular during the presidential elections of 2014 with a populist program. But when she began her second term she tried to take reactionary measures by making a 180 degree turn away from the rhetoric of her electoral campaign. Cristina Kirchner also had to take hard measures. The appearance of cases of corruption in Brazil and Argentina involving PT and Kirchnerism damaged the political legitimacy of these two political forces within mass movements. Both defeats (one electoral, one originated from a parliamentary coup) were facilitated by this weakening of popular support.

The preceding analysis shows that governments in Brazil and Argentina had not taken any major steps toward economic adjustment. When the bourgeoisie saw that the PT had neither the capacity to contain mass movements nor to apply more draconian adjustment policies, the reactionary blow of the impeachment rested on a sector of the middle class that turns to the right. Macri's electoral triumph in Argentina can be explained in the same way.

If Maduro survives, it is because he made a clear turn to a reactionary Bonapartism, used harsh repression against demonstrations and negotiated great concessions with imperialism. All policies that aggravate the Venezuelan crisis.

## **The Bolivian indigenism**

In Bolivia we have not seen an analogous resurgence of the right. Indigenous Bolivians achieved new political freedoms as well as majority representation in Brazil's national political institutions. This in a country that was always governed by the white minority. Unlike Venezuela, the social

movements that Brought Evo Morales to power have since been more independent and less attached to the state apparatus.

Evo achieved greater stability thanks to this policy and because he nationalized gas and oil. There was thus more capacity for an independent policy and also put an end to the permanent crisis of the white bourgeoisie.

## **The "new" neoliberal governments**

The electoral triumph of the right in Argentina and the parliamentary coup in Brazil that brought Temer to power open the period or stage of reaction that had already been announced to some extent with the coup in Honduras and then in Paraguay. The neoliberal governments of this period (Temer, Macri, PPK in Peru, Nieto in Mexico, Santos in Colombia and others) do not have the strength of Menem or Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the 90s, in the same way that Trump does not have Reagan's.

They are even more submissive than those and more malignant for the interests of the country because they have less pork to deliver. That is why they want to sell everything to corporations, extractives, etc. and promote even higher levels of poverty with their counter reforms.

They have all been openly pro-American, but they have had to read the pro-Yankee proxy discourse because it does not work so much with Trump's protectionism. Now also the continent is disputed by the speculative capitals and the predators also of China, thus the military geopolitical dominion is of the American imperialism installed always with its military bases.

We cannot compare Maduro to Macri and Temer because they are of different origin. However, Maduro is part of this reactionary process. His government is not the continuity of Chavismo. Rather, politically speaking it is the Thermidorian reaction to

Bolivarianism.

It is necessary to point out that this drastic reactionary turn to openly pro-imperialist neoliberal governments occurred in the absence of a serious and direct defeat of mass movements, be it counterrevolutionary or reactionary; we refer to defeats or counterrevolutionary triumphs such as the coup d'état of the 1980s; They enter a different world situation. That's why they do not have the strength of those.

## **A great battle has begun against new neoliberal governments; new political directions are also emerging**

It is a difficult struggle and of a different character from the struggles of the 2000s because although there are large mobilizations today they are not of the magnitude of struggles during the 2000s. But though mobilizations have been weaker they have not stopped, and now Peru has reached its highest point where the popular mobilization of youth and workers has been undermining the neoliberal model of Humala (son of Lula) and now PPK. In Argentina, where Macri's pension reform has left much of Buenos Aires in a process of mobilization that has continued unabated since he took office. / 1 / We should also not forget Chile, where there is continuity from the struggle of students against privatized education several years ago. Neither June 2013 of Brazil.

There is an accumulation of forces with the mobilizations, but nevertheless their triumph will be difficult. The Latin American bourgeoisie is determined to go forward with its economic counterrevolution. It has no other path in the face of the seriousness of the crisis. The policy of the governments requires severe measures to address mass challenges to their authority. This is what Macri is showing.

An important step to turn the balance in favor of popular movements will be if the Peruvian mobilization ends the PPK government; there then we would have the first fall of these new neoliberal regimes.

Peru is the country where neoliberalism is weakest and the possibility of a new left arising as a mass alternative is the strongest

The Peruvian situation requires a special highlight. In Peru there are several elements that make it a fundamental focus of the struggle against privatizing, predatory and extractive neoliberalism. The struggles can be traced back to the peasant and indigenous mobilizations of Bagualazo, the struggle against the mining extractivism in Conga and TÁa MarÁa, the struggle of the young people who defeated the labor flexibilization plan or garbage jobs for young people, that of the workers with distinction special for the teachers' strike in this case with a democratic revolution within the SUTEP union that made a new direction emerge; And now the popular democratic mobilizations against the pardon to Fujimori that have put in check the neoliberal government of the PPK. On the other hand, it was the country where the accountability measures were most effective and uncovered the corruption of all the governments of the last fifteen years.

The Movement for a New Peru (MNP) is becoming the party that channels popular mobilization towards a political solution that would mark a break with the old regime. It is a new political movement that has overcome the crisis of the old Peruvian left that was lost in the conciliation of classes with the bourgeoisie and in the ultra-leftist terrorist Sendero Luminoso. After emerging from the crisis of Humala's nationalism, it demonstrated that it was a living party that relied on a political vanguard that has experience with the old processes.

Before the open crisis the MNP had hesitations but ended up affirming a policy of rupture with the old regime by raising the slogans against the pardon linked to the departure of PPK and a New Constitution. Every crisis of the regime is a test, and this time



the NPM passed it. The agreements signed recently with the MAS of Gregorio Peral, a movement that has its center in Cajamarca, and that lead the Conga struggle, is another step that consolidates this political front that is becoming a pole for the mass movement.

## **In Brazil, forces accumulate during uncertainties unresolved of the conjuncture**

Brazil is the country in which there is the most uncertainty at present. The recent conviction of Lula (for corruption) means that the Brazilian bourgeoisie affirms itself in its authoritarian turn. With this conviction, the chances of Lula (who is currently by far the favorite to win in 2018 presidential elections) being a candidate in the next elections are almost non-existent. Lula's conviction was clearly a discriminatory measure in the service of the big Brazilian bourgeoisie that does not want the PT now in the government. It is no longer the instrument it needs for its policy of economic counterrevolution.

Temer's government is fragile. He has had to overcome two requests for impeachment denouncing his corruption schemes. Several ministers have fallen for these same corruption schemes. // The government has the lowest approval rating in the entire history of the country (6%).

During this crisis, however, the government can still apply policies of adjustment and austerity. The public stands strongly against these measures, as does a still weak but growing organized resistance movement, but the government retains significant power because there is confusion in the mass movement that essentially exists because the union leaderships and the PT itself have not been willing to confront the government by trying to broaden the resistance into a large-scale general strike. //

The Brazilian situation is confusing,

because the workers and the people have not built a new alternative to replace the PT, one which reorganizes the entire vanguard and becomes a pole for the masses. But strategically the road is open. PSOL is not yet, but it exists and gains credibility in the mass movement.

## **The emergence of new alternatives in the fight against the advance of neoliberalism**

These new movements and new political processes occur not only in Peru or Brazil. In Chile there is the Broad Front that became a political front with mass influence. In Venezuela, even if this is more difficult, the elections showed the cracks of madurism and the appearance of new electoral lists of critical chavismo. Mexico is a place of more unknowns. The upcoming Mexican elections can help to unleash the crisis in a more favorable way by the presence of independent candidates with a special emphasis on that of Zapatismo and if AMLO triumphs (which we do not consider a new process), since it is a bourgeois candidate it is not the same than Nieto or the PAN.

## **In this period, the old is dying, but the new cannot yet be born, as Gramsci said of his time.**

In Honduras, resistance on the streets of the FNRP can revive a rejuvenated alternative political force in the fight against fraud. And in Argentina MST, long a great heritage and trajectory in the class struggle along with other Trotskyist organizations have reached significant objective political power, both in the elections and in the mobilizations. In Argentina, classism

is growing with great force in the union organizations where the bureaucracy suffers a great loss of prestige. Regrettably, Trotskyist sectors are opposed to creating a joint pole for this process to advance and be a mass alternative to the old, corrupt and discredited bureaucracy.

The very interesting thing about this continental situation is that this phenomenon has also appeared with great force in the US Sanders maintains its presence and parallel to this process, but independently, the political organization DSA is advanced in geometric steps. (It is the socialist party that grew the most in the last period). It is a socialist organization with a militant structure and a democratic operation that is on the streets now campaigning for "Medicare for all", and whose candidates for elected office in 2016 won more than a score of victories in city council races.

## **Unity of action, united front, and independent policy**

These new processes and directions have a double task. On the one hand, a policy of unity of action or united front to promote mobilization against neoliberalism. This is to have a policy of agreement for the mobilization with the bureaucratic leaders or the old political leaders in specific matters. It is a tactic that global politics cannot be, since these directions demonstrate every day that they are not capable of mobilizing more than very partially and that they capitulate. Hence, it is fundamental to have an independent position, totally differentiated politically from the old directions.

## **We must be within the new processes defending a class-based, anti-capitalist, and**



## **internationalist program**

The phenomenon of new alternatives is not only property of our continent; It exists in other parts of the world and will grow because of the crisis of the old directions. All the new political alternatives or rather the addresses of them, live at the crossroads between adapting to the old regime or breaking away from it. It is an objective pressure that is put to the test in acute moments of the class struggle. For example, "Nor ... Neither" by Pablo Iglesias ended up being adapted to the post-Franco state.

In Peru, we saw that the MNP lived its first crossroads and surpassed it, even if others may come. In Brazil, PSOL has an internal political struggle against more adaptive positions, in this case the PT.

It is a grave error that the sectarian left commits, which already defined the sign, is adaptation, that is, the conciliation of classes. This false conclusion leads to their combat either from the outside or by making an entrust policy within them. Both are mistaken policies that isolate revolutionary currents from objective processes towards a revolutionary class consciousness for workers.

These processes are a fundamental place to move towards it. And that is why it is necessary to be part of them, a constructive part of them, defending an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist program and their internal democracy. So, there is a dispute inside.

The result is not predetermined (as the sectarian sector on the left says); It will depend not only on the intentions of the leaders, but also about the class struggle that promotes mobilizations as is happening in Peru and that the anti-capitalist left organize and develop inside. You must have the "firm hand"; defend internal democracy; an action program of anti-capitalist break with the regime; bet on the development of mobilization and unity with the living processes of the class struggle; dispute in the electoral and mobilization fields; defend an internationalist policy in its

interior.

## **An internationalist challenge for the socialists in Latin America and the US**

Precisely one of the greatest difficulties we face in carrying out this ant capitalist policy is avoiding national isolation and practicing a concrete internationalism. However, there is still no international real objective pole that is an alternative and that helps building this policy. That helps building this policy and makes a counterbalance to the logical national pressures.

It is a key task to advance this goal. In that sense the vanguard and organizations that are part of these processes would have to set the goal of having common tasks, campaigns, seminars to group these broad processes and within them consolidating the internationalists currents.

Our duty is to try to carry it forward on our continent and there's room for it. The end of the cycle also meant the end of the Forum of São Paulo that grouped together the old left of Latin America and unhappily the end of "the social movements of ALBA, which today are nothing but an appendix to Maduro's Bonapartist policy. They have left a void and the task is to fill it.

That means proposing these goals to MNP, PSOL, Frente Amplio of Chile, FNRP in Honduras, to quote the forces that today are having more impact on the social and political struggle of classes in their countries. And we must add to the Latin Americans the socialists from the US. They can also play an important role in overcoming the current void, opening a new perspective to strengthen the fight against Trump and neoliberalism. Because as we said, the task of fighting against Trump and building the antitrump front is ant capitalist and antiimperialist and must be made on both sides of Rio Bravo. It's not

only facing Trump's wall, it's about his destructive environment policy, his support for large extractivism corporations, his policy against racial discrimination and expulsion of immigrants.

It is Latin Americans' task to build this meeting, to make a "silver bridge" to link our demands and struggles. Defeating imperialism in our countries is defeating the big corporations and financial capitals of which half are based in the US.

The task of a new international organization that is a real pole for the fight takes concrete steps. In America it is this one as in Europe it is to unite the movements and the ant capitalists whose common enemy is the troika. The IV (SU) can play a very important role for it. It should support this idea and take it in its hands.

## **Bet on the working class and internationalism**

In all these processes our organizations must keep up the program of socialism. This is not defeated nor its historical subject which is the working class. This long interregnum or impasse requires more political awareness by the Socialists in the broader processes and in the intervention in the class struggle.

Against the opinion that the working class is asleep and will not wake up, it is worth it to look at the process from a strategic point of view. The capitalist crisis worsens and on the other hand the working class grows in number worldwide; just look at the development throughout Asia. Not coincidentally socialist comprehensions grow in the US and there was internal renewal in the English labor party held in one of the world's most powerful working classes. We are talking about the first and the fifth most powerful countries in the world.

Socialism will be international, or it will not be at all. Socialism is based on this objective process that is far from dying, an international working class.

# Combine anti-imperialism with support for popular struggles for democracy and social justice

14 March 2018

Since the last World Congress of the Fourth International, one of the major upheavals in the world has been the popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa region, which we have defined as a long-term revolutionary process in the part of the world that had been the most blocked in its aspirations for nearly 40 years. This process provoked in return counterrevolutionary offensives of different kinds but all of an unprecedented ferocity, which trapped and suffocated in large part the working classes of Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria ... Only the Tunisian people have been able to limit up to now the ultraviolence of these counter-offensives of the regimes, ultrareactionary jihadist currents and foreign imperialist or regional powers. The massive upsurge of the Maghreb and Middle East popular layers in the political arena and the backlash they suffered, with the intervention of the various world and regional powers deserve in-depth analysis from several angles.

But it has also been a test of the practical utility of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and revolutionary Marxist activists in the present period. Without mentioning those who tried to act on the spot in their country, the structural presence of revolutionary Marxist currents in Europe and North America gave them particular responsibilities to build militant links, incarnating international solidarity against all the oppressors, and supporting the struggles in the South and East of the Mediterranean for freedom, social justice and dignity. We must note that these links and this solidarity were not up to par. In addition, there was strong opposition between the currents that focused primarily on Western imperialist

interventions, deducting very partial and unilateral tasks far removed from the sectors fighting on the ground, and those who wanted to maintain as a guideline the defence of the unconditional struggle of the oppressed, taking into account the contradictions of these struggles without invalidating them, in a context of renewed and unstable conflict between capitalist forces.

The texts presented for the World Congress attempt to address these issues. The document presented by the International Committee "**Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications**" sets out to present the complexity of the dynamics at work to guide our action in future years. Chapters IX and X stress the importance of active international solidarity in the face of increasing oppression, manipulation and clashes between imperialist powers and regional powers. It resolutely engages in the struggle for anti-imperialism, which is obviously indispensable, but absolutely avoids "campist" poison. Conversely, the text "**Let's seize the opportunities, and build an international for revolution and communism**" , presented as an alternative by the "Platform for a Revolutionary International", seems to us (in part IV-B, in particular) to reduce enormously the meaning of the right of peoples to self-determination, to winning democratic rights, and caricatures the strategic importance of class independence. In the name of clarification of the anti-imperialist struggle, it totally ignores the concrete conditions in which peoples struggle for their rights, and the importance of international solidarity with the oppressed. It seems to us open the slide towards simplism and

paternalism that in recent years have led the comrades of Socialist Action in the US for example to very detrimental political mistakes on Syria, and also on Libya and Ukraine. How not to "seize the opportunities ..." on the uprisings in the Middle East

In their text for the World Congress, the comrades who signed the text "Let's seize the opportunities..." affirm two principles that we share globally: "Anti-imperialism should be a central focus of our propaganda and activity. We are against all imperialist interventions and for the withdrawal of all imperialist troops," and "We defend the peoples' right to self-determination,". This should go alongside support for the mobilizations of the oppressed peoples. But how can this support be concretized, when comrades pile up taboos, especially on the Middle East? Their real priority concern is the fight against the illusions that the masses can have:

*"That is why we do not endorse calls to action that ask our government to provide weapons to the Kurds. We do not foster the illusion that our bourgeoisie could defend the peoples of the region.*

Facing our own imperialism, it is not our role to create illusions on the theme: arms, not bombs."

*"But we do not follow the leadership of any national bourgeoisie, even if it comes from an oppressed nation. In the oppressed nations we support a balance between the democratic fight for the right to self-determination and the fight for a society without classes. It means that, according to our strategy, the struggle for national freedom can be useful for working*

*class emancipation only when led by the working class itself."*

Far from being unconditional, support for the right of peoples to self-determination and national emancipation becomes for the comrades in practice very conditional, so they take their distance from most unitary campaigns - in which the challenge to national bourgeoisies are rarely made in advance, but most often during the process! They do not seem to take into account either the articulation of democratic and social demands, or the dialectic of situations in the complexity of the world. They maintain an ambiguity between our strategic goals, and the real conditions of the struggles in which the tactics and demonstrations must be practical and determined in advance for those who fight concretely in terrible conditions. Without waiting for the working class "for itself" to lead the struggle, the progressives and revolutionaries of the Middle East and Maghreb must move forward according to the timescales, obstacles, tactical setbacks and qualitative leaps that make abstract lessons appear counter-productive.

On Syria, what does the policy of comrades who oppose the texts proposed by the International Committee mean? The organized working class as such did not lead the extraordinary uprising of the Syrian people against the Assad regime in 2011. Classically, it was an interclassist movement where the democratic, social and national independence intertwined. Faced with the terrible repression and massive desertions of soldiers who refused the role of butcher assigned to them, the movement developing its self-organization had to militarize if it wanted to continue, as Gilbert Achcar has said many times. The military equipment seized from the regime remaining insufficient and the liberated areas increasing under the management of pluralist local councils, the constant threat of bombardment by the regime led the people to demonstrate massively to demand international aid, both humanitarian and military. Clearly, for the comrades, the rebellious Syrian people, who had not formalized their workers' leadership and spoke

indiscriminately to "civil societies" and imperialist and regional states to break their isolation, showed, whatever their courage, illusions that could only make them lose - or agendas that do not really concern us. The stake would be essentially propagandist ... for the survivors. The comrades extend this vision to Kurds led by the PKK / PYD.

This is an old discussion of the dialectical development of the concrete struggle of the oppressed peoples, about which revolutionary Marxists, from Leon Trotsky on, have written scathing comments. The anti-capitalist, minority revolutionaries must be the most determined to get rid of the oppressors if they want to claim to concretely reveal the illusions. They must constantly make demands on the powers that "technically" have the means to reduce the suffering of the people and do not do so. Like for the Palestinian people and others, countering the influence of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalist currents to build movements based on class independence and all oppressive currents implies that it is at the heart of the struggles, of self-organization and international solidarity that revolutionary Marxists can gain prestige and influence, and not in the prediction of betrayals and defeats to come.

In the Syrian case, one option was to go in the same direction as the regime and its allies, who denied the importance of revolt and popular self-organization, describing the people as being manipulated by jihadists, Gulf monarchies, Turkey, the Western imperialists - and in so doing betraying them while pushing them towards these regional powers and Islamic fundamentalist movements, since the imperialist states were just speech-making (or, like the United States, opposed to sending anti-aircraft weapons). Our choice was to denounce Western imperialism as false friends of the Syrian people, at the same time as accompanying the Syrian revolutionaries in their struggle by mobilizing international solidarity people to people, refusing the damaging direct military interventions of the imperialists - but to ensure that the struggling people

did not remain defenceless, it was necessary to defend the idea that the people should have the necessary means - including military - to prevent the bombings and attacks of the Assad regime and its allies, and those of Daesh, and jihadist and Salafist currents. It was then easy to discuss the inconsistency of the leadership of the Syrian opposition abroad under the cross-influence of all the reactionary powers, easy to discuss the criminal policies of Obama, Hollande or Macron - but also obviously that, even worse in this situation, of Putin. Alas, given the evolution of the balance of power, malicious predictions have become self-fulfilling!

## **The errors of Socialist Action**

The inoperative orientation on the ongoing processes in the Middle East and Maghreb that appears in the text of the "Platform for a Revolutionary International" takes on a truly deplorable character in the documents from one of its main forces, Socialist Action US, from its obsession with "opposing its own imperialism". Indeed, it appears that for Jeff Mackler, his leader and candidate in the last US presidential election:

« the false designation of Russia and China as imperialist states is a convenient cover to excuse western aggression. It promotes passivity, including on the radical left, towards the regime-change wars fostered by the west in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and beyond.. »  
(Quoted by Socialist Action Canada in the 2016 Socialism Report - Crisis and Change Conference May 20-22, 2016).

In his text "The war of US imperialism in Syria: acid test for the antiwar movement" (November 16, 2016), Jeff Mackler could not be further from the reality and political dynamics in Syria concerning American imperialism, and plunges into the campism according to which any apparent enemy of the American government has the legitimate right to be helped:

*"Few, if any, informed sources doubt that the U.S. government is central to*

*the organization, arming, financing, directing, and perpetuating the war in Syria to remove the Syrian government. It has been so since early 2012—that is, shortly after the entirely justified mass demonstrations against the Assad dictatorship's imposition of neo-liberal "reforms" that cut deep into the well-being of Syrian farmers and outraged democratically-minded forces. Tragically, in short order, and especially with the Assad government's firing on and arresting en masse peaceful demonstrators, the extremely limited and virtually leaderless mobilizations devolved into a U.S.-abetted "regime change" war, almost immediately involving massive ISIS and Al Qaida forces. (...)*

"The intervention of Russia, as well as others invited by the Syrian government to intervene on its behalf (Iran and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah) have been central to the present and often heated polemics issuing from currents on the U.S. left who reject any characterization of the war as a U.S. imperialist onslaught. Instead, these currents stand firmly opposed to united front mass action mobilizations that demand "U.S. Out Now!" and "Self-determination for Syria!"» (...) « In our view, the right to self-determination necessarily includes the right of oppressed nations to request intervention from other nations» in the case of Syria, the intervention of Russia, Iran, and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah. "

Thus, the legitimacy of the Syrian regime is superior to that of the insurgents, the interests of capitalist Russia and the atrocious character of the Assad regime (which it does not deny), as well as the aspirations and the struggle of the Syrian people, are pushed behind abstract geopolitical logic! This position was also adopted by some sections of the left and anti-war movements, notably in the United Kingdom and the United States, who refused to act in solidarity with the Syrian uprising on the grounds that "the main enemy is a home ", even if this meant implicitly supporting the Assad regime or the Russian state. It is a form of primary campism, a choice of a block ... This is particularly absurd given that close analysis shows that the Obama administration -

learning from the debacle of its policy in Iraq - made every effort to intervene as little as possible in Syria, and mainly against Daesh, aiming for the most limited possible change at the head while maintaining the structures intact, of a regime whose crimes had made it a pariah.

Among these sections of the left, communist thinker Karl Liebknecht is frequently cited. Liebknecht is famous for his 1915 declaration that "the enemy is at home," a statement made in condemnation of imperialist aggression against Russia led by his native Austria-Germany. In quoting Liebknecht, many have decontextualized his views. From his perspective, fighting against the enemy at home did not mean ignoring foreign regimes repressing their own people or failing to show solidarity with the oppressed. Indeed, Liebknecht believed we must oppose our own ruling class's push for war by "cooperating with the proletariat of other countries whose struggle is against their own imperialists."

To defend their unilateral orientation, Jeff Mackler and SA have not hesitated to join the campaign of disinformation fuelled by "independent journalist" Eva Bartlett:

*"At meetings initiated by the newly formed Hands Off Syria Coalition (HOSC), independent Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett reported on her several trips to Syria, including most recently to Aleppo in late November. Bartlett toured the U.S. in mid-December addressing packed meetings in New York City and other East Coast venues as well as standing-room-only public forums in Oakland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.*

More than 600 activists attended her meetings, which included lengthy question and answer periods. Her slide show and video presentation debunked the U.S. corporate media's characterization of the events in Syria as a civil war between democratic-minded Syrian "rebels" and the government of President Bashar Assad. Instead, Bartlett, while noting the legitimacy of the early mass protests for democracy in 2011, asserted that this brief movement had long ago given way to a U.S.-backed,

NATO and Gulf State Arab monarchy abetted imperialist and terrorist war aimed at "regime change" in Syria. Based on two key points of unity, "No U.S. Intervention in Syria!" and Self-determination for Syria!" the Hands Off Syria Coalition was formed last year at the initiative of the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) and the U.S. Peace Council.

Security and transportation for Bartlett's most recent visit to Aleppo was provided by the Syrian government and included interviews with President Assad."

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Bartlett mainly relayed the propaganda of the Syrian regime, appeared on its television channels, not to mention that she worked for Russia Today which relays the propaganda of the Putin regime and conspiracy sites like SOTT.net, The Duran, MintPress and Globalresearch.ca ... So in terms of political independence, we do better!

There is obviously no question of denying the rise of Islamic fundamentalist currents in Syria, but this benefited from the direct complicity of the Assad regime at the beginning of the process (more than that of the USA, by the way), then of regional powers while the democratic components of the uprising that tried to resist (and continue to exist!) were abandoned by all. Only Kurdish affiliated members of the PKK have received a little firm support from the US - should they be even more denounced by the revolutionary left?

Socialist Action has in fact turned its back on working with the truly progressive Syrian progressives, who are fighting the Assad regime, Islamist and jihadist fundamentalism in its various forms, and attempts to seize Syria by a foreign country, in particular Russia and Iran. An acid test for the "Platform for a Revolutionary International" for which practical international solidarity is the last priority, is also shown in the lack of involvement from comrades of Anticapitalism and Revolution, dominant current of the NPA youth sector for many years, in mobilizations in the Maghreb and the Middle East. Conversely, the FI comrades in the

region, the resolutions and press releases of the International Committee, the organizations in the rest of the world, have tried to combine united mobilizations against all oppressions, class independence, and links of international solidarity.

This type of support has and could take different forms: support for progressive organizations in the region; public conferences, rallies and demonstrations in solidarity with the liberation struggles of the region;

publications of articles on local resistance and political dynamics in relation to the region; campaigns of solidarity, visits to the populations facing and fighting against oppression; financial support.

We also support the self-determination and various forms of popular resistance of the oppressed peoples of the region such as Palestine and Kurdistan. In support of the liberation of the Palestinian people, support for

the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign is very important, for example. While fighting against our own ruling classes who bear a heavy responsibility in the world situation, we must give an internationalist colour to our struggles and daily activities.

It is a fundamental question for internationalist solidarity based on the idea that we are all linked in our struggles for the emancipation of our societies.

# Mutual aid and self-management: a multiple implantation project

## 14 March 2018

The workers movement of the 20th century has exhausted its cycle. This does not mean that the working class has dissolved or that there is no longer any trade union or labour movement. What no longer exists is the synergistic whole that had forced capitalism, in Europe and in the world, to change in order to survive.. A labour movement built mainly around the "German model", the institutional and state-based strength of the Party and the complementary but limited role of economic demands, centred on the specific interests of the Union.

The early workers' movement, rooted in mutual aid and associative solidarity, was forced early on to pay the price for capitalist development, impetuous industrialization and the choices of its leading groups, and embarked on the road of building strong electoral parties.

The end of the labour movement has been accelerated and centrifuged by the end of "real socialism". The fate of the "short century" has reverberated like a nuclear mushroom over the destinies of the international labour movement, exalting the elements of the crisis and hiding its last vital functions until they were buried.

The end of the workers' movement also has another consequence: the necessity for the opposition that lived inside the movement to change its outlook and practices. Precisely those who opposed the dominant thought of the majority labour movement have the greatest responsibility to find a different way, armed with the teachings of Walter Benjamin, which urge us to save the vanquished "from the oblivion of history".

## The lost subject

In the last decades in Europe the structure of the lower classes has changed: because of the defeats that have weakened and dismembered the working class, greatly reducing its capacity to be a point of reference for the weaker and more fluid layers of the population; by the relocation of parts of the productive process and the expansion of the tertiary (service) sector; by the more massive presence of women and immigrants; by the proletarianization of a part of the social mass which formerly belonged to the petty bourgeoisie; by the marketization of activities and human aspects that were previously exterior to the market, etc.

From the mid-1990s, under the attack of neoliberalism, European societies were in ferment and produced struggles, movements, different and divergent organizational forms whose variety of practices, demands and languages reflected first, the articulation of a more diversified society, and then the centrifugal dynamics brought about by the crisis of the "subjective factor".

The processes of subjectivization therefore may not be linear and superimposable. There may be sudden accelerations and delays that are difficult to fill from one sector or another, or a subjectivity that has its own specificities. What is happening in the feminist movement offers some tracks for study, although the situation is generally characterized by a fundamental fragility in the construction of possible and practicable alternatives.

The most advanced political experiences also offer interesting grounds to develop and concretely represent a need for transformation, for alternative. But overall there does not seem to be a reversal of the tendency to reduce the hope of change and to develop an alternative grammar of the social order. The



socialist awakening in the United States, made manifest by the experience of Bernie Sanders, does not produce, at least to the naked eye, a capacity to challenge the roots of the current hegemony of Trump; Jeremy Corbyn represented a shake-up for the labour movement semi-destroyed by Blair's Third Way, while remaining in the camp of reformist recipes whose consistency must be put to the test. The most interesting experience, Podemos in the Spanish state, lives contradictions that could explode. In Catalonia, Podemos has lost the possibility of a qualitative leap forward because it failed to grasp the depth of the self-determination processes and get in tune with them. Efforts in Italy oscillate between weak operations of political reunification, as in the case of *Liberi e Uguali*, and improvised and confused operations which, starting from slogans borrowed from self-management and mutualism, seem more like a life-raft for old political subjects (see *Potere al Popolo*).

What appears to be missing everywhere is a strong social connection based on robust experiences of one-off but lasting counterpositional struggles, of alternative societal embryos. "Bastions" that resist the clashes and cultivate alliances, spaces of self-activity that do not end on Saturday in the street, political and cultural discourse that really raises the question of the quality of an economic and social alternative.

The direction we have adopted is that the present phase resembles the dawn of the labour movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the movement experimented with ideas and practices. Today we can also experiment with new organizations, instruments of direct work organization, employee and cooperativist. Using self-management as an instrument to practice the objective, one able to build political subjectivity and to propose a new democracy in which the state really begins to decline. And organisms that finally break the old dichotomy between spontaneity and organization, between political consciousness codified only in party forms to "import" into the experiences of

struggle. The two moments can coexist in a phase where the social practice can no longer be separated from theoretical and cultural elaboration.

## Before everything started

It is Marx who points to two of the successive positive factors to the defeat of 1848: the law on the ten-hour work day and the cooperative movement. Marx is aware of the limitations and difficulties and in fact writes that "experience has proved that cooperative work, the practice of which can be excellent, is not in a position to stop the geometric progress of the monopoly, to emancipate and not even to lighten the burden of their misery, if it is limited in a narrow circle of partial efforts of isolated workmen". But Marx's contempt is mainly directed at the use of co-operative work by "self-proclaimed philanthropists of the middle class" from whom the "nauseating compliments" of cooperative work originate.

After the recognition of the cooperative movement "as one of the transforming forces of the present society", Marx emphasizes how, in order to encourage cooperative work, "general social changes, transformations of the general conditions of society, are only possible with the commitment of the organized forces of society, i.e. government power wrested from the hands of capitalists and landowners and placed in the hands of the producers" are indispensable. These are the same problems that characterize the fraternal societies, also straddling the labour movement and "philanthropy", between workers' emancipation organizations and the structures that the rapidly industrializing bourgeoisie used to appease the nascent workers' movement. But this contradiction was not eliminated. Throughout the ascendancy phase, the characteristic of "fraternity" and supportive assistance was manifested in the societies ranging from providing aid and economic support to sick members, education and training for children, insertion into the world of

work, up to the creation of workers' credit societies. Societies were also social occasions, meeting places and relationships "outside the harrowing life of the factory or the fields". So places for discussion or confrontation on common problems, opportunities for social ties that were woven for the first time and which, as we will see, will make possible a first very important passage, that of solidarity to the "resistance".

## The Italian and Belgian workers' parties

Two experiences in particular help us to better understand. In Italy, the Workers' Party was born in Milan in 1882 and represented an active and widespread political and social movement. Despite its name it was not a workerist political organization, and wasn't even Italian in the sense of a presence throughout the territory. It represented a new phase of trade unionism. More than a party, it was a "federation of societies of resistance", an evolution of the basic forms of solidarity and trade unions that had a political connotation. It was an association of associations which "binds not individuals but workers' societies of mutual aid, improvement, cooperation, education and training in a federative manner" which, through this party, in the strike, experienced the dimension of "resistance".

The experience of the Belgian Workers Party (POB), intimately linked to mutualist experience, is even more advanced. The most important is that of cooperatives for the production and sale of bread. For example, in 1905 the House of the People of Brussels produced ten million kg of bread a year while Ghent produced one hundred thousand a week. In the 1880s, these two cooperatives sent thirty tons of bread to support the miners of the Borinage,

The statutes of this party state that the purpose of the POB is to "reunite the working and socialist forces of the country to improve, through the Mutual Agreement, the fate of the working class. For this reason the

party will organize itself on the political as well as the economic field" And so "professional unions, mutual aid societies, cooperative societies, circles of study and propaganda can join the Party" in addition to individual workers "of both sexes" of a certain territory. As the party principles repeat: "against capitalism workers must fight with all the means at their disposal" and therefore "with political action and with the development of free associations".

Thus is born a method of intervention defined as "multi-faceted syndicalism" in which the workers' and mutual aid societies' movement intersect, helping each other. For these pioneering socialists who have seen the experience of the First International, it is quite natural to combine mutuality, which meets basic needs, and resistance or struggle to wrest conquests and rights.

## **The binomial mutualism-resistance**

In the nineteenth-century experience, the "mutualism-resistance" pairing is based on a dual concept of solidarity: "for" in the case of mutualism; "against" in the case of resistance struggles or for rights. But the couple "mutualism-resistance" is replaced by the couple "party / union" which theorizes and operates a rigid partitioning between the political element and the social-economic element. On the one hand, politics is understood as electoral participation to give the state social and socialist content, on the other hand the strike and trade union struggle to improve living conditions. This separation would mark the entire history of the labour movement of the 20th century, with a few exceptions, most often in anarchist and libertarian movements.

Thus at the end of the 19th century integration into the state created the conditions for the end of the constitutive autonomy of the workers' movement, its existence outside and against the bourgeois state, its structural otherness. In its work "to improve living conditions, alleviate

suffering and then to determine a more advanced degree of class independence," mutualism laid the foundation for "a society in society" which, while it did not succeed in overthrowing the existing order, guaranteed the congenial otherness of the concrete working reality. The highest and symbolic example of this otherness is the Paris Commune.

## **Reconnect the political and social**

The opportunities for politicization in the globalized world of the 20th century are infinitely greater than those of a hundred years ago. It is therefore even more difficult today to think of rigid divisions, even more if history shows us that this separation has never - or only relatively - existed.

Each revolutionary passage and each mass action that did not have a decisive military dimension showed a plurality of instruments, functions, and options, in which, in essence, the difference was represented by the degree of mass consciousness, by the forms of self-organization. And so by instances where the political and the social have been superimposed until they are indistinct. For Marx the social is always political, the revolutionary subject is not separated from the class and the idea of political consciousness imported from the outside does not exist.

## **Self-made consciousness**

To act by oneself is the necessary precondition for the formation of a process of subjectivization. The mechanism of formation of a political consciousness - which is the distinctive element of Marx's "class for itself" - does not begin only at the very important moment of criticism of the existing, the mechanisms of exploitation, rhythms and working times, forms of domination and hierarchy of capitalist societies. It does not come only from the negation of the given reality, although negation is an important form of the process of human identity. The process of

subjectivization needs association, the coordination of ideas and common practices, solidarity. "When communist workers get together, their primary purpose is doctrine, propaganda, and so on. But with that, they take ownership together of a new need, the need of society and what seems to be a means has become a goal." The centrality of associationism as a place of thought and common life allows us to get out of the trap of the consciousness brought to the workers "from the outside" by an enlightened avant-garde of intellectuals.

Lenin's famous "consciousness from the outside" produced more damage than solutions, even if it was oversimplified by a party busy seeking to make itself the state. Consciousness is certainly an element that is "outside" the fatigue of working or existential life, of permanent anxiety for survival. When we are hungry we cannot think. But where to think? And what instrument to build to be able to do so?

Consciousness can develop in actions of resistance, in this "negative solidarity" which is so constitutive of trade-union action, of conflict. But it is enriched by a propositional element and a utopian dimension if it acts motivated by positive solidarity, that which finds its fulfilment in free association. In this negative-positive dialectic, resistance-mutualism are the spaces for an accumulation of consciousness: mutualism-resistance-thought. Without thought, culture, political intelligence, mutualism and resistance fall back on the existing and curl up like faded flowers. This consciousness is not the separate prerogative of an enlightened party, but can also be formed within worker associationism. Or from a party but one which produces experiences of solidarityself-activity, experiences of self-management, of mutualism, of cooperative work. A new type of subject, with multiple implantation. The "working-class" societies of the 21st century will build their own study centres, libraries... because only in this way can the mutualist experience and a project of multiple implantation contribute to the formation of a new Subject, a consciousness adequate to the challenges for social transformation. The social dimension



and the political dimension therefore go together in instruments that think as they do and do as they think.

## Do it yourself, be part of it

Starting from the 19th century does not mean cancelling out the past and pretending that the film produced by the labour movement can be rewound again and again. But it helps to learn the full lessons and to really grasp the moments where we lost the

opportunity. Not only the essential political moments where the bureaucracies, the states or the various bosses prevailed (Germany 1918-19, URRS after 1927, Spain in 1937, Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, Italy between 1968 and 1977) but also moments in which we have embarked on irreversible paths that have led the subaltern classes, after a hundred years, to a stalemate; deprived of the material force to oppose what exists, but especially lacking ideas that could trace an alternative path. At bottom, the great tragedy of the third millennium is this: to have seen the

progressive crisis of all hope of emancipation of humanity and to be forced to live a daily life without solutions. The moment when we lost the fertile connection between negative solidarity and positive solidarity, between mutualism and resistance, between associations based on doing for oneself, on self help, but endowed with political thought, this moment can be recovered for the future. And it is with this connection and in this capacity to weave a new thread that conflictual mutualism can find its reason for being.

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

16 December 2017

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...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.

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.

# The Red Green Alliance, Denmark, 2011-2017

16 December 2017, by **Michael Voss**

In January 2011, I wrote a chapter to the book "New Parties of the Left - Experiences from Europe" (Socialist Resistance, Britain, and IIRE) about the Red-Green Alliance. It was also published in *International Viewpoint* **The Red-Green Alliance in Denmark**. [1]

In this article, I will try explain the most important class struggles and political developments since then, what happened to the RGA, how RGA acted, and how SAP (Danish section) related to it.

From 2001 to 2011 there was a government coalition of the two traditional parties of the Right, supported by the nationalist, xenophobic Danish Peoples Party. Especially during the last half of the period social protest evolved, and several mass demonstrations took place against the government.

At the same time the workers' parties - aggregatet - Social Democracy, Socialist Peoples Party and the Red Green Alliance - increased their support in opinion polls, getting close to a majority. There were big expectations for an SD-led government, and trade unions campaigned actively for this on class policy basis.

At the time of the election in September 2011, support for the SD and the SPP had decreased, though, and the growth of the RGA could not outweigh that. A government coalition of SD, SPP and the social liberal party was established on a platform, dictated by the social liberals. It was a platform that explicitly promised to continue the neo-liberal policies of the previous Right government.

The RGA supported the leader of SD, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, as "head of negotiations for a new government",

and the party stated that it would not support a vote of no confidence at the first meeting of the newly elected parliament. In that sense, the RGA was seen as "parliamentary basis" of the coalition government.

The SD-led government adapted fully to the neoliberal discourse. It made continuation of the economic policy of the Right government a principle, and it did almost no rolling back of previous austerity policy. Only on a few occasions, organized protests and mobilisations against the government happened, primarily against a combined reform of primary school and an attack on teachers' working conditions and against the sale of the national energy company to Goldman Sachs.

The 2011 elections was a real strengthening of the RGA (from 4 to 12 MP's), but the new situation as "parliamentary basis" for the SD-led government was also a difficult tactical situation that would create risks of serious mistakes for any socialist party. For the RGA, these risks were seriously increased, because the party was not united behind a revolutionary socialist analyses of the reformist parties. It was not united behind a class struggle based united front approach.

In fact, parts of the RGA held serious illusions that the SD would roll back the worst neoliberal reforms of the previous government, and that they would go for real progressive reforms. These illusions dominated the MP-group and the group of RGA party employees in Parliament.

At the bottom of this was also real strategic disagreements inside the party. Some people - like SAP - support a revolutionary class struggle strategy, promoting independent

working class organisation and preparing for a revolutionary break with the capitalist system and its state apparatus. On the other hand, other leading members promote a strategy of defending "the Danish welfare state" as such and a parliamentary democracy - only in need of extending democracy to the economic sphere and the workplaces. Behind this is of course different analyses of the bourgeois state which implicates these strategic differences.

These disagreements came out into the open when the RGA debated a new Political Programme. The final result was somewhat of a compromise, leaving out some questions of long term strategy. At the National Congress 2014, the left wing of the party won a couple of votes on important amendments. (**A good anticapitalist policy agenda**)

Basically, we can state that the RGA stuck to its principles and did not "cross classlines" during the S-led government period, like voting for austerity policies or other cutbacks. Most closely to that was the one week long support for Danish war planes to Libya, but the support was withdrawn, when the NL-majority and the MP-group realized that their preconditions were not met by the government. There were also a couple of wrong voting decisions, primarily cases where it was technically difficult to judge if something qualified for being a "cut-back".

Seriously wrong decisions were taken when the RGA voted for National Budgets that - in the view of SAP and of big minority of the party - did not qualify for such a break with previous policies that were defined in Congress decisions on principles of voting on National Budgets.



In November 2014, SAP made a balance sheet on the parliamentary work of the RGA at a National Convention. Let me quote:

*"The decisive problem of the parliamentary work of the RGA during the Helle Thorning-Schmidt (HTS) government is caused by the framing of parliamentary work, including own political proposals, statements and voting explanations, which led to using phrases like:*

â€œ "Our friends in SD and SPP"

â€œ "Our friends in the government"

â€œ "We are looking forward to negotiate with the government about..."

â€œ "We expect to reach an agreement with the government about..."

This rhetoric and basic approach to the government has been unchanged from the election campaign (2011) until today [Nov. 14]. This is caused partly by far too big illusions in an SD-led government, partly by a mistaken publicity- and media tactic. It is hard to see where this was decided. On the other hand, at no time a clear majority against it manifested itself inside the party.

In accordance with this rhetoric, the MP group has almost only promoted political demands and proposals, which they could claim that they "expected" the government to agree on, fully or partly, and they did almost never raise anticapitalist demands which break with everything that "our friends" in government represent.

This general approach became more problematic when the governmental platform was published with its promises to continue the economic policies of the VK-government [the Right government], and the promises to "over-implement" EU-rules and decisions and to carry through the reform of unemployment benefits that the Right government were about to put for a vote just before the election. At this stage, the RGA should have stated clearly that this general line would mean disaster for ordinary people, and that this would make it hard for the RGA to get sensible

proposals through parliament under such a government.

This turned into catastrophe when the RGA did not change approach to the government after the tax reform, the refusal to annul the reform of unemployment benefit and the sale of DONG (state owned energy company) to Goldman Sachs. In all these situations, the RGA had the chance to go into opposition. It was done briefly after the tax reform, but this did not last."

From day one after the 2011 elections, the governmental coalition parties lost support in opinion polls. This reflected a deep disappointment among especially SD and SPP voters. At the extreme end of opinion polls, one of them came out like this: SD 14 %; RGA 13 %; SPP 4 %.

Support for the SPP nearly collapsed, resulting in deep conflicts inside of the party, and in January 2014 the party withdrew from government.

Of more deep consequences were what happened in Social Democracy during these four years of neoliberal governmental policies. Disappointment manifested itself only in voters leaving, some for RGA, some for the no-voting-group, and some for Danish Peoples Party. Party members, including many trade unionists, left the party or became passive.

It is not the first time in history that Social Democracy has made a left turn in opposition and then a right turn in government, disappointing their constituency. But this time, the party did not act in the way that we would expect from a reformist workers party. No organized opposition inside the party developed, not to mention splits. Neither any organized fight-back from the trade union leaders, affiliated with the SD.

When confronted with massive discontent, loss of support in opinion polls and members leaving, the party leadership did nothing to adjust the course in order to win back working class support. Not a small left turn, not a little more leftist rhetoric, not even a few attacks on the parties of the Right or the multinational for a show.

The parties behind the SD-led government lost their majority in the 2015 elections. The traditional Liberal Party were another big loser. Nevertheless, this party managed to form a government, made possible by support from the new ultraliberal party, the Conservatives and the Danish Peoples Party. **(A defeat for austerity policies but no left wing victory)**

RGA votes increased from 6,7% to 7,8% and 14 instead of 12 MP's. Not only did the party consolidate the good result from 2011 but it was also able to obtain increased support. Still, SAP raised the question if this advance of the RGA was satisfactory, taking into consideration the massive disappointment among SD and SPP voters. A post-election statement of the SAP National Leadership said:

*"The RGA appeared too much like the other parties - a party that does politics in the same way as the others with serious, concrete and "fully financed" political proposals within the consensus on what can be made into reality. This approach has helped the RGA to address groups within the working class, but during the election campaign, the lack of more far-reaching demands such as a 30 hours work week, implies that the party did not fully appeal to those that wish for something different and something more. This also indicates that the RGA was not able to use the election to present own visions and politics."*

Parallel to the increase in votes in the period since 2010-2011, membership has grown from around 4.500 in 2010 to 10.000 in 2015, though now (May 2017), down to 9.000. The increasing number of votes and MP's has resulted in an even greater increase in staff. Danish Parliament allocate huge economic resources to MP-staff. At the elections for local and regional councils in 2013, the number of RGA councilors grew dramatically.

This development has given the RGA a lot of resources and a lot of possibilities. Most of these resources are tied by law to parliamentary work and publicity for MP's and their proposals, but other parts have been successfully used to build the party and support member activities.

This development has created serious imbalances in the party. Basically the party is built on democratic attitudes and strict formal democratic rules. But realities tend to pull in the opposite direction. When it comes to development of politics and decisions on political priorities, it is almost impossible for a National Leadership of 25 persons, most of them with full time job outside the party, to keep track with a group of 14 full time MP's and 30 MP-employees (the national office has 18 employees)..

Such a big full time group tend to develop a group mentality and a we-know-better attitude. Placed in the Parliament and with parliamentary work as their main task, they are easily drawn towards accommodation to parliamentarism and to other political parties.

The MP-group of the last periods did not avoid these tendencies, and it is obvious that the main forces drawing the RGA toward accommodation with the HTS-government and to downplaying the anticapitalist elements of the party were MP's, MP-staff and full timers in the local council of Copenhagen - though never a totally homogenous group.

These imbalances tends to undermine democracy in the party, and it gives this group a disproportionate power over politics and priorities in the party. The MP-group most often has the support of the majority of the National Leadership, and the MP-group never met a general opposition

and protest from the majority of party members. In general the MP group is popular among the membership.

Nevertheless it is also important to note that the basic democratic impulse of the party often makes itself felt, when National Congresses make decisions against the majority of National Leadership and of the MP-group.

A National Congress in September 2015 almost unanimously approved a statement, called "The Left of the Future". Based on a balance sheet of the HTS-government, it outlines a new perspective. In the statement, the RGA defines its task as building a new Left in opposition to both Social Democracy and the Right. The focus will be on building our own political and organisational alternative and taking on responsibility for building social movements:

*"The story about the Helle Thorning-Schmidt government, the election campaign of Social Democracy plus the post-election statements of the new leader of Social Democracy (HTS resigned just after the elections, and Mette Frederiksen took over - MV) have made it clear that the RGA has no project in common with Social Democracy. On the contrary the economic policy and the migrant/refugee policy of Social Democracy are much closer to the Right than to us."*

The text then states the need to rebuilt the Left and says: "In this task we cannot rely on Social Democracy

as a co-player. The Left must strengthen itself and develop by itself in opposition to both the Right and to Social Democracy. Our main task cannot be attempts to make small correction to the defeated and mistaken political perspective of Social Democracy. We are the Left in our own right with our own perspective and our own course."

The text took notice of the fact that the RGA now is the biggest party to the left of Social Democracy and concluded that it is the duty of the RGA to lead the work of rebuilding the Left. (**Danish RGA changes perspective** )

For the first time in party history, the RGA defined a political-organisational perspective that was aimed at directing all parts of party activities. Most part of it was in line with the perspectives that SAP had argued for in many years.

To a great extent, SAP has focused on making the RGA implement the perspectives of "The Left of the Future". For several reasons this is a slow and difficult process: 1) Real opposition to some of it exists inside the RGA, also in the leadership 2) It is a huge and complicated political task, which might actualize some of the strategic disagreements in the party; 3) It involves a change of mindset not only at the top, but also among the membership. Among other things, a showdown with the widespread reluctance against organized and open intervention work.

# Amendments from the women's seminar

## 16 December 2017

**Amendments to the text Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications**

**V. New far right forces, new fascisms**

1) Replace transsexuals by transgender in the last paragraph

2) After the last paragraph, add: "These movements target in particular the women who are concerned by the double oppression of both racism and sexism. In a lot of western countries,

the success of these movements has developed through Islamophobic propaganda (even if it is not only the brand of the reactionary parties and movements), especially about Muslim women, particularly with those who wear the veil, while aggressions against women wearing the veil are

increasing.

If some movements attack clearly women and LGBTQI people, we can observe a new phenomenon of homonationalism and femonationalism in the European countries, in United States and in Israel, with the pretext of doing it for women and LGBTQI people, they attack some parts of the population like migrants or Muslim people, accusing them of raping women, or that Islam is against homosexuality. These movements have been growing up for a few years, in fact, they are often linked to the far right.

In light of the constant and recent religious fundamentalist ideology in our respective states we reaffirm the importance of state secularism alongside the freedom to practice one's religion.

The state must be secular, without secularising communities and using secularism as a tool to target minorities (France). A secular state does not mean secularisation of communities and people, in a way that impinges on their human rights.

And freedom to practice religion does not equate to the freedom of religious leaders to exercise power and control through state apparatuses. Freedom of religion only means the freedom to practise one's faith, that is freedom of religion in Lebanon should not equate to the ability of religious leaders to exercise their version of the "religious rule of law"

We take special note that both the above practices impose their oppressive power relations onto women, their bodies, and their lives and that religious rules of law heavily depend on the family unit and the segregation of roles of men and women. For example in Lebanon there are no personal status laws covered by the state, only religious laws covered by the sects.

Also in countries where State-Church separation has been a historic achievement, like Italy and México, we would like to point out the constant blurring of this division, as we have witnessed the increase of public ties between high-ranking government and

church leaders, especially on topics about women and LGBT rights.

These actions, although it is not said, are in order to make joint decisions on the bodies of women and their rights, like in the case of México about abortion. These are actions that of course endanger our lives.

Neoliberal conservatism that aims to strengthen the patriarchal family instead of women and obstruct divorce has dramatically increased domestic violence against women. Besides impunity for the perpetrators, cuts in the material support to the victims of domestic violence has created a social environment that encourages male violence.

Theofascist movements use systematic sexual violence against women and minors in the territories they hold mostly in the form of rape and sex slavery to recruit members and fight against other groups. In Iraq and Syria thousands of Yazidi and Kurdish women were captured and raped by the members of Islamic state.

## Part VI

This weakening of the democratic bourgeois state as an expression of the will of the people exposes women and other historically weaker sectors of society directly to the "savage" laws of the market where only the strongest can survive.

The giving up of the social contract as we knew it in the second half of the 20th century has opened the door for multinational capital to grab all common goods, which is extended to the personal and intimate sphere of women's bodies and vital organs (and of human beings in general).

## Amendments to Social upheavals, fightbacks and alternatives

### 2 / Evolution also of worldwide rate of exploitation

*After the first paragraph, add the following:*

In this context, we note what has been called the "feminization" of the labor market and poverty. This can be understood in two senses: on the one hand, conditions that historically have been typical in the formal employment

of women: instability and job insecurity, flexible contracts, salaries less than those necessary to pay for the family's needs, have been generalized to the whole workforce. In a second sense, it also explains the increase in job opportunities for women notably in sectors that continue to be feminized, such as care work. The workday is doubled for those women who also perform tasks of unpaid domestic work.

At the end of the third paragraph, add the following:

... and social control to block these policies. The notion of the feminization of poverty refers to the fact that it is on this point that women also become the priority "target" of this type of policies. As mothers, they are called on to take responsibility for implementing these policies. They are also involved in the bancarization and financialization of their economies, which can add an extra burden to their labor.

After the fifth paragraph, to finish the section, add the following paragraph:

The processes of feminization referred to - as well as the weakening of some identities that were once collectivizing, such as union identity - also explain the emergence of "new" social actors with an unprecedented role, such as women and, in many countries, the LGBT + community.

## Add a new paragraph in chapter 4 -"4 / What are the consequences of the significant increase in migration?"

Between the first and the second paragraph of this chapter, add the following:

Women's migration in the current context of crisis, along with the capitalist globalization of the economy, deepens and increases their oppression and has multiple impacts in very diverse ways on the exploitation of women. The context in which migration takes place expresses the extreme impoverishment and loss of rights of large sectors of world's population.

Women migrate because they need better living conditions for themselves



and their families, and because in their countries of origin they cannot find decent employment. Also they emigrate because of political persecution, or as a consequence of wars, that threaten their lives.

We also find women and their families being part of the flow of refugees heading to various countries in Europe, fleeing their original countries plagued by violence and war, notably in the case of Syria and other Middle East regions. In this case, we are faced with the brutal drama of the migrants who try to reach Germany and other countries. This tragedy is taking place on the borders of Europe, on the coasts, on the Mediterranean Sea, in Eastern Europe and the Balkan countries. In this context women face gender discrimination, racism and exploitation.

Another facet of migration is related to the trafficking of women in the countries they manage to reach: England, Denmark, the Netherlands and others.

In countries where organized crime and drug cartels are very strong, women face different risks, like getting kidnapped and 'disappeared' by the cartels who use them in the prostitution business, within the national and international networks of trafficking of women. In other cases the trafficking is organised through more sophisticated mechanisms, like matchmaking women for supposedly love relationships in which whole families of traffickers are involved. Then another method is to deceive women with promises of jobs which are a cover for forcing them into prostitution.. In some places there is a correlation between migration and the sex tourism business.

Xenophobic campaigns are used politically, to present migrants as enemies, even of the working class, as it was done during Brexit in Great Britain and then in the United States by Donald Trump. In some European countries such as Denmark, xenophobic campaigns have taken the form of a "femonationalist" rhetoric which claims that migration is undermining the rights of native

women in the destination country. The discourse of "femonationalism" is closely related to "homonationalism" where the xenophobic right is claiming that migration is a threat to the rights of the LGBT community.

At the same time, another expression of the problem has to do with economically-driven migration, in which poverty, inequality, lack of jobs and opportunities due to the devastating consequences of neoliberalism pushes millions of people to leave their countries to look for a job in other places.

In the case of the Philippines, more than ten million people are working outside the country, in places as far afield as Saudi Arabia and the rest of Middle East. The monetary incomes sent by Filipino workers to their families through remittances constitute a central part of the foreign currency income of the country. In this case, the predominant presence of women among Filipino migrants is supposedly because it is easier for them to get a job, even though they are often forced into prostitution, which implies deep and serious consequences for them and their families.

In the many regions of world where migrants face oppression and exploitation, women are also suffering 'new' forms of work practically akin to slavery - confinement, prostitution and being trafficked.

If we refer to the displacements and migration in Latin America, Mexico is one of the most dramatic examples and, at the same time, also the place of many experiences of resistance. This country is the obligatory route for hundreds of thousands of migrants, not only Mexicans but also Central Americans and from places as far as Africa, trying to cross over into the United States at any of the points along the more than one thousand kilometer border between Mexico and the US, seeking a job or refuge (running away from violence in Central America, for example). That is why Donald Trump runs his demagogic campaign against Mexican workers, accusing them of stealing jobs from US workers in US factories and insists all the time about building

(actually to finish building) a wall along this long border.

On top of this longstanding critical situation with migration to the US, can now be added the threat of Trump's xenophobic and racist policy that intends to expel in the short term around three million Mexican workers. During Obama's presidency, in fact, three million workers were expelled; the problem now is that Trump wants to deport the same number only in 2017, which would trigger a social crisis with unpredictable consequences in Mexico, in the middle of an existing human rights and political crisis. These deportations would go alongside restrictions on Mexican workers sending money from the US to their families in Mexico.

Remittances represent the second largest foreign exchange income in the country, only surpassed by the exports of automotive companies (companies that Trump wants to take back to the US). This remittance income is greater than foreign direct investment, tourism and oil exports. Mexico is the fourth largest economy for remittance income, after China, India and the Philippines.

The consequences of these policies are especially significant for women. The new laws that Trump seeks to impose, like ending the "sanctuary cities" (where the police are not allowed to request migrant documents from somebody committing a minor offence, such as traffic violations) will lead to deportations which break up families. If an undocumented migrant woman has children in the United States, they acquire nationality and, after a long, costly and risky process, the mother can also become an American citizen. With the new legal provisions, families are split up, their children are taken and the mothers deported to Mexico. Another legal provision that Trump wants to implement is to give a 10-year jail to those undocumented immigrants who, having been deported to Mexico, are arrested in a new attempt to return to the United States.

In addition to being a bridge to the US, Mexico is also the arrival point of migrants from other countries. With restrictions in the US, thousands of

migrants are stranded in Mexico, especially in border cities like Tijuana and Nuevo Laredo. Hours before leaving the government, Obama cancelled the legal order known as "dry feet" that granted immediate asylum to Cubans who arrived in the United States by land and not by sea. In February of 2017 thousands of Cubans in Nuevo Laredo were demanding to go to the US but now they had no rights, neither do they have any in Mexico.

The same situation arose in Tijuana where the crossing of the border is blocked for thousands of Haitians and Africans who paid a lot of money to traffickers from their countries to supposedly take them to the US. Among Haitians there are complete families and many qualified people.

In addition to the social and economic crisis of these thousands of stranded migrants, without jobs and without rights there is now racism among the Mexican population against Haitians and Africans who are stigmatized as delinquents. While Mexico may complain about the bad treatment that migrants receive in the US, that bad treatment also applies to the migrants that arrive in Mexico or are going towards the United States.

As well as the racism that robs and exploits them, the drug cartels (that frequently have the support of the Mexican authorities), assault buses of Central American migrants in places like San Fernando and Tamaulipas. In addition to stealing from and murdering a number of these migrants, others are recruited for quasi slave labor or as hit men, and women are taken to be used as prostitutes in their business or for the use of traffickers themselves.

The tendency of reducing the labour force, as a result of capitalist globalization, also translates into an increase in the migration of women and children in risky conditions (including an increase of children traveling alone to the United States). According to official data, migrant women made up 44.7% of the total number of migrants in the 2004-2006 period whereas this has risen to 47.5% in the 2013-2015 period. Migrant women have also a higher rate of

unemployment than men.

The migration of Mexican women shows an increase from the 1970s to the present. In 2012, women residing in the United States were about 5.5 million, representing 46% of the Mexican population residing in that country. Their conditions of labor and employment are linked to traditional gender roles.

Several organizations point out that abuse against migrant women has become normalised and that rape has become a spectacle. The roles and stereotypes that accompany these women make them more vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual violence, disappearances, prostitution, human trafficking, extortion, separation from their families (many travel with children), arbitrary detention, illness, accidents and feminicide. As they are often responsible for the care of children traveling with them, they become double targets and the difficulties increase because their status as undocumented workers makes it more difficult to obtain employment, housing and resources, as well as any social services for them and their children.

**Replace Chapter 7 with the following wording:**

**Women's rights and mass mobilization against violence, rape and femicide, and for the right to abortion**

In general terms, as regards the key issues of feminist struggles, the situation in recent years has been contradictory, given the growing presence of women in the labour force. The women's movement has developed multiple structures and mobilizations in all regions of the world, but faces a reactionary offensive in many countries, linked to the rise of neoconservative and fundamentalist currents. This offensive once again attacks fundamental rights: the right to live; the right to financial and social independence from men (parents, brothers or husbands); the ability to dress as they want; and the right to control reproductive capacity, especially through legal, free and safe access to abortion.

In recent years, an important factor of social mobilization has been the response to violence against women, in the first place feminicide, in India, Turkey, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay or Mexico. Since the gigantic demonstrations in India in December 2012, many other mobilizations have taken place in as many cities: on 7 November 2015, 500,000 women mobilized in Madrid against the increase in violence and murders of women; in Argentina, hundreds of thousands of women mobilized in 2015 in response to several murders that impacted the country; in Mexico, the spread of murders and disappearances of women marked by drug trafficking to a hitherto unknown level also resulted in strong mobilizations in the country.

These mobilizations remind us of the high level of violence in many countries, violence that affects women in the first place and also weighs on the social reality: most of the countries of Central America, Mexico and Brazil and almost all of sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa have reached their highest level of homicides not linked to war.

Among the noticeable new factors, we find a tendency to interpellation and fruitful dialogues with social subjects that until now had not felt themselves to be a full part of the women's and feminist movements: trans collectives, black women, indigenous women, lesbians, among others. New forms of mobilization are also present, which in some countries have included using methods such as the strike, in dialogue and debate with the trade union movement, like the 8 March 2017 mobilization that was called as the Women's International Strike, with a significant increase of mobilization, which allows us to foresee the rise of the feminist movement and the diversification of its alliances.

The election of Donald Trump provoked an international wave of protests on 21 January 2017 at the initiative of the women's movement, not only in several cities of the United States, but also in many cities of the world, placing the women's movement at the forefront of political struggles against reaction. The various reactionary governments that have

come to power in the wave of liberal offensives, try to challenge the right to abortion won by the struggles of previous decades. In this situation mass mobilizations have had to defend and extend this right, notably in the Spanish State in 2014 and in Poland in 2016.

We should point out the international character of this new movement, which gives it a potential for growth. Countries like Argentina and Italy inspire in different latitudes the possibility of shaping emerging structures that connect struggles, tactics and strategies. The role that new technologies have played in this regard, particularly social networks as a platform for dissemination and communication, is undeniable.

#### **Amendments to Towards a text on Role and Tasks of the Fourth International**

##### **Point 6 “The balance sheets of our experiences since the beginning of the 1990s”**

###### **Add at end:**

As noted above, agreement on tasks in the national situation is an indispensable factor in creating new parties that have a lasting character, all the more so when there seems to be formal “programmatic” agreement, for example in the case of fusion between self-defined revolutionary currents. The ability to grasp the key task in the national situation, such as for example the question of the

referendum for the legalisation of abortion in Portugal in 1999 – agreement on which was a key factor in the creation of the Left Bloc – is, as we have underlined several times, essential in determining our orientation to other forces.

##### **Point 7 “Lessons from the balance sheets”**

**Rewrite the second sentence “They have turned around the need to wage political battles within the political forces we are building on: To read:**

“They have turned around the need to wage political battles within the political forces we are building on a series of key programmatic principles. These principles in their developed form are not necessarily a precondition for building a new political force, but without the basis to have such discussions and to move forward then the prospects of building a truly useful party for the class struggle are unlikely. The level of initial agreement required on each of these points must be judged on the basis of the nature of the existing political currents and audience of the new party.

The points we have highlighted are:”

###### **Add a new bullet point:**

“The party is committed to a policy of activity on demands and campaigns combating women’s oppression, in the context of participation in the class-struggle oriented groups, campaigns

and movements, with an understanding of the strategic goal of building an autonomous women’s movement. The party’s preoccupation with both education and activity on these questions is a permanent one, not to be put aside in moments where there is a lower level of mass activity.

The party seeks to build a feminist profile both externally and internally to not only encourage women to join but to build internally a positive vision of women in the leadership.

In addition to ensuring that the democratic functioning of the party enables all members to fully participate as outlined above, the party understands that social dynamics tend to exclude women from political participation, therefore it accepts the need for specific mechanisms (women only meetings, priority for women in speakers lists etc) that encourage women’s participation, and the recognition of further problems to be overcome.

The party does not tolerate any form of sexist (or transphobic or homo/lesbophobic) behaviour. The implementation of this political position is the responsibility of the party which ensures not only political education on these questions but also that the structures, functioning and procedures put in place work to ensure that the parties we are building, although they cannot be “islands of socialism” in a capitalist world, strive to prefigure the society we want.

## **A civilisational wake-up call - and an ecosocialist response**

**16 December 2017, by Alan Davies**

The world is approaching a climate cliff. Sixteen of the 17 warmest years in the 136-year record have all occurred since 2001. The year 2016 ranks as the warmest on record. Scientists have long argued that an

increase in the global average surface temperature of 2°C above the preindustrial level “we are already at 0.99°C and rising” will trigger irreversible feedbacks that could spin the global climate system beyond

human control. The Paris COP regarded the 2°C limit as inadequate and adopted a more stringent target of a 1.5°C limit. Even this is sufficient to melt a major portion of the world’s ice sheets and set the course towards

an ice-free world. As a result, the sea level will rise sharply and many thousands of islands will be submerged, along with coastal areas around the globe. The destabilisation of the Western Antarctic ice sheet threatens an even greater rise in seas levels up to six or seven metres. Extreme weather events (droughts, storms, floods, and wild fires) would become ever more frequent and severe. The poorest people will suffer the most.

The oceans are now 30% more acidic than in pre-industrial times, due (mainly) to carbon absorption from the atmosphere. One third of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into the atmosphere are absorbed into the oceans. Coral reefs are dying off. Marine invertebrates that rely on calcification for their shell structures face a bleak future as does the breeding cycle of many of the fish species central to the human diet.

Species are going extinct 1,000 times faster than the historic or 'back ground' rate. The World Wildlife Fund's 2016 Living Planet Report "that monitored over 10,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, in both tropical and temperate regions" concluded that in the last fifty years human impact has done more damage to natural habitats than in any previous period in the history of the planet. The report recognised "along with a predominant weight of scientific opinion" that we are currently witnessing the 'sixth great extinction' event: i.e. the biggest extinction of species since that which destroyed the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

At the same time we are treating the planet like a gigantic rubbish dump. The World Bank (no less) has calculated that the per capita production of garbage from urban residents in the world is now 2.6 pounds per person per day, and is projected to increase rapidly, with most of the increase in the developing countries. When you add to this is the waste produced by energy production, manufacturing and agriculture the volume of waste created every day weighs more than the combined weight the 7 billion inhabitants of the planet!

There will soon be more plastic in the oceans than fish. 90% of all sea birds have plastic in their bodies. The first global analysis of all mass-produced plastics "Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made" was produced by the University of California and published in July 2017. It found that a total of 8.3bn tonnes of non-biodegradable plastic has been produced since plastic production began in the 1950s "with the majority ending up in landfill or in the oceans. Of the nearly seven billion tonnes of plastic waste generated during 2015, only 9% was recycled and 12% incinerated. The rest went into the environment (mostly the oceans) and will last for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years in one form or another.

The message is clear and relentless. Modern humans, 'homo sapiens' "ourselves" are set to determine, during the course of the present (21st) century, whether or not the planet we live on, with millions of other species, will continue to be a habitable space.

We, as a species, cannot continue living in the destructive way we have for most of our existence "and since the industrial revolution in particular. Wars and conflict over energy resources have become more frequent. People fleeing desertification, floods, or fires fall foul of national immigration controls and face the wrath of the police and the immigration service. The UN estimates that approximately 50 million people are 'environmental refugees', forced to leave their regions of origin in the wake of drought, floods, soil erosion, and the extension of export oriented agriculture. The transition to this new reality is endangering the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people, especially women, children and the elderly, and could contribute to a complete collapse of our species.

## Capitalism, modern humans,

## and the planet

We can agree, as revolutionary socialists, that the capitalist system, with its insatiable drive for profit and growth, is the most environmentally destructive system of society the planet has ever faced. It alienates human beings from their environment as well as from the results of their labour. It is the most socially divisive system the world has ever seen in terms of the denial of human and civil rights and economic exploitation. There is no dispute on the left about this. As socialists, we struggle against capitalism every day of our lives.

The question that arises, however, and which remains controversial, is not whether capitalism is ecologically destructive but whether the environmental and climate crisis can be reduced to the role of capitalism "as is often implied in the writing of Marxists and socialist environmentalists. The answer to this question is no. In the end, capitalism is a human construct. It is one of the forms of social organisation adopted by modern humans in the course of their/our evolution on this planet "and hopefully it will not be the final one. It is not 'speciesism', or anti-Marxist to say this "it is objective reality. The fact that is based on exploitation and divided by class does not make any less of a human construct.

In any case (as the Commission's text points out) when major parts of the world were removed from the capitalist sphere of influence for much of the 20th century in the form of the Stalinist dictatorships ecological destruction was arguable even worse.

It is, therefore, time to accept, uncomfortable as it might be, that despite its unparalleled destructive capacity, capitalism is not the only environmental challenge to the planet. Modern humans, 'homo sapiens' i.e. ourselves, have also played and continue to play a major destructive role as well. In fact the two factors are ultimately indivisible, since in the end capitalism is itself a human construct. It is just one of the constructs (or forms of social organisation) devised by modern

humans in the course of their/our evolution on the planet.

The impact of human beings on the planet has now been brought into sharp focus by the decision of the scientific community, globally, to propose a change to the definition of the current geological epoch from the Holocene (the period since the last ice age) to the epoch of the Anthropocene—an epoch defined by the impact of modern humans on the planet and its biosphere. It is important that we fully support this development that can help to clarify the situation and help to develop the struggle.

Modern humans are unique, and our influence on the ecology of the planet predates the advent of capitalism and will postdate it as well. Since they (we) emerged from Africa some 180,000 years ago we have always had a disproportionate impact on other species given our intellectual capacity, hunting skills, organisational and linguistic abilities and drive to explore. We are the only species that has invaded every habitat on earth and is capable of destroying the planet and its biosphere many times over—by ecological degradation or nuclear war—unless we consciously decide (or manage) not to do so. We are the only species capable of acting consciously (rather than by instinct) and of understanding our own existence and the consequences of our own actions. We cannot ignore this situation and the impact this has on the planet and the other species that live on it.

Modern humans have been responsible for the demise of many of the large mammals that had no other predators but were vulnerable to modern humans. With the expansion of maritime capability sailors hunted to extinction isolated and vulnerable species such as the dodo, the great auk, the giant tortoise, and flighted birds that had evolved with no fear of predation. Such species went from abundance to extinction in very short periods of time. The large and slow-moving Steller's sea cow, from around the Commander Islands in the Bering Sea, was hunted to extinction within 27 years of its discovery by human beings. We invented farming 12,000

years ago, which facilitated a further leap in food production and population growth.

How can we ignore this situation when we confront the ecological crisis? Nor can we refuse to take any responsibility for it. It is true that the richest in society bare the greatest responsibility, but in the end it is our planet and the only one available.

## The problems of the radical left

The radical left had a disastrous 20th century as far as the ecology of the planet was concerned—and therefore some humility should be exercised in terms of the rest of the movement. The mainstream organisations regarding themselves as Marxist—whether from the Stalinist, Maoist, or Trotskyist traditions—were not only absent from the ecological struggle most of that time but went on to embrace the worse aspects of capitalist logic in the shape of growth and productivism. There were very important individuals from the radical left or Trotskyist tradition, in the Global North, and indeed small currents, both before and soon after the WW2, that opposed this but were unable to reverse the overall direction of travel. We can mention in terms of the USA pioneers such as Rachel Carson, Roderick Frazier Nash, Scott Nearing, and Barry Commoner all of whom made major contributions and came from socialist or ecosocialist backgrounds.

In the Global South, where the ecological crisis had its greatest impact and there was already a much stronger ecosocialist dynamic, particularly in the indigenous and peasant movements. There were socialists such as Chico Mendes in Brazil, and Vandana Shiva, the socialist, feminist and ecological activist in India. There were also important mass movements like the peasant's movement in Peru, led by Hugo Blanco, that rejected this framework.

Despite these outstanding contributions, however, the vast bulk of organisations defining themselves

as Marxist or socialist were not involved. They regarded the ecological struggle at best a middle-class diversion and stood aside from the struggle from the 1930 until the 1980s. It will get us nowhere today to act as if, now that we are waking up, that we have all the answers. This would not represent the kind of deep and critical re-evaluation of our approach to the ecology of the planet and the forces of growth and productivism that is needed to reequip Marxism and socialism for the 21st century.

## Ecosocialism

Reequipping ourselves for the 21st century means deepening our understanding of the concept of ecosocialism—to which we committed ourselves at the last World Congress. Ecosocialism involves nothing less than the survival of planet earth as a liveable space for ourselves and the millions of other species which we share it and the time scale in which to do this is down to a few decades. It means that the ecological struggle can no longer be treated as an add-on to all other aspects of the struggle we are engaged in since it is the most important and the most fundamental of all.

It means basing ourselves on the ecological conceptions of classical Marxism itself—as developed and elaborated by Marx, Engels, and William Morris in the second half of the 19th century. There was an approach that brought together a strong ecological understanding with the revolutionary process itself. It is a heritage that was lost in the first part of the 20th century but has been re-established in recent decades not least by the work of John Bellamy Foster, in Marx's Ecology—materialism and nature published in 2000, and Paul Burkett, in Marx and Nature published in 2014.

It means that the models of a post-capitalist socialist/ecosocialist society discussed during the 20th century are inadequate to the task today, even if we discount the Stalinist monstrosities. Even the models discussed by Trotskyists and others who had rejected Stalinism, did not start to address the problem. It means

understanding that whilst a post capitalist/ecosocialist society would put us in a far better position to tackle the ecological crisis it would not resolve it automatically. It means accepting that the struggle for environmental sustainability will have to continue after the socialist revolution has taken place.

It means developing a model of a post-capitalist ecosocialist society that is not only based on economic and social justice but ecological sustainability and the ability to remain so. This means an end to the use of fossil fuels and a complete changeover to renewables. It means an end to productivism and built-in obsolescence and production for use values and not exchange values. It means an end to factory farming and a big reduction in the consumption of meat. It means taking the demography of the planet into account and moving to a population size and structure that is compatible with the biosphere of the only planet. It means developing a relationship with nature based on being a part of nature rather than in conflict with it and existing as its expense.

## Economic growth and population growth

It is increasingly recognised on the environmental radical left that endless growth and productivism, whether generated by capitalism, or in the last century by the Stalinist states, is completely unsustainable, and will destroy the biosphere of the planet if it continues. Either a natural resource becomes over-exploited to the point of exhaustion, or because more waste is dumped into the ecosystem than can be safely absorbed, leading to dysfunction or collapse. The current global rate of growth of 3 per cent per year would grow the world economy by a factor of 16 in the course of this century and by a factor of 250 over the course of this century and the next.

We can no longer avoid the demographic issue: i.e. population growth, which is indivisible from economic growth

since it is one of the main drivers of economic growth.

The human population of the planet has almost tripled in the last 60 years—from 2.5 billion in 1952, when I left school—to 7.2 billion today. Although the rate of growth has fallen, the increase continues in absolute terms by between 70 and 80 million a year. This has been the case for the past 50 years, and shows no signs of reducing. It is the equivalent of adding the population of Germany to the planet every year.

According to the UN the population of Africa could more than double by mid-century, increasing from 1.1 billion today to 2.4 billion in 2050, and potentially reaching 4.2 billion by 2100. Nigeria's population is expected to surpass that of the United States before the middle of the century. Nigeria could start to rival China as the second most populous country in the world. By 2100 several other countries could have populations over 200 million, namely Indonesia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda and Niger. During the same period, the population of developed regions will remain largely unchanged at around 1.3 billion people.

The key to stabilising the demography of the planet is the empowerment of women to control their own bodies and the rejection of any and all forms of coercive population control. Empowerment means giving women the means to control their own fertility by making contraception and abortion freely available to women, giving them access to education, and lifting them out of poverty. It means challenging the influence of religion, patriarchy or communal pressure, which denies them the right to choose.

Both the highest birth rates and lowest carbon footprints are to be found in the impoverished countries of the Global South. More than 220 million women are denied basic reproductive services—which can be (and often are) the difference between life and death. There are 80m unintended pregnancies a year globally—which equals the global population increase. 74,000 women

die every year as a result of failed back-street abortions—a disproportionate number of these in the Global South. Every year, around 288,000 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth—and 99% of them occur in developing countries. It is a policy that helps the women of the Global South and helps the planet at the same time—it is win-win again.

In any case the proposition that most women in the Global South, given genuine choice, would choose to have the large families many of them have today (or allow their husbands to insist on such families) is unconvincing. Some would but most would not. Multiple pregnancies with little space between them, wreak havoc in terms of the health and life expectancy of the mothers concerned.

## Food production

The question posed, in terms of food, is not just whether enough food can be produced to sustain the existing human population of 7.2 billion, or indeed the 9 or 10 billion people projected by mid-century. The question is whether such numbers can be fed without destroying the biosphere of the planet: i.e. without a further extension intensified agriculture and by the ever-increasing use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and monocropping techniques.

Agriculture is by far the biggest global user of fresh water which is becoming increasingly scarce. The demand for fresh water globally has long outpaced the available renewable sources that are replenished by rainfall or snow melt. Ancient sources (in the form of aquifers) are in trouble. Either do not renew at all or renew at rates far short of the replacement. The distribution is uneven. Some regions are relatively well supplied while others face drought and increasing salinisation through the rising sea level. In much of the developing world, clean water is either desperately hard to come by or requires laborious work or big investment to obtain. According to the UN, the demand for water has grown at more than twice the rate of the population during the last century. By

2025, an estimated 1.8 billion people will live in areas plagued by water scarcity, with two-thirds of the world's population living in water-stressed regions.

The question posed, in terms of food production, therefore, is not just whether enough food can be produced to feed the existing human population of 7 billion, or indeed the 9 or 10 billion people projected by mid-century. The question is whether such populations can be fed without destroying the biosphere of the planet and depleting its fresh water supplies? Whether it can be done without a major extension intensified agriculture with the ever-increasing use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and monocropping techniques?

Some of the demands we should pose in this regard are as follows:

• The abolition of the private ownership of natural resources—land, water, forests, wind, solar, geothermal energy, and tidal systems.

• The socialization of the credit sector to provide long-term investment for renewable energy and adaptation to climate changes that are already inevitable and for aid to those who have been denied climate justice

• To defend the rights of first nations/indigenous peoples and to recognise the need to learn from the relationship they have developed with nature and with Mother Earth.

• End industrialised agriculture that dominates our global food system. A small handful of large corporations control much of the production, processing, distribution, marketing and retailing of food. This enables big businesses to wipe out competition and dictate tough terms to their suppliers. It forces farmers and consumers into poverty and hunger.

• A big reduction in global meat production and consumption.

• A big reduction in food waste.

• Promote food sovereignty that asserts the right of those who produce, distribute, and consume the

food to control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution.

• Protect the biodiversity of the planet in the production of food by ending the use of pesticides and herbicides and ban GMO foods.

## The state of the movement

### 1) The indigenous struggle

According to the UN there are an estimated 370 million indigenous peoples on the planet in 90 countries and speaking roughly 7,000 languages. They have long been the most effect defenders of the ecology of the planet and its wildernesses and the best guardians of its integrity and biodiversity. Their struggle often combines with that of peasants and rural communities, but with a direct, more specific, relationship with nature and naturally assumes an ecosocialist framework. This goes alongside their own struggles for sovereignty over their own lands, territories, resources and for self-determination.

Many indigenous peoples live on resource-rich territory, partly because they have protected and preserved it for generations. This makes them prime targets for both extractive industries and land grabs. They have struggled against colonisation for more than 500 years and continue to struggle against all forms of colonisation and racism. Aboriginal peoples from Canada and the northern United States have been in the forefront the struggle against the construction of pipe lines to service the extraction of the Alberta tar sands. Fifty indigenous organisations signed a treaty to oppose the treaty in 2016 including the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, which opposes the North Dakota pipeline.

The Indigenous Peoples Global Summit was held in Anchorage Alaska in April 2009—in advance of the Copenhagen COP to the held in December. It was the largest gathering of indigenous people ever held to discuss climate change. It was attended by 500 people representing

80 nations: from the Arctic, North America, Latin America Africa, the Caribbean and Russia.

Following the defeat of the climate movement at the Copenhagen climate summit (COP15) the Bolivian president Evo Morales called a Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, in Cochabamba Bolivia, in April 2010, in order to make the voices of the peoples, including the indigenous peoples. Over 35,000 people attended the conference despite international travel being disrupted by a volcanic eruption in Iceland (volcano Eyjafjallajökull) which prevented many thousands more from attending.

### 2) The wider struggle

The struggle to defend the planet and against global warming and climate change requires the broadest possible coalition involving not just the power of the indigenous movements and the labour movement but also the social movements that have strengthened and radicalised in recent years and have played an increasing role in the climate movement in particular. Organisations such as Plane Stupid, Take the Power, and the Ende Gelände movements in Germany have led important direct-action campaigns. La Via Campesina is one of the largest social movements in the world, and brings together more than 200 million small and medium-scale farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous peoples, migrants and agricultural workers from 70 countries. The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) is one of the biggest components of Via Campesina, with 1.5 million members, which campaigns for access to land by the poor and for land redistribution. It has led land occupations by the rural poor forcing the Brazilian Government to resettle hundreds of thousands of families. Both the NGOs and the Greens have also made important contributions to the struggle. Longstanding organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace have grown and radicalised in recent years and new groupings have come on the scene such as Avaaz and 38 degrees that have radicalised, particularly in the run up to Paris, and have an impressive mobilising ability.



The Paris COP 21 with all its weaknesses (and there are many) was a gain for the movement in that it recognised for the first time the anthropogenic nature of the climate crisis (in sharp contrast to Copenhagen) and it set a target containing the increase in the average surface temperature of the planet below 1.5°C which is a target with transitional implications. It was not won without a struggle, however. It was the direct result of a determined battle, throughout the conference, by those countries that will disappear under the waves as a result of a temperature rise in excess of 1.5°C. A coalition of a hundred vulnerable countries, led by the Marshall Islands, organised what they called a ‘High Ambition Coalition’ to coordinate their campaign. Many of them have long campaigned around the slogan ‘1.5 to stay alive’ but no one had listened. This struggle needs to go alongside a world-wide policy which satisfies real human needs, which are not determined by the market but by a democratic discussion allowing the people to take their destiny in their own hands, liberated from market alienation. The task now is to build on the gains i.e. the new targets and objectives established in Paris whilst fighting to ensure that the individual countries meet the commitments to which they have agreed in terms of carbon reduction.

The involvement of the trade unions in the climate struggle is ultimately crucial, though it remains difficult in such a defensive period. Progress has never-the-less been by initiatives such as the campaign for a million green jobs in Britain which has the support of most major trade unions and the TUC. At the international level the ‘just transition’ campaign by the ITUC (i.e. a socially just transition from fossil fuel to green jobs) is very important, although it takes place in a reformist framework of course like the vast majority of trade union campaigns and actions. Campaigns such as ‘Trade Unions for Energy Democracy’ and the ‘Labor Network for Sustainability’. These initiatives have credibility in the unions because they address the issue of job-losses as a result of the changeover to green energy.

### 3) The FI

The FI declared itself ecosocialist at the last World Congress in 2010. In doing so it became the only international current of the radical left to do so. It was an important decision but it was only a first step on which to build. The strongest advocates of it were its sections from the impoverished countries of the Global South that are the most impacted by extreme weather events, have contributed least in terms of carbon emissions, and are most deprived when it comes to climate justice. Some of these sections were already in effect ecosocialist.

The FI section in Mindanao in the Philippines, for example, a region facing ever more frequent and powerful typhoons, has long been involved in the defence of their communities against extreme weather events. They are also involved in the development of agricultural methods based on food sovereignty and the exclusion of genetically modified seeds from multi-nationals like Monsanto. Instead they are harvesting their own seeds and producing organic food for the local communities.

In Bangladesh, one of the most vulnerable, low-lying, and most impacted countries in the world in terms of climate change, is already suffering from rising sea levels and the salinification of vast areas of the country, the FI section is deeply involved in the struggle against climate change and rising sea level. The FI section is centrally involved major peasant movements campaigning both against climate change and for land redistribution along the lines of the MST in Brazil. Along with La Via Campesina and other organisations they are campaigning for food sovereignty, the rights of peasant producers and for land redistribution. They have been heavily involved in organising climate caravans since 2011, which have campaigned throughout Bangladesh and into Nepal and India against climate change and global warming.

In Pakistan, FI comrades have also been on the sharpest end the climate struggle. In 2010 devastating floods submerged a fifth of the country, and

left millions homeless. Twenty million people were affected and 2,000 lost their lives, 12m people had their homes damaged or destroyed. Half a million livestock were lost, and 10,000 schools destroyed.

Five comrades were jailed for defending villagers after a landslide blocked the Hunza River in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan, sweeping homes away and killing 19 people. The slide forming a 23km long lake that submerged three villages leaving 500 people homeless and 25,000 stranded. They are still in jail today seven years later and campaigns are still continuing for their release.

In Brazil FI comrades have been involved in defence of the Amazon and against the disastrous REDDs treaty. In Latin America, the organisations of the FI have been involved in mobilisations around the People’s Summit at Cochabamba.

In Europe and North America FI comrades have been increasingly involved in climate mobilisations whether around COPs in Copenhagen and Paris, or around more localised struggles against fracking in Britain, against the tar sands in the Canadian state or against the Keystone Pipeline in the US and Canadian state.

Some radical left parties, Europe-wide, have defined themselves ecosocialist including the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Socialist Left Party in Norway and, formally at least, the Parti de Gauche in France.

## Transitional method

A transitional approach is crucial that we conduct the struggle to defend the ecology of the planet as an integral part of our overall struggle to end capitalism and establish an ecosocialist society that is economically and socially just as well as ecologically sustainable.

This does not mean, however, which is the logic of the Commission’s text along with much of the wider

Radical left – that the solution to the ecological crisis today is the overthrow and replacement of capitalism world-wide in the next two or three decades. This is what I call the ‘credibility gap’. Whilst ecological catastrophe is indeed just around the corner there are few signs that this is the case in terms of global ecosocialist revolution. In fact, in practical terms, if global ecosocialist revolution, in the next two or three decades, is the solution to global warming then there is no solution to global warming.

It is equally problematic to conclude or imply that nothing significant can be done to defend the environment whilst capitalism exists, since it would by then be too late. The working class would inherit a dead or a semi-dead planet, and there is no ecosocialism (or jobs) on a dead planet.

The reality is that a successful defence of the ecology of the planet means a struggle, here and now, to force capitalism to make serious changes here and now. And it is not impossible. It is against the logic of capitalism and the governments that are based on it, but significant change has already happened and it has been against this logic. Advances range from the reversal of the destruction of the ozone layer, to the defeat of nuclear power in Germany to the advances made in green energy, even though they remain inadequate to the task.

We have to advance demands that give people hope rather than despair – and there is little hope in a policy of one solution revolution.

What is required, therefore, is not a maximalist approach but a transitional approach. In other words, a struggle to end capitalism in the context of a struggle to force capitalism to take the steps necessary to defend the ecology of the planet – for example the full implementation of the commitments to the Paris agreement. It is a process that is described very well in the conclusion of The Commission’s text – which was drafted by Michael Lowy – and which in my view is out of line with the rest of the text. It says the following, with which I strongly agree:

‘To dream and to fight for green socialism or as some say, for solar communism, does not mean that we do not to fight for concrete and urgent reforms. Without any illusion in “green capitalism”, we must try to win time and impose on the powers in place, concrete measures against the ongoing catastrophe, starting with a radical reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases.

These urgent ecological demands can favour a process of radicalisation on the condition that we refuse to limit their objectives by obeying to the capitalist market or ‘competitiveness’.

Each small victory, each partial advance can immediately bring us to a higher and more radical demand. These struggles on concrete problems are important, not only because partial victories in themselves are welcome, but also because they contribute to the growth of an ecological and socialist consciousness and promote autonomy and self-organisation from below. This autonomy and this self-organisation are the necessary and decisive preconditions for a radical transformation of the world, this means, a revolutionary transformation which is only possible by the self-emancipation of the oppressed and the exploited: workers and peasants, women, indigenous communities, and also all persons prosecuted because of their race, religion or nationality.

The leading elites of the system, retrenched behind their barricades, are incredibly powerful and the forces of the radical opposition are small. But their development into a mass movement, unprecedented in its numbers, is the only hope to stop the catastrophic course if capitalist ‘growth’ and to invent a desirable form of life, more-rich in human qualities, a new society based on the values of human dignity, solidarity, freedom and respect for ‘Mother Nature’.

The changes we need today in order move in the direction of ecosocialism and reverse the climate crisis are not complex, though it will mean a big struggle to achieve them. We should call for the following:

A complete and urgent break from fossil energy. Keep the oil in the soil and the coal in the hole. Ban the use of lignite coal, tar sands, fracking for gas and all other forms of extreme energy production. We should call for disinvestment in the fossil fuel sector and the end of subsidies for the development of projects based on fossil fuel energy.

• A crash programme to convert to renewables – as a part of a socialised energy system. We need at the same time a big reduction in energy use at every level of society including through the insulation of both our private and public buildings since renewables will not be enough to replace our current profligate consumption.

• An end to nuclear energy.

• We should call for strongly progressive tariffs when it comes to energy and water: tariffs that start at zero and increase as usage increases. This would both help the poorest people and cut the use of energy and water.

• An end to the throwaway society, designed to generate vast quantities of unnecessary commodities to feed the capitalist obsession with profit and growth and the growing scandal of plastic waste. We should end the practice of planned obsolescence. We should end the production of single use plastic commodities and control the disposal of plastic where it is used. Over the last ten years we have produced more plastic than during the whole of the last century. It takes 500-1,000 years for plastic to degrade. Virtually every piece of plastic that was ever made still exists in some shape or form (except the small amount that has been incinerated). The effects of this on biodiversity is already catastrophic.

• A big reduction in the use of the car, particularly for individual use. Meanwhile we need the elimination of the internal combustion (most urgently diesel), and changeover to electric cars with big investment in the necessary technology. We need a big reduction in air travel, the ending of short-haul flights (in favour of rail) and an end to airport expansion.

â€¢ A big reduction in individual carbon and ecological foot prints, particularly in the Global North.

â€¢ The use of progressive taxation to reduce the use of fossil fuelsâ€”with the imposition of tax on air and maritime fuel an urgent necessity.

â€¢ A big reduction of working time without loss of pay and a socially just transition to green jobs for workers in the fossil fuel industry. The ITUC has made an important start in this regard and should be supported.

â€¢ Give refugee status to the victims of ecological/climate disasters; Full respect for the democratic rights of refugees in general.

â€¢ An end to end the carnage against the natural world. Elephants are still being hunted to extinction for their tusks, rhinos are hunted to extinction for their horns, tigers the same to use their bones in Chinese medicine and sharks are being killed in vast numbers just their fins and whales for

the illegal meat trade. At the same time the bush meat trade is still flourishing, alongside the trapping of live wild animals for the pet trade, in Africa and South America in particular. Hunting for sport should be ended.

## **An exit strategy from fossil fuel**

Whilst the above demands are crucially important, the unavoidable reality is that as long as fossil fuels are the cheapest form of energy available they are going to be used. There is an urgent need, therefore, for an exit strategy that can bring about a very big reduction in carbon emissions in the two or three decades we have available. The most effective way to do this is by making fossil fuels much more expensive by a method that is socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding mass popular support.

The best proposal on the table in this regard is James Hansen's cap and dividend propositionâ€”or something along similar lines. It provides an effective framework for a very big reduction in fossil fuel emissions, here and now whilst capitalism exists, in a decade or two, and on the basis of a major transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich as an incentive to drive it forward. No other proposal does that. Nor is Hansen's proposal dependent on an international agreement, but can be fought for through the national political arena in every country.

It would need, as Hansen recognises, to go alongside many other measures such as changeover to renewable energy, a major programme of energy conservation, an end to waste and obsolescent production, plus many of the demands listed above.

I am not proposing that the FI adopts Hansen's proposal here and now but we should give serious consideration to adopting either Hansen's proposal or something on similar lines.

# **Our line on Greece without prism or omission**

**20 November 2017, by Léon Crémieux**

The text by Manos ("**Greece, a story without the distorting prism of Syriza**") follows a clear thesis:

Syriza's experience reflects the impasse of "broad parties", "anti-austerity governments" and the failure of anti-capitalist left-wing movements accused of supporting Tsipras and Syriza, like the Fourth International leadership.

The advantage of Manos' text is that it deals directly with the debate that existed within the revolutionary left concerning Greece and defends the orientations of the OKDE Spartakos by polemicising against that of the FI leadership without falling too far into the caricatures that we experience elsewhere. This allows a concrete debate without having to polemicise against floods of false information and

calumny. But at the same time Manos mixes together individual positions and collective positions, and those of various currents with those of the FI.

For our part, we will discuss what concerns us, that is to say the orientations elaborated within the bodies of the FI and the published texts and resolutions of our bodies, in particular from spring 2012, and especially from January to September 2015, from the election of Syriza to the day after Tsipras' acceptance of the 3rd memorandum.

We followed a political line, not hopes, fears or disappointments, a line shared by the vast majority of sections of the International. We have had many disagreements with the OKDE comrades since the beginning of this experiment, but nevertheless shared

many common analyses:

We will try to take the various questions in order, taking up the same ones as those raised by Manos.

## **Was Syriza, especially in 2012, an expression of the rise of the mass movement?**

Syriza is the product of the regroupment of Synaspismos (Eurocommunist organization resulting from successive splits of the communist movement) and groups of the far left. Although the vast majority

of the trade union movement was in 2012 organized by PASOK, the right and the KKE with PAME, Manos suggests that Syriza would have been in 2012 an electoral receptacle, unrelated to the mass movement. Everyone knows that in the 2000s, Syriza also had an anchor in the trade union movement (notably in education) and with trade union cadres from the KKE, a weaker base than the Social Democracy, the Stalinists and the right, but comparable to that of the far left. And above all, Syriza grew among the youth, like all the radical left, with the rise of the global justice movement. In 2013, Syriza had 30,000 members, and even with militant criteria different in general than the extreme left, it cannot be said, as Manos does, that Syriza "has never been organically linked to the movement" because, seen from the point of view of activist forces on the ground its presence there was at least equivalent to the 3,000 activists claimed by Antarsya. We never said that Syriza was "the organization of the mass movement." On the other hand, yes, Syriza was between 2012 and 2015 the electoral expression of the mass movement of the popular classes, movement of opposition to the memorandum, electoral expression solidly rooted in popular neighbourhoods and localities. If this result appeared in 2012, it is because in the previous years Syriza was identified on a large scale with the struggles, to the gatherings, to the movement of the Indignants. Its result in the parliamentary elections of 2012, going from 4.6% to 16.8% in 3 years, had therefore not come out of the blue. On the other hand, it is quite astounding to read, if we follow Manos correctly, that mechanically Syriza's success was the expression of the tiredness and deceleration of the movement, or worse than the retreat of the mass movement before spring 2012 was due to Syriza and his political proposals.

The waves of general strikes and movements were quite strong in 2011 and early 2012 to force the traditional parties to unite against the popular revolt and to decide early elections to restore their legitimacy. These elections of 2012 were not wanted and the Greek and European bourgeoisie

would have done well.

The challenge of these elections was therefore Greek and European. It is in this sense that we made a declaration between the two elections (Fourth International, 25 May 2012 "**The future of the workers of Europe is being decided in Greece**"), while the European right and social democracy went wild in their support for Samaras.

"the Greek radical Left, and in particular Syriza, which today occupies a central place in the Greek political situation, defends a 5-point emergency plan:

1. Abolition of the memoranda, of all measures of austerity and of the counter-reforms of the labour laws which are destroying the country.
2. Nationalization of the banks which have been largely paid by government aid.
3. A moratorium on payment of the debt and an audit which will make it possible to denounce and abolish the illegitimate debt.
4. Abolition of immunity of ministers from prosecution.
5. Modification of the electoral law which allowed PASOK and New Democracy to govern to the detriment of the Greek population and to plunge the country into crisis.

The Fourth International calls on the whole of the international workers' movement, on all the indignant, on all those who defend the ideals of the Left, to support such an emergency programme."

We were convinced of the importance of forming a government to the left of Social Democracy in the next election for workers in Greece and throughout Europe. The arrival of such a government could increase their self-confidence and contribute, under certain circumstances, to a new rise in struggles.

The five points we put forward were the synthesis of the points advanced in the spring of 2012, not only by Syriza but also by Antarsya and linked this position with the demand for an anti-

austerity government, a government of the left forces, notably Syriza / Antarsya / KKE, linked to practical proposals of a United Front in action in relation to the same forces. Although Syriza was in favour of such a government; unfortunately the KKE, of course, but also Antarsya, refused this perspective of a united front.

Manos, together with other comrades of the FI, themselves recognized in a contribution of 2012 the importance of making a political response to the Greek crisis, but at the same time wrote that this response could only be propagandist: "a situation in Greece, the watchword of workers' government is becoming relevant. It is obviously not applicable now: it is even difficult to predict at the present time the possible composition. Such a government should be able to implement an emergency program to fight the crisis, ready to implement key transition measures, for example by expropriating banks and other sectors of the economy." (Manos Skofoglou et al, 16 June 2012 "**For a program of confrontation with capitalism, for an independent anticapitalist and revolutionary party**".) We were in the spring of 2012, when Néa Dimokratia and PASOK collapsed and Syriza, with the KKE and Antarsya exceeding the 30% vote on a program of rejection of the memorandums, an anti-austerity program ... In such a situation political crisis, we felt it would be essential to put forward a political response, a government of the left, a Syriza / KKE / Antarsya government, the realization of the slogan of the workers' government, a program of transitional demands that were concretely supported by the Greek left. Paradoxically, by refusing a concrete slogan of this kind, the comrades wrote in the same text: "If a Syriza-led government took measures favourable to workers, such as the questioning of memoranda, it is evident that the revolutionaries would support them, ("**For a program of confrontation with capitalism, for an independent anticapitalist and revolutionary party**") while saying that a Syriza government could be nothing but a parliamentary coalition, but without proposing any alternative. We were trying to put forward a comprehensive political response that went beyond

propaganda in a situation where the movement was raising the question of a political response and our positions obviously corresponded to positions in the Greek radical left. Concretely, Manos and the OKDE leadership thought it unnecessary to present this global political response, which was also the case for Antarsya, who also refused even to respond to Syriza's proposals for the "government of the left", only calling for the development of struggles without raising the question of government.

Manos poses the question of the strategy put forward by OKDE as an alternative to the proposal of a government of the lefts:

And there the answer is clear. Faced with a major social and political crisis, requiring the implementation of transitional demands, Manos persists in saying that the only answer could only be the call for generalized self-organization. Although real self-organizing experiences existed in Greece in 2012, they were largely limited and marginal. The call for their generalization and, above all, for them to play a central political role, an alternative to the parliamentary system, could not be the answer of the day. If a demand of workers' government could only, according to the comrades be propagandist, then what can we say about a slogan equivalent to "all power to the soviets"?

So our approach to Syriza and the governmental question in 2012 was not an illusion, a hope, but an analysis of the importance of the issue and the need for concrete policy answers. This is a fairly standard approach for revolutionary Marxists. All the more so since the highlighting of the key points on which Syriza had spoken in the May elections and a unit of the anti-austerity left-wing forces corresponded to this concrete situation, opposing the proposals in the leadership Syriza of the government of salvation or national union with capitalist representatives. Moreover, this unique front line for which we spoke was of course about the revolutionary forces present in both Syriza and Antarsya. Therefore, the essential disagreement we expressed was not the party-building

choice of OKDE Spartakos not to join Syriza, but the orientation it followed. I would also be important for the comrades to take a balance sheet of the orientation as Antarsya and as OKDE Spartakos in the 2011-2013 period.

## Was Syriza different from a reformist party?

We did not need to redwash what Syriza was to defend such an orientation. We have always said and written that Syriza was led by a reformist current, coming from Synaspismos and the euro-communist tradition of gradualism. And within Syriza there was a constant and concrete battle between these reformist currents and the opposition in which anti-capitalist and revolutionary left-wing currents were had a certain weight. We also maintain that, in spite of the bureaucratic methods of the Tsipras leadership (which were challenged on several occasions by DEA comrades) Syriza did not yet have such a strong crystallization of reformist bureaucratic apparatus linked to structures local institutions or the state apparatus itself, as the PCF, the PCE or the Greek or Portuguese communist parties. On the other hand, the OKDE comrades want to make Syriza between 2012 and 2015 an organization equivalent to the social democratic or Stalinist parties. And here again we are dealing with a self-fulfilling prophecy, in the logic of the comrades the future proves the past: the proof that they were inserted in the state apparatus is that they were there easily integrated from January 2015. We said at the same time that the context, which it is unnecessary to describe again, contributed to giving Syriza a radical role very different from the role played by the European Communist parties, not to mention social-democracy.

Manos blames Syriza's international supporters (including us no doubt) for being blind to Syriza's constant programmatic retreats.

"They supported an "emergency plan",

failing to see that not even that would be even achievable since SYRIZA was committed to the bourgeois and imperialist institutions as well as to private property and the rules of capitalist economy." he says. ("Greece, a story without the distorting prism of Syriza")

We were evidently far from the blissful ignorance described by Manos. Having a united front policy does not imply either naivety or blindness, nor taking will o' the wisps for lanterns or promises for deeds. The secretariat of the Bureau pointed out in its statement made on the eve of 25 January 2015: (Fourth International, 12 January 2015 "**Fourth International: On 25 January, a turning point for Greece and Europe!**")

"A lot is at stake today in Syriza, which is at a crossroads. The "presidential office" and Alexis Tsipras - the Syriza leadership - are multiplying contradictory statements: rejection of the troika's "memorandums", stopping paying debt charges, and suppression of most of this debt, but at the same time seeking an agreement with the leaders of the European Union who, in order to continue their loans, demand application of the budget policies, the fall in the Greek people's standard of living, and the destruction of the public services.

At this stage, the dominant theme in Syriza's campaign is the commitments of the Thessalonika programme: restoring wages and pensions to their pre-crisis level; return to the pre-crisis collective agreements; return to a minimum threshold of taxable income to 12,000 euros; suppression of the tax on heating fuel oil. These measures, if they are applied, will have a meaning for the Greek people and further afield in Europe: austerity can be blocked.

This is why this dual discourse will very quickly run up against the policy of the ruling classes, in Greece and Europe: either the diktats of the EU are accepted, and the experiment will be defeated, or one remains faithful to the fight against austerity, while calling for mass mobilization, and there is the possibility of a social



rebound. It will be difficult to escape this alternative. "

And to continue with the following paragraph in this statement, quoted by Manos but stopping midway:

"The challenge is clear and decisive: it is necessary to defeat the Greek right and far right and to do everything so that the Greek left, of which Syriza is the main component, wins these elections, in order to create a social and political dynamic for a left government, which must strive to bring together all the forces ready to break with the austerity policy and to fight against the pitfalls of chauvinistic nationalism. This government must be a government of the lefts and not a national union government preparing conciliation with the ruling classes and the EU. The rejection of the memorandums, of the budgetary diktats of the EU, the non-repayment of most of the debt, the first measures of an anti-austerity government, are the questions on which the confrontation with the EU will be played out, but they will not be able to be consolidated without a policy which from the outset breaks with all the antisocial attacks on the Greek people in the last four years in the field of wages, health, the right to work and housing; which starts to take anticapitalist measures, of incursion into capitalist property, nationalization of the banks, and certain key sectors of the economy, reorganization of the economy to satisfy elementary social needs. To impose these solutions, social mobilization, workers' control, self-organization and social self-management are essential. Finally the conquest of the government, within a parliamentary framework, can, in exceptional circumstances, be a first step on the path to an anticapitalist rupture but, there too, this one can be confirmed only if one government anti-austerity creates the conditions for a new power being pressed on Popular Assemblies, in the companies, the districts and the cities."

We could say more. But the question that we were continually posing was the unity of the radical left:

"For the slogan "Not one step backwards" to take on stronger

substance, it must gain support from a unitive policy of the whole of the Greek left, Syriza obviously but also the KKE and Antarsya. Within the KKE, there are increasing doubts about the ultra-sectarian orientation of the leadership. As for Antarsya, it is divided on the possibility of an alliance with a "national communist" current - Alvanos's Plan B. The Greek left wing, Syriza and Antarsya have particular responsibility in building a unitive project, which goes beyond these organizations, but can bring together trade unionists, campaign activists, ecologists."

Finally in February 2015, during the IC meeting, after the agreement between Varoufakis, Tsipras et la Troïka we could only confirm this orientation:

"The demands put forward by the Eurogroup demonstrate that the idea of a break with the austerity policies without a confrontation with the European Union is impossible in practice.

Over and above the words, in the first agreements made between the Eurogroup and the government of Tsipras, the government undertakes to reimburse fully and in respect of the deadlines its creditors. This is a retreat on the undertakings given to the Greek people." (Fourth International, 2 March 2015 "Solidarity with the Greek people!")

We must also note that this resolution was voted unanimously (with 4 abstentions) by the members of the International Committee. Manos himself did not propose any amendment or contradictory resolution, limiting himself to one abstention (three other comrades also abstained, the IC not having incorporated amendments attenuating the criticism vis-à-vis Syriza).

We are therefore very far from an alleged line of the FI of political support to Tsipras, of tailending the leadership of Syriza which Manos denounces in his text.

The same debate continued during the final crisis of the first Tsipras government in June / July 2015 around the adoption of a third memorandum. And once again, Manos twists the

positions of the Bureau to justify his thesis of "support of the FI Bureau for Tsipras"

Manos writes, referring to the resolution of 7 July written the day after the overwhelming victory from the NO to the referendum, "the statement of the FI Bureau praised the SYRIZA government and called the people to support it once again," (Fourth International, 8 July 2015 "The victory of the "no" announces decisive battles against the Troika")

Whatever Manos says, neither in June nor in February did we trust Tsipras. We had the same position as that expressed in February and on the eve of the referendum. We explained that Tsipras since February had been ready to make maximum concessions and to implement new austerity measures demanded by the Troika, but that the problem was that EU leaders wanted political capitulation and in no way which might have seemed honourable to Tsipras, both in Greece and in Europe. We were also obviously saying what the Greek Left was saying, whether it was the comrades of Antarsya or those of the left of Syriza, that the continuation of the NO would be a total break with the dictates, the cancellation of payment of the debt, nationalization and direct control of the entire banking system. The realization of these tasks could only be the result of popular mobilization. And we reaffirm (statement of 7 July 2015 "The victory of the "no" announces decisive battles against the Troika") that "the alternative for the Greek government will be the same as in the previous weeks: accept an agreement that will continue and aggravate attacks against the population or take another path, that of rupture " ... ..and we had the same approach as before in relation to the Greek government: to affirm that "The workers of Europe, who are being hit by the same policies, will have to mobilize alongside the Greek social and political movement in opposition to austerity, alongside the Greek government in all the measures it may take to resist the diktat of the Troïka." (as before, Manos makes only partial citations of our resolutions ...). We do not reject a word of this resolution which, of course, was not

about "praising" the Tsipras government.

We always take responsibility for our positions: support for the movement, for Greek workers, for all their organizations, including its essential component, Syriza, in the face of attacks by the Troika and European capitalist leaders. We also take part in the campaign for the audit of Greece, support for the rejection of the memoranda and the unilateral suspension of the payment of the debt, a campaign deemed confused by OKDE-Spartakos comrades. The FI and its sections in Europe, in particular, have also put their strength into developing a network of concrete solidarity with the Greek social and political movement, through political initiatives, networking ... which had no complacency or optimism towards the government and aimed instead to support those who in Greece were building social mobilization. And here, we must recognize the weakness of the mobilization in Europe, despite the determined action of many militants.

On the other hand, we also, in the aftermath of the final surrender of Tsipras, took a stance for the action in

Greece of all the left-wing forces opposed to this capitulation, while the OKDE-Spartakos comrades (like Manos in his text) placed the Syriza leadership and the left opposition which was going to form Popular Unity on practically the same level.

This debate is essential. In Europe, we are or may be confronted with situations similar to the Greek experience, with the crisis of institutional parties. We must therefore develop our thinking on the initiatives to be taken for anti-capitalist fronts to form and be built, bringing together forces opposed to austerity policies. We must develop our thinking on the need for a political strategy posing the question of anti-austerity governments committed to taking emergency measures to block capitalist policies. Similarly, the Greek experience, and the capitulation of Tsipras, strengthens us in the direct contradiction between an anti-austerity policy and respect for the rules of the European Union. On the other hand, on several occasions, Antarsya's comrades thought that the vector "exit from the euro" could be the main axis of a gathering, with

openings on the side of Alavanos, notably against the Directorate of Syriza. We still believe that this orientation was a dead end.

Similarly, we must also make comparative balance sheets for the years 2011/2014 in Greece and the Spanish state, although comparisons are always risky. In the Spanish state, as a result of the movement of the Indignants, Podemos was a constituent process relying on the occupation of the Squares. With a more powerful movement in Greece, an opportunity has perhaps been missed to launch a similar process of opening the anticapitalist currents to the new forces of the movement ...

In any case, we believe that the independent existence of organizations on a revolutionary basis, together with propaganda for self-organization, cannot take the place of strategy, especially when the social and political crisis poses objectively the question of anti-austerity government .

We must all have the modesty of our failures, but also the certainty that political responses are indispensable.

## Greece, a story without the distorting prism of Syriza

**20 November 2017, by Manos Skoufoglou**

During recent years, the debate on Greece has not been just a debate among the other ones. The particular intensity of the crisis, of the capitalist attack and of the social fightback, as well as the emergence of a party of reformist origin that finally managed to take power, in coalition with a nationalist right-wing party - all these have made Greece the point of reference for 5 years. The catastrophic experience of SYRIZA has marked not only the end of an era for the workers' movement in Greece, but also the impasse of the political strategy that advocated a "broad left

party" and an "anti-austerity government".

Unfortunately, this strategy was not only promoted by reformist parties, but also by the majority of the anti-capitalist left around the world. Most left leaderships were so enthusiastic about the perspective of a SYRIZA government that they wouldn't even discuss the possibility of an independent anticapitalist formation in Greece or listen to what Greek revolutionary organizations had to say about the character and role of SYRIZA. SYRIZA was the undisputed

model for a strategic project in the context of which political, organizational and electoral unity with reformists was absolutely instrumental. Now that this project has collapsed on the heads of the Greek working class, the vast majority of the proponents of this strategy is stubbornly avoiding an honest balance-sheet. After SYRIZA imposed the harsh 3rd austerity pact (memorandum) in July 2015, most of them wrote hasty articles blaming their former hero, Tsipras, for being either a traitor or so naïve as to think that he could negotiate with the



lenders, and then just left Greece aside and started envisioning the same project as SYRIZA in other countries. As a leader of the Fourth International said in the International Committee of February 2017, “if something proves wrong at some point, it doesn’t mean it was already wrong in the first place”. According to that, one can claim that nothing is ever wrong. Things just change.

If we need a clear balance-sheet of the Greek experience, though, this is exactly because the same strategy is attempted in other countries. We think that comrades who are trying to draw their conclusions from Greece may find it useful to read what the members of the Greek Section of the FI, OKDE-Spartakos, have supported during all those years and why they have opted from the very beginning to not follow or “critically” support SYRIZA, but build an independent anticapitalist project, ANTARSYA, instead. Anyone who follows the evolution of our positions step by step can ascertain that, unlike the vast majority of left narratives, our opposition to SYRIZA is not a post Christum prophecy.

Recent stories about Greece are like modern fairy-tails, full of inaccuracies, myths and “wishful thinking”. This is our modest contribution to the demystification of the recent political history of this country.

## **Has SYRIZA been an expression of the rise of the social movement?**

Most international left people would reply “yes”, with no hesitation. SYRIZA represented the mass movement, and this is why we should have all supported it. However, this is not exactly true. SYRIZA did receive the majority of the votes of the working class and the poor strata, and this could not have happened if it wasn’t for the mass movement that developed in the country. However, SYRIZA was never organically linked with the movement. The party had always a very small membership, with

particularly few workers and unionists. SYRIZA did never lead a single mass movement or workers’ strike, and its intervention in class struggles was always marginal. To present SYRIZA as a party of the mass movement is a myth. Its relation with the working class and the oppressed was a relation of electoral representation. Even this relation, though, was consolidated not during, but after the culmination point of the mass movement. During the hot period 2010-2012, SYRIZA was only polling poor results. It skyrocketed not before the spring of 2012, when the mass movement had already retreated. Struggles, sometimes important ones, went and are still going on, however the movement never reached the level of the period between May 2010 and February the 12th 2012, which has been the last really huge demonstration. One reason for this setback was definitely the easy solution that SYRIZA proposed: wait for the election to vote for a left, anti-austerity government. SYRIZA has not been an expression of the rising mass movement, but an expression of its fatigue and deceleration. And it has also been a reason for this deceleration.

## **Was there any strategic alternative to the proposal for a left government?**

During the peak of the mass movement in Greece, and especially after June 2011, both SYRIZA and the Communist Party (KKE) rushed to ask for elections. SYRIZA finally proved to be more convincing, because, unlike KKE, they promised a left government that would abolish the austerity agreements (memoranda). This promise was not only fraudulent, but also harmful, as it fostered passive anticipation and the assignment of the struggle against austerity to a parliamentary leadership. Ever since 2011, SYRIZA has been declaring that the mass movement has shown its limit, and it is time to give a “political” (that is, electoral) solution.

But no government can save the people, if the people are not organized and determined to save themselves. The calls of OKDE-Spartakos and other anticapitalist groups for generalized self-organization was confronted with skepticism or sarcasm by the majority of the left, who argued that it would be invented and utopian to speak of councils or Soviets in a situation where such things simply don’t exist. Soviets, or anything else, will never exist if nobody proposes them. However, it was not true that self-organization structures did not exist. The Syntagma square hosted a daily people’s assembly for nearly two months. The assembly formed sub-committees charged with various tasks. A self-organized radio station was installed on the square. Several every-day popular assemblies were created in different neighborhoods of Athens and in almost all relatively big cities of the country. People were asking: what if we had not a parliament which we vote for every 4 years? How else could power be organized?

It was possible to build an alternative proposal based on those, limited but actual and important, experiences of self-organization. It was possible to call for assemblies in workplaces as well. It was possible to propose that local assemblies elect their revocable representatives and turn the Syntagma Square into a national assembly. It was possible to explain that this assembly represents working people much better than the parliament and the government, and should thus claim power for itself. It was possible, even if very hard, to put forward a concrete revolutionary perspective. But SYRIZA could only fiercely oppose this perspective, and the Communist Part as well. The anticapitalist left did try, but it was still weak and not well prepared.

## **Was SYRIZA something different from a reformist party?**

Militants coming from revolutionary Marxism have developed a large

spectrum of theories to deny the reformist character of SYRIZA before it took power, in order to justify their support to the party. They were those who saw an anticapitalist party in SYRIZA. Alan Thornett was definitely not the only one who could claim that “the leadership of SYRIZA wants to trigger the overthrow of capitalism” as late as the eve of the accession of the party to power in 2015 (A. Thornett, 8 Apr 2014 [The significance of Syriza](#)). Today, the experience of the SYRIZA-ANEL government makes it needless to confront the embarrassing idea that the leadership of SYRIZA ever wanted to overthrow capitalism.

A different idea was that SYRIZA represents a new kind of reformism where “bureaucratic crystallization is not as strong as it is in the leaderships of the Communist parties of Europe” (F. Sabado 25 Apr 2013, [A few remarks on the question of government](#)). Our remarks that this is not exactly true were ignored. In terms of party bureaucracy, the leadership around Tsipras proved much more indisputable than the leaderships of the social-democratic PASOK or the right New Democracy. “But it lacked links to the state bureaucracy”, the same comrades retorted. This was no more correct. In relation to its small size, SYRIZA had a large number of long-time national or local deputies, municipal councilors, cadres in the state’s apparatus, in the administration of universities etc. The only reason why the party was not more actively involved in the management of the system is that it was very small, and nobody would offer them this opportunity. However, as soon as SYRIZA appeared ready to win the election, it immediately adopted entire sectors of the social-democratic state, local government and unionist bureaucracy. As for its will to manage the system, there was nothing exceptional in the reformism of SYRIZA.

## Was the program of SYRIZA a “grain of sand in the

## machinery” of the system?

The program of SYRIZA was getting more and more conservative and rudimentary before the party came to power. The celebrated Thessaloniki program of 2014 already rejected a large part of the program of 2012, and the program of January 2015 already refrained from the promises of the Thessaloniki program. But, of course, none of the modest promises of this last program were applied by the SYRIZA government. The international supporters of SYRIZA were blind to the constant programmatic cutback. They supported an “emergency plan”, failing to see that not even that would be even achievable since SYRIZA was committed to the bourgeois and imperialist institutions as well as to private property and the rules of capitalist economy. They defended the supposed position of SYRIZA for “no sacrifice for the euro” and failed to see that behind the rejection of the demand for rupture with the euro and the EU, there was no anti-nationalist purpose but only unwillingness to break with any capitalist institution. As soon as it won the elections, SYRIZA made it clear that its real slogan was “any sacrifice for the euro”. As for their supposed anti-nationalist sentiments, SYRIZA formed a government with the nationalist right party of Independent Greeks (ANEL).

The enthusiasm of the international SYRIZA supporters made them see promises as already accomplished facts. Wishful thinking turned into pure fiction. According to a member of the Fourth International Bureau, SYRIZA was a “grain of sand in the machinery”, as it “returned the legal minimum wage to its former level (751 euros)”, “dissolved the entity created by the Troika to manage privatisations” and “cancelled the sale of the ports of Piraeus and Thessaloniki” (E. Toussaint 12 Feb 2015, [Syriza: “A grain of sand in the machinery”](#)). Of course, none of these ever happened, and the government never claimed any of those reforms. As soon as it was elected, the SYRIZA government started negotiating with the bourgeois class and the

international capitalist institutions, and soon totally aligned with them. This was dictated by its reformist character, and was thus absolutely predictable. There is nothing exceptional in the reformism of SYRIZA regarding this issue, as well: in the crucial moment, reformism backs the capitalist camp. On the IV website, we have read several times that “the comrades of the KKE and ANTARSYA made an elementary error in seeing SYRIZA’s proposal for a left government as something that would simply manage capitalism” (R. Fidler, 17 Aug 2015, [Greece: Was, and Is There, an Alternative?](#)). Now, in the light of the experience of the SYRIZA government, who made an “elementary error”?

## Would the election of a left government bring self-confidence and combativity to the people?

Another usual justification for the support to SYRIZA was that, even if a SYRIZA government could not confront austerity, it could raise class self-confidence and trigger mass mobilizations, or even a pre-revolutionary situation. In the words of a comrade who was convinced that a “Syriza-led anti-austerity government of the left” would be “a workers’ government in Marxist parlance”, “a pre-revolutionary situation could quickly emerge if Syriza is elected and implements its programme (A. Thornett, 16 June 2012 [Spectacular stakes in the Greek elections](#)). This abstract scenario was utterly refuted by facts. No progressive reforms or “emergency” measures were implemented. SYRIZA’s broken promises did not bring combativity, but disillusionment and confusion. Passivity and parliamentary expectations, both nurtured by SYRIZA and its supporters, had rendered the people unprepared for a new round of strikes. The resistance of the working class against the introduction of the 3rd

austerity pact (memorandum) in July 2015 was weaker than the one against the 1st and the 2nd memoranda. The situation got worse afterwards. The pension reform of 2016 and the 4th austerity pact of May 2017 were imposed with almost no reaction. Social anger will probably explode again, and we are counting on that. But it is undoubted that the SYRIZA government did not favor workers' mobilization. On the contrary, it was the government that managed to restrain, and thus suppress, social and workers' reactions more than any previous one amid the crisis.

## **Do workers and the people trust those who stand alongside them in reformist projects?**

One of the innumerable arguments that always concluded that everybody should support SYRIZA is that, if SYRIZA fails to deliver on its promises, its base will revolt and follow the left wing of the party. People would trust the left wing more than the anticapitalist opposition outside SYRIZA, because it is with the former that they have fought together for years. A very old and dogmatic concept was repeated here: revolutionaries should stand alongside the working class in labour parties so as to gain their trust, and be ready to lead them out of those parties when the leadership betrays them. However, SYRIZA was never a massive party, with a vivid internal life and strong bonds between the leadership and the rank and file. The period is not the same anymore, neither are parties. The above abstract scenario failed altogether. The Left Platform of SYRIZA did create a split and leave the party after the 3rd memorandum to create Popular Unity. But they only attracted a small minority of the SYRIZA members. A large part among those who left SYRIZA is not in Popular Unity. Even more, Popular Unity has been in a constant state of crisis ever since its creation. Organizations and tendencies abandon the project one after another, and the

party is in no position to take any substantial initiative. The rank and file of SYRIZA did not trust them, and why would they, since the leadership of Popular Unity has always been an organic part of SYRIZA, including four first-class ministers in its first cabinet. The crisis of the Popular Unity is far worse than the pressures which ANTARSYA (the anticapitalist left front), the Communist Party of anarchist groups suffer because of the setback in the mass movement. Being long-time members of SYRIZA did not help the Popular Unity be a massive party. On the contrary, to not have been in SYRIZA is not an obstacle when we approach former SYRIZA militants in the mass movement. We respect militants who left SYRIZA to join Popular Unity and want to work with them in the mass movement, but we don't approve their political project for a "patriotic anti-austerity front" and for a second, honest SYRIZA.

## **Did the leadership of the Fourth International support SYRIZA?**

It has been recently claimed by members of the Fourth International Bureau that the FI leadership never officially supported SYRIZA. However, this is unfortunately not correct. In fact, all international revolutionary leaderships with some influence, with maybe only a couple of exceptions, supported SYRIZA.

The CWI and IMT did it in every official way possible, since being part of broad reformist parties is an instrumental element of their politics. However, currents that are typically building a project for independent anticapitalist formations have also actually backed SYRIZA in Greece, even contrary to the position of their Greek sections. Although the Greek IST section (SEK) participates in ANTARSYA and never joined or voted for SYRIZA, pronounced members of the British SWP expressed their direct or indirect support to SYRIZA. Even after the formation of the SYRIZA-ANEL government, Callinicos

maintained that "revolutionary socialists should celebrate the new government's victory and support the progressive measures it takes" (even if it took none) and thought that it is "great" to have "senior ministers coming from the left wing of SYRIZA", although recognizing it is also risky (A. Callinicos in a debate with Stathis Kouvelakis, "[Syriza and socialist strategy - Stathis Kouvelakis and Alex Callinicos](#)"). Even Altamira of the Argentinian Partido Obrero and the CRFI called for a vote to SYRIZA "under the banner of a rupture with the EU, for the United Socialist States, for a workers' government" in the 11th Congress of the PO, although the Greek section of the CRFI followed an independent project.

Unfortunately, the case was even worse with the Fourth International leadership. Renown members have repeatedly visited Greece as invited speakers in SYRIZA meetings, without consulting or even informing the Greek section. FI cadres served as economic advisors to Tsipras and as close collaborators to the former SYRIZA President of the Parliament Zoe Konstantopoulou. The current Minister of the State and Government Spokesperson, Tzanakopoulos, takes pride in having been a member of the British section a few years ago, while being a first-class cadre of SYRIZA at the same time.

The official positions of the Fourth International Bureau were more cautious, but in fact no less explicit. The Bureau's permanent position was that anticapitalists should join SYRIZA or an alliance led by SYRIZA, for a left anti-austerity government. In May 2012, it stated clearly that everybody should unite under the emergency programme of SYRIZA: "The Fourth International calls on the whole of the international workers' movement, on all the indignant, on all those who defend the ideals of the Left, to support such an emergency programme...we call for the coming together of all the forces which are fighting against austerity in Greece" Syriza, Antarsya, the KKE, the trade unions and the other social movements "around an emergency plan" (FI Bureau Statement, 24 May 2012, [The future of the workers of Europe is being decided in Greece](#)). In

its reply to the letter of the Greek section, who complained about this statement, the FI Bureau was clear: "Our answer, like that of almost all the sections of the International, is clear: it is necessary to support Syriza" (9 June 2012).

The FI leadership position was not much different in 2015. Before the January election that brought SYRIZA to power, a series of top FI cadres, including Bureau members, co-signed an international call titled "With the Greek people, for a change in Europe - A call launched in the Spanish State", which was actually a call for a vote to SYRIZA and did not even mention ANTARSYA, the project where the Greek section is engaged (9 Jan 2015, [With the Greek people, for a change in Europe - A call launched in the Spanish State](#)). The statement of the Secretariat of the Bureau a few days afterwards said: "The various components of Syriza, their members in the trade unions - in collaboration, often, with militants of the Antarsya coalition, the student movement, etc. - are the vectors of these mobilizations. Syriza and Antarsya have particular responsibility in building a unitive project" and urged "to do everything so that the Greek left, of which Syriza is the main component, wins these elections, in order to create a social and political dynamic for a left government" (12 Jan 2015, [Fourth International: On 25 January, a turning point for Greece and Europe!](#)). There is no doubt that this equals an official call for a vote to SYRIZA and a suggestion that ANTARSYA should also join its project. After the election of the SYRIZA government, the FI leadership advocated a policy of "Critical" support to the government,

and the decision of the Greek section to build a working class left opposition was rejected, on the pretext that only the bourgeois class opposes SYRIZA.

Even on the eve of the SYRIZA "betrayal" and after the experience of six months of shameful negotiations with the capitalist and imperialist institutions, the Fourth International Bureau could not draw a clear conclusion about the nature of the SYRIZA-ANEL government. The Greek section's warning that SYRIZA would introduce a new austerity pact no matter the result of the referendum of July 5 was ignored. The Greek section fought for the NO with all its forces, but it simultaneously declared no confidence to the government. On the contrary, the statement of the FI Bureau praised the SYRIZA government and called the people to support it once again: "the interests of the exploited classes in Europe do not lie behind the governments who run the European Union, but on the side of the Greek people and of Syriza, who are fighting austerity. Resistance to austerity is possible. The victories of Syriza, like the advances of Podemos in the Spanish state, show the road to take in all the countries of Europe." It invited the workers of all Europe to "mobilize alongside the Greek social and political movement in opposition to austerity, alongside the Greek government" (7 July 2015, [The victory of the "no" announces decisive battles against the Troika](#)). This statement was relentlessly ridiculed less than one week afterwards, when the SYRIZA government approved the new austerity pact (3rd memorandum). No balance sheet was ever drawn of this huge mistake. On the contrary, the

majority of the leadership of the FI shifted its support to the Popular Unity, once again ignoring the suggestions of the Greek section that the newly formed party wants to repeat the SYRIZA project anew (see the joint statement of O. Besançon, M. Urbán and A. Davanellos of the Popular Unity for the September 2015 elections, 19 Sept 2015, [Time for an exit from austerity](#)).

Unfortunately, we have to admit that the FI leadership, as well as the leaderships of most international revolutionary currents, have uncritically supported SYRIZA, and thus bear their own responsibility for having helped SYRIZA hegemonize the social current that arose against austerity, which induced passivity among the working class, false electoral expectations and, finally, a disaster. This development could be foreseen, and the Greek section foresaw it. This is why the section dedicated its modest forces to an independent anticapitalist current that remained out of SYRIZA, its crisis and its degradation. This project has helped avoid a situation of complete collapse of the left and workers organizations, as happened in other countries who experienced governments of the left or with the participation of the left. The independent anticapitalist left in Greece is a first material to start our counter-attack with.

Greece calls for a balance sheet. But no balance sheet will be honest, as far as it avoids the main conclusion: the need for political and organizational independence from reformism.

July 2017

# The crisis of the EU and our orientation

## 20 November 2017

1. The EU is facing a profound economic, social and political/institutional crisis. The Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties, which

were to make the EU "the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic space" - based on the introduction of a

common currency and a harsh budget discipline (the "Maastricht criteria") - could not resist the blows of the 2007/2008 financial and economic



crisis.

The crisis unveiled the EU's main contradictions:

- It is a project that has as its foremost priority the rescue of the financial institutions rather than the welfare and social cohesion of its populations. Rights and liberties are in force above all for capital and the Union has long since abandoned its promise to adjust the living conditions upwards and it has carried the competition between the workers of all member states to extremes.

- It is a project in which the interests of the elites of individual member states - above all of those in the economically strongest - have got the upper hand over the interests of the entire Union.

- And it is a project that on the one hand in various aspects and to some extent is accelerating European integration while on the other hand its institutions lack democratic legitimacy.

2. Those contradictions and the EU's capitalist class character have unequivocally been shown by the EU's treatment of the Greek crisis. The course of this crisis has taught us two things:

- \* It is impossible to get rid of austerity policies in one member country without being in radical conflict with the EU's leading institutions and treaties, because this would threaten the very project of the EU. It's institutions and Treaties cannot be "reformed" democratically. It is necessary to break with the EU in order to get rid of the austerity policy.

- \* It is not possible to get rid of the austerity policy without a simultaneous break with the capitalist regime in one's own country. The Brexit of the UK is an example that shows us that the question of leaving the EU has a right-wing answer if it is separated from the necessity to break with the logic of profit. It will obtain a progressive character only if it is indissolubly linked to a project of eco-socialist transformation. For a lot of progressive and anticapitalist forces this twofold condition is difficult to

understand. Thus the debate on how to overcome the dictatorship of markets often puts wrong alternatives on the agenda: Leaving the EU or fighting against it from within? But the EU is not a foreign power although it sometimes acts - as in the Greek case - as a colonial power. It is an appendix to the national bourgeois state apparatuses. Any popular government, especially in the European periphery, must when launching its own policy take into account an adverse reaction from the EU. In such a case, it should be ready to rely, at least for a period, on its own means. This implies preparing new international alliances and introducing political mechanisms like an alternative monetary policy or new banking regulations capable to intervene in the private sector. It implies as well building a public banking sector and setting up controls of capital movements. These transitional steps need not contradict a policy which combines an endogenous and sovereign development with a future supranational alliance on a popular and cooperative basis. Thereby it takes into account the unevenness of political developments in the EU member states. Whatever the concrete paths might look like, a lasting resistance to a new financial and banking crisis or to the logic of global competition as well as the emergence of an alternative social and ecological transition, not to speak of a socialist upheaval in Europe, are only conceivable on a European scale. Although specific struggles on national and local levels are inevitable, an internationalist approach should push for common objectives and actions among different peoples based on the common interests of the working class. It should focus locally and nationally on those demands and political proposals which are compatible with popular struggles in other European countries. The trade unions and the social movements should initiate common struggles on all levels where capital is acting and organized.

We do not merely aspire to co-exist but we should cooperate, respecting the autonomy of others. By acting in such a way we offer an alternative to the far right's reactionary concepts of

Europe.

3. Those who - after the financial crisis, and even more after the Brexit - see the EU as already finished will probably be disappointed. The EU is - at least in continental Europe, the UK has always played a special role - a necessary framework for the capitalist class to be competitive on the world market and in world politics. The EU can also be reshaped within the capitalist framework if this should be necessary. This has happened more than once since the Second World War. Today we are facing a new paradigm shift - the possible consolidation and institutional creation of a core Europe - based on the euro and on a European military project.

The difficulties and contradictions this project is facing are great and it is not at all certain that it would work. But also the constraints are great - after the Brexit and the US policy change the ruling classes of the EU feel that the time has come to capture more shares of the world market at the expense of the US. The alleged weakening of the US as 'the protecting power of the west' gives the EU the legitimization to launch a genuine arms race and a militarization of the EU. The militarization of the EU's external borders is already taking place at the moment.

But the rearmament is also an instrument for creating a new reactionary interior cohesive force since the social cohesion is diminishing because of the rising levels of precarity. Furthermore, the causes of the financial crisis are still present and new waves of the concentration of capital destroy thousands of jobs. This goes hand in hand with an increasing racist rhetoric and practice hitting migrant workers and asylum seekers. They are the new bogeyman of a capitalism that has got into its system crisis.

The creation of a core Europe around its euro zone would mean that some member states will be shaken off whereas the centre is getting increasingly under the domination of German capital (possibly through the creation of a European Monetary Fund). The resulting upheavals are not foreseeable.



4. We say NO to this policy of our governments and to the caricature of European unity they have created and are still creating.

We organize the resistance with the aim to create a European opposition to dominant policies - this could result in a constituent process outside the EU framework.

Our Europe should be bound to a common eco-socialist, democratic and anti-imperialist perspective guaranteeing equal rights for all as well as the peoples' right to self-determination. Therefore we make a new attempt to coordinate our activities - e.g. against all kinds of free-trade agreements (within the EU and between the EU and its "partners"), against the debt regime,

against racism and islamophobia, for equal rights for all, against the logic of competition among people and workers - for the adjustment of social standards like wages and working-hours, against nuclear energy and the use of fossil fuels - for democratic plans and funds to organize the transition, for the socialization of the banking system and for the public control of financial flows.

All these are problems that cannot be solved on a national level. We take part in the elaboration and popularization of an European and international Manifesto defending such demands. We participate in European discussion forums about a left alternative to the EU (like Plan B, Alter Summit, etc.) putting emphasis:

- on the building of European networks like those between 'rebel towns' or those defending public services, labour rights, women's rights, the rights of migrants...

- on workers/citizen/social control and its possible dynamics, as e.g. contained in the citizens' audit on the debt;

- on the accountability and control of companies and transnationals (e.g. in case of lay-offs, of capital flight, conversion of production and so on).

We create a place for our mutual internal information and discussion, with specific working groups and lists. (Angela Klein ISO Germany, Catherine Samary NPA France, Daniel Albarracin, Anticapitalistas EE, 14 June 2017)

## A Reply to the Opposition Platform

20 November 2017, by **Fourth International Bureau**

The opposition platform touches on a wide range of political issues, especially the question of socialist strategy and the potential for socialist forces to grow in the current world situation. Those are issues that are being debated in meetings of the Fourth International, such as the International Committee (IC) meetings.

The opposition platform however intervenes not only in the debate around strategy, but also raises a number of cases of what it calls '*a serious democratic problem*'. This brief reply focuses on the latter - it is not meant to exhaust the political points raised. We do not intend to enter here the debate on the evaluation of past experiences such as those in the PT or Rifondazione Comunista. The FI has been making balance-sheets of the very different experiences of FI-members in the last decades in very different parties and contexts. These are ongoing debates and to the extent of its abilities, the FI publishes in its websites and journals articles and resolutions on these

debates. Such debates are intended to create a shared perspective among the sections of the FI while avoiding the illusion that it is possibly to formulate some kind of 'model' that ought to be adopted universally.

Rather, this first reply is meant only to address a number of factual issues raised by the Opposition Platform. The platform makes a number of allegations concerning procedures in the FI, especially in the section titled 'C. A militant deficiency and a serious democratic problem' which we want to address here.

To clarify the episodes mentioned here, requires some clarification on the structure of the FI. The highest body is the world congress. In between those, the IC gathers once a year and consists of representatives of the sections of the FI. In between IC-meetings, there are regular meetings of the FI Bureau to ensure continuity and follow-up between these yearly meetings. The statement refers to a 'FI leadership' but does not specify whether it refers to the IC - of which

some comrades who signed the statement are part - the World Congress, or the Bureau.

### Spanish state

The Platform claims that '*in the Spanish state, Anticapitalistas is preparing to form a joint majority with Pablo Iglesias*' and that 'the FI-leadership' is allied with Pablo Iglesias. This paints a distorted picture of the politics of FI-comrades. In the Podemos congress of February there were 3 platforms. One of the lists was animated by Álex Errejón, another by Pablo Iglesias and the third, which received around 13 per cent of the votes, by Anticapitalistas. Each lists presented its own platform and perspectives.

The Platform mentions '*a recent expulsion by the majority of the Spanish State section of the Anticapitalistas minority, which enjoyed 20 per cent support at the last congress, and which now constitutes IZAR*'. IZAR came out of a break in the

organisation of Anticapitalistas, the FI section in the Spanish state. Anticapitalistas is organized as a federation of organisations in the different regions of the Spanish state. At the end of 2014, early 2015 there was a break in the organisation in Andalusia. In elections for the leadership of Podemos, a minority of the Andalusian branch organised an alternative list, contesting the list supported by the majority. The majority of the organisation in Andalusia considered it impossible to continue to work together with the minority under these circumstances. It asked the federal leadership of Anticapitalistas to be recognised as the Andalusian chapter of Anticapitalistas and so it was. The minority went on to form its own separate organisation: IZAR. The debate during the IC didn't concern an appeal against the so-called "expulsion" but for recognition of IZAR as observer to the FI, a request that was denied by the IC on the request of the FI's section in the Spanish state.

The national sections of the FI have a decisive say on whether other organisations are invited to IC meetings and other activities organised by the International. Obviously, the IC can not decide to establish such ongoing ties with organisations if the local section objects to this. Observers not only participate in the IC meetings but are also invited to international activities organized by the FI such as its international educational courses, seminars or the European youth-camp. The rejection of the request of IZAR to become an observer also explains why it was not invited to the FI youth-camp.

The opposition platform confuses IZAR's rejected request to become an observer with appealing the decision of the federal structure of Anticapitalistas on membership. A line like "the recent expulsion by the majority of the Spanish State section of the Anticapitalistas minority" however could be read as if the break with the people of who went on to form IZAR was an international decision while it was an internal development in the section in the Spanish state.

## Canada

*"Our Socialist Action Canada comrades were expelled, and still are victims of the same kind of exclusion now. Of course there is a political logic at work behind those expulsions."*

This could be interpreted as if the FI expelled an organisation. In the early nineties, a comrade was expelled from the pan-Canadian organisation. This comrade then appealed his expulsion at the FI World Congress of 1995 but the world congress upheld his expulsion. The person in question then proceeded to build Socialist Action, an organisation that has requested to become an observer in the FI. This request was refused on the basis that there is no collective organisation or action between Socialist Action and the section.

## Denmark

*"Facing our own imperialism, it is not our role to create illusions on the theme: arms, not bombs. That is exactly what happened when the Red Green Alliance members of parliament voted for the war budget on the pretext that it would allow sending weapons, but who were very quickly faced with the second step, the only important one for the Danish government, and the others, sending Danish F-16 jets which are today bombing Iraq, in alliance with France and the United States."*

This confuses separate things. The RGA voted for the selling and transporting of weapons to Kurdish forces in 2014. This was unrelated to the later decision by the Danish government and majority of parliament to engage in a bombing campaign. The RGA never voted for bombing Iraq.

The RGA is not part of the majority coalition. There is no 'war budget' as such to vote on. On another occasion the RGA has voted for the state budget - this is the complete budget, which indeed includes the defence budget. The RGA has never been part of the defence conciliation in parliament. It did in the past give support to a

minority government coalition of social-liberal and progressive parties, while remaining outside the executive. The RGA's decision to vote for the 2013 budget was part of this tactic to avoid the fall of the government. This step was criticized in a resolution of SAP, the Danish FI-section; 'Budget 2013: A major mistake by the Red-Green Alliance'.

## France

The statement claims that *'forbidding the participation of the NPA youth sector in the last camp shows a worrisome theoretical and practical/political weakness.'*

In fact, the NPA organized a delegation of 100 young comrades at the camp. The youth-camp is organised yearly by the Fourth International, in solidarity with the positions of the Fourth International. Considering the importance of currents in the NPA youth sector that do not have ties with the FI, in 2016 the invitation to the camp was addressed to a delegation organised and led by comrades identifying with the Fourth International. There was no ban of 'the NPA youth sector' from the camp. The decision to limit participation in the camp of people from the current linked to the Argentinian PTS to three was an internal decision of the NPA leadership.

## Criticism

The statement claims on to declare *'the leadership refuses to allow criticism of the majority orientation of the Fourth International'* but the orientation of the FI is continuously discussed. FI-organisations who signed the Opposition Platform are invited to be part of our international activities and are of course represented in the IC where comrades defend different points of view. During one such discussion, an individual IC-member did call the approach of the Greek section, OKDE-Spartakos, 'counter revolutionary'. Comrades with different views on the issues discussed criticized this accusation.

To suggest, as the opposition

statement does, that over two decades breaks of the FI with people who would form Socialist Action Canada and IZAR is motivated by a desire to silence 'criticism of the majority

approach' is incorrect. The discussion on strategic perspectives and the roles of the FI in the socialist movement continues in different forms such as in the discussion on a draft resolution on

'role and tasks' of the FI for the next world congress. Questions of organisational democracy can not be separated from political questions, but a debate needs to be based on facts.

# The capitalist destruction of the environment and the ecosocialist alternative

9 August 2017, by **Fourth International Ecology Commission**

*In memory of Berta Caceres, indigenous activist, ecologist and feminist from Honduras, assassinated on the 3rd of March 2016 by the henchmen of the multinationals and in memory of the martyrs in the struggles for environmental justice.*

## 1. Introduction

1.1. The pressure humanity exerts on the Earth System has been growing ever more rapidly since the 1950s. At the beginning of the 21st century, it has reached an extremely alarming level, and continues to grow in almost all areas. Thresholds are already exceeded in some areas, particularly greenhouse gases concentration in the atmosphere. This increasing quantitative pressure, observable everywhere and in most fields, leads to a qualitative shift that could be abrupt (within a few decades) and largely irreversible. The Earth System would then enter a new dynamic equilibrium regime, characterized by very different geophysical conditions and an even more marked decrease in its biological richness. At the least, in addition to the consequences for other living creatures, the transition to this new regime would endanger the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people, especially women, children and the elderly. At the most, it cannot be excluded that it contributes to a collapse of our species.

1.2. The danger increases day by day, but the catastrophe can be averted, or

at least limited and contained. It is not human existence in general that is the determining cause of the threat, but the mode of production and social reproduction of this existence, which also includes its mode of distribution, consumption and cultural values. The mode in force for about two centuries - capitalism - is unsustainable because competition for profit, its driving force, implies a blind tendency to limitless quantitative growth. During the 20th century, the countries of "really existing socialism" were unable to offer an alternative to the productivist destruction of the environment to which they also contributed in an important way. At the beginning of the 21st century, humanity is confronted with the unprecedented obligation to control its development in all fields in order to make it compatible with the limits and the good health of the environment in which it has developed. No political project can ignore the conclusion of scientific studies on "global change". On the contrary, every political project must be assessed first of all by taking into account the risk, the systemic responses it brings, the conformity of these responses with the fundamental requirements of human dignity, and their articulation with its program in the other areas, particularly in the social and economic sphere.

## 2. A deep gap

**between the urgency of a radical ecosocialist alternative on the one hand and the relationship of forces and the levels of consciousness on the other hand.**

2.1. An entirely different relationship of humankind to the environment is an urgent necessity. This new relationship, based on a caring model for both humans and the environment, will not be simply the result of individual changes in behaviour. Rather it needs a structural change in the relationships between humans: the total and global eradication of capitalism as the mode of production of social existence. This total eradication is indeed the necessary condition for a rational, economical and prudent management in the exchanges of matter between humanity and the rest of nature. Sciences and technologies can facilitate this management, but only on the condition that their development is not subjected to the dictates of capitalist profit.

2.2. Green capitalism and the Paris agreement do not allow us to get rid of the environmental destruction in general and of the dangers of climate denial in particular. The alternative can only come from a worldwide policy which satisfies real human needs. These are not determined by the market but by a democratic discussion that allows people to take their destiny in their own hands, liberated from market alienation. This will break the impersonal logic of productivist accumulation typical of capitalism.

2.3. The key demands of this alternative are:

1- the socialization of the energy sector: this is the only way to break free of a fossil energy economy, stop nuclear energy, reduce radically the production/consumption of energy and realize as fast as possible the transition towards a renewable, decentralized and efficient energy system according to ecological and social imperatives;

2- the socialization of the credit sector: this is essential given the interweaving of the energy and financial sectors in heavy and long-term investments and in order to have the necessary financial resources for transition investments;

3- the abolition of private ownership of natural resources (land, water, forests, wind, solar energy, geothermal energy, marine resources, ...) and intellectual knowledge;

4- the destruction of all stock of arms, suppression of useless (weapons etc.) or harmful products (petrochemicals, nuclear energy), the production of use values decided democratically instead of exchange values;

5- a common and democratic management of resources at the service of real human needs, with respect for the good functioning and the capacities for renewal by the ecosystems;

6- the abolition of all forms of inequality and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preferences; emancipation of all the oppressed, particularly the

emancipation of women and people of color;

7- the abolition of imposed working hours for the production of commodities as an alienating category that destroys leisure time and discourages non-commodified human activities;

8- a lengthy-term socio-economic policy aiming at rebalancing urban and rural populations and overcoming the opposition between town and countryside;

2.4. There is a deep gap between this objectively necessary alternative and the social relationship of forces and the current levels of consciousness. This gap can only be closed by concrete struggles of the exploited and the oppressed in the defence of their living conditions and of the environment. By winning immediate demands, larger layers will radicalize and their struggles will converge. They will formulate transitional demands incompatible with the capitalist logic.

In this strategic framework, some key demands are:

1 - disinvest in the fossil fuel sector; stop subsidies for the development of projects based on fossil energy and its combustion; oppose public-private partnerships that currently dominate the energy sector worldwide;

2- mobilise against all extractivist projects - especially new oil exploitations such as shale gas (fracking) and large-scale useless investments at the service of the fossil sector (airports, motorways etc.);

3- stop nuclear energy, the end of the exploitation of coal, tar sands and lignite;

4- support for popular educational programs concerning ecological sustainability;

5- refuse any capitalist appropriation of land, of oceans and of their resources;

6- defend women's rights beginning with the fight against all attempts to criminalise women's decisions concerning their reproductive

capacities. Free abortion and contraception on demand, paid for by the social security/health care system. De-feminise and de-privatise caring for the young, the sick, the elderly. These are communal responsibilities;

7- recognize the first nations/indigenous people's right to self-determination. Recognize their knowledge and their sustainable management of the ecosystems;

8- give refugee status to the victims of ecological/climate disasters; full respect for the democratic rights of refugees including freedom of movement and settlement;

9- ensure a good social security system with guarantees for all individuals, and including adequate pensions;

10- abolish multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements; remove ecological technologies from GATTs;

11- respect the Green Fund commitments (\$100 billion / year) to be made in the form of grants not loans. Public management of the Green Fund, not by the World Bank but by representatives of the countries of the South, under the control of communities and social movements;

12- tax on international air and maritime transport; the product of this tax should go directly to the countries of the South as a (partial) compensation of the ecological debt;

13- recognize the ecological debt to the countries of the South. Abolish (without compensation except for small holders) public debts used by imperialism to impose an unjust and unsustainable development model;

14- tax financial transactions and construct a redistributive fiscal reform so that owners of capital and their inheritors pay for the transition;

15- abolish the patent system and in particular, stop all patents on life and on technologies concerning energy conversion and storage. End the theft of ancestral knowledge of indigenous people, notably by pharmaceutical companies;

16- reorganize public research; end

the system that submits research to industry;

17- promote food sovereignty and the protection of biodiversity by agrarian reforms;

18- put in place an ecological, local agriculture, without GMOs nor pesticides and recognize it as a public good;

19- abolish industrial animal breeding; strongly reduce production/consumption of meat. Respect animal welfare;

20- ban advertising and institute recycle, reuse, reduce: end consumerist, wasteful and energy-demanding model imposed by capital;

21- establish free energy and water for basic necessities and, above this threshold, impose strongly progressive tariffs tied to usage in order to fight against waste while insuring basic access; develop a strategy to extend distribution of free goods (basic food products) and services (public transport, education, health care, etc.);

22- guarantee to workers whose companies are to be closed within the framework of the transition the right to propose alternative production needed to build a sustainable infrastructure, if those plans prove unrealistic, workers maintain social rights to retraining, new work or retirement ;

23- develop public enterprises aimed at job creation through the implementation of the ecological transition regardless of profit, under workers' and citizens' control (in particular in the fields of electricity generation, water management, construction-insulation-renovation of buildings, mobility of people through the exit of the "all-car" system, recycling of waste and repairing of ecosystems);

25- reduce working time without wage loss, with lower work rates; implement proportional hiring (especially of youth, women and minorities): together with the development of the public sector, this is the best way to reconcile the reduction of the production of goods, of energy

consumption, full employment and democratic transition;

24- guarantee workers' right to organize and exert control in the workplace, in particular on occupational health, product sustainability, production efficiency, etc. Protection of whistle blowers;

26- reform of urban areas aimed at breaking land speculation, "disartificialising" the city (through fostering community gardening and urban agriculture, restoring biotopes embedded in the urban framework) and freeing it from the car in favour of public transport and soft mobility (developing areas exclusively for walking and biking);

2.5. This program is not exhaustive; it is and will continue to be enriched by concrete struggles. In an ecosocialist perspective, this enrichment must be guided by the main keys of a just transition: environmental and social justice, common but differentiated responsibilities, fight against inequality and for an improvement of living conditions, the end to green colonialism and environmental racism, a priority for collective solutions, internationalism, the principle of precaution. Above all, the exploited and the oppressed must develop their empowerment by democracy, decentralization, control, and the collective appropriation or re-appropriation of the commons. What is common is defined by the social process of its democratic construction, not by nature which would make certain things as "commons", while others would be doomed to private appropriation.

The above demands do not therefore constitute a key door-to-door solution: they indicate the general way forward for an anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecosocialist and ecofeminist perspective that will change all spheres of activity (production, reproduction, distribution, consumption) and will be accompanied by a profound change in cultural values. They are applicable separately, but an end to the crisis is possible only through their coordinated and planned application. These measures form a coherent whole, incompatible with the normal functioning of the capitalist

system. There is no other way to deal with the urgency of the situation.

### **3. Wage-labour, alienation and ecosocialism**

3.1. The exploited and the oppressed alone can lead the environmental struggle to the end because the abolition of the capitalist system corresponds to their class interests. Yet capital incorporates the worker by the purchase of his/her/their labour power. Commodification and destruction of the environment are the result. Under the "normal" circumstances of the capitalist mode of production, daily existence of the proletarians depends on the functioning of the system which mutilates them directly and, by mutilating their environment, indirectly. This contradiction makes it both very difficult and of decisive importance to mobilize the labour movement in the ecological struggle. In the present moment, given the restructuring of the economy with its mass unemployment, decline in class consciousness and the deterioration in the balance of forces between labour and capital this difficulty has increased.

3.2. The majority leadership of the trade union movement is in favour of class collaboration with the project of so called "green capitalism". They have the illusion that the "just transition", if it is well negotiated, will reduce massively unemployment and favour growth thanks to "green" production. Faced with this dominant trade union trend, certain sectors are inclined towards protectionism, or even climate denial. Indeed, in certain cases climate defence is used as a pretext for capitalist attacks, or unionists have the illusion that doubting on this reality could help to avoid the destruction of jobs in the fossil fuels sectors. Fostering a debate on ecosocialist alternatives and helping to develop a left-wing breaking with capitalism and class collaboration is therefore a task of prime strategic importance.

3.3. Left-wing sectors are taking part



in environmental struggles - f.i. "Trade Unions for Energy Democracy", "Labor Network for Sustainability" and the "Climate Jobs Campaigns". These initiatives engage trade unions and their membership to overcome that fear of massive job losses. All those important union initiatives attribute the responsibility for getting out of the fossils economy to polluting companies and the governments who protected and subsidized them. As such, they develop anticapitalist demands which can be amplified and coordinated when workers are being confronted with the severity of the ecological crisis. For example, "Trade Unions for Energy Democracy" defends the socialization of energy. It is clear that pro-capitalist forces will try to limit the radicalism of these campaigns by insisting that they remain within a framework of "respect for the competitiveness of companies" (ITUC, Vancouver Congress, resolution on "Just Transition"). Furthermore, campaigns for climate jobs are sometimes based on too optimistic projections concerning the "growth" of employment thanks to the transition. Sustainability creates the necessity of a reduction of production, and this is not always taken into account. The closure of harmful industries - from the production of weapons to coal-fired electricity plants - and the reconversion of the production of cars into the production and maintenance of a system of mass public transport are priority measures of the transition. And indeed, the transition will create a growth of employment in other sectors. For example, the dismantlement of agribusiness in favour of ecological farming and the development of a public or community sector, under democratic control, will offer possibilities for reconversion.

We must also take into account the fact that reorganizing activities according to social needs, and the reduction of inequalities, constitute objectives which are not limited to a specific region. They constitute global objectives implying new jobs for repairing the damages inflicted to the countries of the South. However, a global reduction of material production is necessary. The workers movement must give an answer to this

by demanding a reduction of working hours without loss of wages. A radical reduction of working hours is the antiproduktivist demand "par excellence". It constitutes the best way to "manage in a rational way the exchange of matter with nature and at the same time respecting human dignity", reconciling full employment and the suppression of useless and wasteful production and planned obsolescence.

3.4. The deterioration of the balance of power between capital and labor has resulted in a deterioration in working conditions. The health of the most precarious workers is especially endangered. Thus the fight against the increase in occupational diseases constitutes a lever to increase workers' awareness of the fact that Capital destroys both the Earth and the laborer. This destruction includes rising psycho-social risks, resulting not only from the forms of organization and control of workers, but also from the environmental damage that many workers are forced to realize by the dictates of capital. The defense of the health of workers is also a lever for the often difficult convergence of demands by the workers of polluting companies and by the surrounding populations - who also suffer from this pollution - and movements for the environment.

## 4. Women's struggles and ecosocialism

4.1. Indigenous peoples, peasants and youth are at the forefront of environmental struggles, and women play a leading role in these three sectors. This situation is the product of their specific oppression, not their biological sex. Patriarchy imposes on women social functions directly linked to "caring" and places them at the forefront of environmental challenges. Because they produce 80% of the food in the countries of the South, women are directly confronted with the ravages of climate change and agribusiness. Because they take on most of the child-rearing and home maintenance tasks, women are directly confronted with the effects of

environmental destruction and poisoning on the health and education of their communities.

4.2. On the ideological level, women's movements remember how women's bodies have been used in the name of science (forced sterilization campaigns, etc.). This instrumentalist view has been another tool of domination and manipulation.

4.3. Women's struggles also have a special, valuable and irreplaceable contribution to the development of a global anticapitalist consciousness that favors the integration of struggles. According to the UN the full range of modern family-planning methods still remain unavailable to at least 350-million couples world-wide. More than 220 million women are denied basic reproductive services "which can be (and often are) the difference between life and death. 74,000 women die every year as a result of failed back-street abortions" a disproportionate number of these in the Global South. Every year, around 288,000 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth "and 99% of them occur in developing countries. By fighting against the patriarchal appropriation of their bodies and against the exploitation of their free domestic work, women grow to realize that capitalism relies not only on the appropriation of nature and the exploitation of the labor force through wage labor but also on the patriarchal invisibility of the labor of care and reproduction of the labor force. Added to these three pillars of capitalism is a fourth, exploitation based on race. All have a common denominator that is the appropriation of natural resources, in which the human workforce is a part. Women's struggles (i) for the right to control their bodies, sexuality and reproductive capacities, free of violence, (ii) against sexist and racist discrimination in the wage labor market and in production in general, and (iii) for social recognition and reorganization of domestic work are thus an integral part of the ecosocialist struggle. The struggles of women deepen and enlarge the horizon of liberation.

## 5. The agrarian question and ecosocialism

5.1 Around the world farmers, landless peasants and agricultural workers are the world's most heavily involved social sector in the fight for the environment in general and climate in particular. This vanguard role is attributable to the brutal aggression of capital, which wants to eliminate the independent peasants and replace with them agricultural workers, subcontracted workers and the unemployed (in order to put pressure on wages). The industrial agricultural system produces cheap goods at low cost for the market rather than quality food for local populations. Peasant unions such as Via Campesina carry out organizational and awareness-raising work, including helping the landless take over abandoned lands.

5.2 Unlike salaried workers, small-scale farmers are not incorporated into capital. Although production for the market tends to impose productivist objectives and methods on them, they also retain the mentality of the craftsperson anxious to do "fine work". Despite a powerful capitalist enemy, they mobilize to retain or reconquer the ownership of their means of production. But the very unequal balance of power in the face of agribusiness and large-scale distribution forces them to seek alliances with other social movements, in particular with wage-earners and the environmental movement. Agricultural workers, especially undocumented seasonal workers who are over-exploited, have little prospect of leaving the ultra-precarious margins of wage-earners. Despite employer intimidations and even repression, some have managed to form unions and raise their wages and working conditions. Their struggle is objectively anti-capitalist.

5.3 The importance of the agrarian question should not be judged only by the proportion of farmers in the labor force, but based on five objective facts:

5.3.1 The industrial modes of agricultural production and fisheries are at the center of decisive human health issues (obesity, cardiac diseases, allergies, etc.) and the protection of the environment, which reveal the destructive force of capital. Changes in behavior by consumers will not lead the ecological transition, but choices made in food consumption can support the reorientation of agriculture and have a significant ecological impact. The demand of "food sovereignty" makes it more difficult for multinational companies to use food as a weapon against the struggles of the people. It makes it possible to unify consumers and producers around practices generating anti-capitalist consciousness.

5.3.2. Women play an important role in agricultural production, making up 43% of the agricultural workforce in so-called "developing" countries. Patriarchal discrimination is reflected in the smaller size of their farms and livestock, the lower level of mechanization, a heavier workload for a lower yield (due to the weight of non-productive chores – such as obtaining water and firewood), less access to training and credit (but a more important part than men in microcredit). The emancipation of women farmers as women is one of the decisive conditions for addressing both the challenge of food sovereignty and ecological agriculture. It is therefore an ecosocialist issue in itself.

5.3.3. The agricultural-forestry sector as a whole is responsible for more than 40% of greenhouse gas emissions. Agribusiness is also a key agent for chemical poisoning of the biosphere, while industrial fishing and water pollution by agribusiness are key determinants of the biodiversity loss in aquatic environments. At the same time, warming threatens land productivity and acidification caused by rising CO2 levels threaten aquatic ecosystems.

5.3.4. Biodiversity loss will not be stopped mainly by the creation of nature reserves but by the development of an ecological agriculture. Moreover, reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero is

no longer sufficient to curb climate change. In the coming decades carbon must be removed from the atmosphere. Given the logic of profitability, capital can only react with dangerous technologies such as geo-engineering and a general appropriation of "ecosystemic services". Peasant farming and rational forestry are the only means of achieving this removal efficiently, safely while respecting social justice. Thus the protection of biodiversity and of the climate reinforce the need for the ecosocialist alternative. The decisive role of agro-ecological farming is materially grounded in this overall alternative.

5.3.5. The transition to environmentally friendly agriculture (and fisheries and forestry) is a major condition for building an ecosocialist society. This aspect is of the same importance as the democracy of producers and the use of 100% renewable energy. However, agro-ecology is more labor-intensive than industrial agriculture. The transition to sustainable forestry and the restoration / protection of ecosystems entail an increase in the share of the population invested in these activities. To answer to this challenge requires a long-term policy of upgrading agricultural trades, training workers, equipping rural areas with infrastructure and personal services and building urban gardens.

## 6. Indigenous peoples, buen vivir and ecosocialism

In North, Central and South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, indigenous peoples are on the front line. Their struggle often combines with that of peasants and rural communities, but it is specific. Indigenous peoples produce their social existence from a direct relationship with the environment they have shaped and which constitutes their way of life. As a result, these peoples are blocking many powerful capitalist players eager to plunder natural resources: oil, gas, mining, wood, pulp, meat multinationals, agribusiness, pharmaceutical sector and those who

finance carbon offsetting disguised as ecological defenders of the forest. All of these extractivist plunderers generally act with the complicity of national governments and local authorities, who invoke development goals and ecological needs to conceal their greed and neocolonial contempt for indigenous peoples. For their part, these peoples generally have no title to property or the resources of their environment. They have no other means but to struggle against displacement. Through their struggle indigenous peoples protect and make known their cosmogony, which is a precious asset to the whole of humanity and an inspiration for ecosocialism. As capitalism seeks to push them aside and appropriate their resources and their knowledge, they play a vanguard role in the struggle for a society of ecological balance. Even when indigenous people live in urban areas, they maintain ties to their communities and culture although they also face particular problems within cities, including discrimination. They rightly look for allies to strengthen their fight.

## **7. Self-management, control and political prospects**

7.1. The profound changes in lifestyle and development prospects that ecological transition requires cannot be imposed from above, either authoritatively or technocratically. They are only feasible if the majority of the population acquires the conviction that they are indispensable and compatible with a significant improvement in their living conditions, hence desirable. This requires a major shift in consciousness to value time, control over what is produced, and unalienated labour over endless material things. Therefore popular education about the severity of environmental destruction and its causes is essential. In the face of capitalist deception, the movement for sustainability must stimulate democratic processes of active control, take charge of the transition, intervene in public decision-making,

and even take over production and social reproduction, as well as protect endangered ecosystems. By their very nature, these processes combine with the struggles of oppressed nationalities for their social rights and democratic right to self-determination. It is a matter of sketching in practice the invention of emancipated relationships between human beings, and between humanity and the rest of nature, to show that "another world is possible". These practices of the social sectors most involved in struggles encourage the workers' movement to combat the influence of protectionism and productivism within it.

7.2. The movement for the divestment of fossil fuels and the transition town's movement must be actively supported. In general, the experiences of workers' control, citizen control, participatory management and self-management, as well as women's struggles for social recognition and the sharing of domestic tasks, favor an anti-capitalist consciousness and project that includes the ecosocialist dimension at its core. Experiments in cooperative ecological agriculture, particularly in Europe but especially in Latin America, demonstrate this and also have an influence in the labor movement. Many self-management production experiments also involve fired workers, excluded and precarious workers, even undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers. These alternatives provide an immediate response to massive and permanent social exclusion, which degrades the lives and dignity of people. They have an important place in an ecosocialist strategy because they refuse fatalism, create solidarity and enlarge the circles of environmental activists.

It is, however, an illusion to believe that their generalization would make it possible to avoid ecological catastrophe. Structural socio-economic measures, in particular the socialization of credit and energy, are absolutely necessary. Transitional initiatives must be based on democratic planning, meeting social needs while respecting ecological constraints. Without such an articulation, these initiatives may have an effect of depoliticisation, or even constitute long term coexistence with

a profit-based system.

7.3. The struggle against major fossil infrastructures is a key element in the general movement of interference, control and transition. Mass demonstrations, occupations of sites, mines, and civil disobedience campaigns make it possible to concretely oppose the "growth" and "extractivist" dynamics of capital. These fights have a key importance in defending the ecosystems and the human communities that live there and shape them. They are of strategic importance in defending the climate because the current level of infrastructure constitutes a bottleneck in the development of fossil capital. Thus they constitute a privileged means of building bridges between the struggles of peasants, indigenous peoples, youth, women and from there, to challenge the labor movement to join the struggle. The international networking of these resistances makes it possible to improve the balance of power, to dispel the accusations of NIMBY and to reinforce the legitimacy of the demands. In some cases, this can impose reforms which, while remaining within the capitalist framework, serve as a basis for subsequent radicalization.

7.4. The necessary convergence of social and environmental struggles is not a gathering of a stable compromise but a dynamic process of clarification, recomposition and radicalization. Such a process involves multiple conflicts between social sectors, particularly conflicts with sectors of the labor movement that engage in class collaboration with productivism. While demonstrating the necessary tactical sense and emphasizing the benefits of the ecological transition to the workers (especially in terms of jobs and health), it is necessary to challenge the worker's movement under protectionist and productivist influence. In a conflict between the social sectors involved in the environment and sectors of the workers movement believing in productivism we defend the former whilst trying to convince workers to change their point of view. In these cases, we must try to propose solid programmatic alternatives aiming

improving the rights and well being of both workers and communities. They should not pay for the decisions of the corporations and governments that supported them.

7.5. To win the labor movement and other social actors to the struggle for an ecosocialist transitional program is ultimately achievable only through the emergence of political alternatives for a comprehensive plan of structural anticapitalist reforms that satisfies both social needs and environmental constraints. Without the construction of such political alternatives, and without their articulation with social movements, this will always be a chimera: the environment will be sacrificed on the altar of the social, or the latter on the altar of the first. The creation of an ecosocialist government that breaks with capitalism through social mobilization is the cornerstone of an ecosocialist emergency program. But there is no possible ecosocialism in one country. The formation of such a government is, in turn, only a transitory stage of a permanent process which aims at the overthrow of capitalism on the whole surface of the globe.

## **8. Technologies, self management and decentralization**

8.1 "The Commune is the political form finally found of the emancipation of labor," announced Marx in his work on the Commune of Paris. In the 19th century, capitalism created an increasingly uniform and centralized energy system, whose technical and political control involved a large bureaucratic apparatus and a complex system of delegations of power. This system is obviously not the cause of the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR - which was the result of the Stalinist counter-revolution - but it favored it to some extent. Conversely, the flexibility and modularity of renewable technologies are no guarantee for socialist democracy, but they open up new possibilities for anticapitalist structural reforms. These can be aimed at decentralized

territorial development, organized around the democratic control by local communities of the renewable energy resources available on the site and its use. But the realization of these possibilities depends on the class struggle. The confiscation of only part of the fortunes accumulated by the Arab petromonarchies would suffice to finance regional projects of alternative development in the Near and Middle East based on the solar energy and directed towards the satisfaction of the social needs at the local scale. Similarly, it is deplorable that the so-called "progressive" Latin American governments have not invested a large portion of the revenues of fossil exploitation in social and ecological transition plans aimed at another type of decentralized development: democratic, more balanced urban-rural, community-based and 100% renewable.

8.2. Renewable energy technologies also modify the link between structural measures and control or self-management experiences at the territorial level, with new possibilities for energy autonomy. The project of a democratic eco-socialist society based on a network of decentralized bodies of power thus regains credibility. The physical nature and the difficulty of storage of electrical energy make it is easier to manage in a decentralized, combined and complementary system than in the current system, which is subjected to the dictates of the market. Along with food sovereignty this field of struggle is particularly important for the countries of the South, as part of an alternative development model to the imperialist model.

## **9. Environmental destruction and the social role of scientists**

Capitalist responses are insufficient ecologically and socially unjust because they are biased by the assimilation of the social market rules with unavoidable natural laws. This reality pushes some scientists to engage in the field of the struggle.

Their commitment is against the background of the increasing fragmentation of scientific research and its increasingly strong subordination to the needs of capital. A growing number of researchers perceive the necessity of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work that implies collaboration with social movements. In this context, an opportunity arises to redefine "knowledge", liberating it from capital. Scientists are further challenged by the rise of irrationality and denial of objective facts within certain sectors of the ruling class, two reactionary traits embodied in particular by Donald Trump. Ecosocialists need to encourage scientists to speak out. It is not a question of subjecting the social movement to the dictatorship of "science" or of experts, but rather of putting expertise at the service of the movement, even while stimulating criticism. This can greatly increase the credibility and legitimacy of anti-capitalist options. In particular, the experience of international scientific cooperation is a powerful asset in developing and deepening internationalism.

## **10. Self-organization of the affected populations**

The capacity to ward off the coming environmental catastrophe is behind schedule. As we already witness, "anthropogenic" ecological disasters are therefore likely to multiply, particularly due to extreme weather events (floods, cyclones, etc.). This creates situations of disorganization and chaos exploited by speculators with the aim of domination (political, economic, geostrategic). At the same time, these same situations may be conducive to initiatives aiming at building solidarity networks that are alternative to imperialist agencies. This self-organization of aid, reception of refugees and even reconstruction of social life in general is critical to building social solidarity. These initiatives then benefit from a great legitimacy because they become vital in these circumstances and are more

efficient than international aid. Such a perspective is an integral part of our ecosocialist strategy as a revolutionary strategy. More generally, the failure of capitalism to respond to the growing ecological crisis poses an alternative: either we succumb to devastation or we rescue ourselves.

## **11. Ecosocialism and internationalism**

11.1. In the ecosocialist emergency plan, the requirements of localization of production and food sovereignty are part of a self-management and internationalist perspective that is radically opposed to both capitalist globalization and "free trade" on the one hand, and to capitalist protectionism and national sovereignty, on the other. In developed countries in particular, the greatest vigilance is required in the face of the far right's attempt to shift ecological demands towards nationalist pseudo-responses. These are always at the service of capital and make the link with the racist, islamophobic and reactionary-traditionalist themes. These attempts are most often found in the demand for localization of production and food sovereignty. It is therefore crucial to frame demands to these issues carefully.

11.2. We are opposed to the relocation of companies to low-cost countries, and are in favor of localization of production in general, but we do not support the demand for relocation in imperialist countries of companies that have moved towards low-cost countries. This idea would entail that workers in low-cost countries should lose their jobs so that those in the imperialist countries will regain their own. Instead of uniting the workers of different countries against their exploiters, this demand puts them in competition, and therefore disarms them in the face of the pressure of employers for competitiveness on the markets. The location of production is part of an entirely different project, based on ecological and social needs, in particular the right to employment

and income for all, close to the place they are living. Similarly, food sovereignty, for us, is not a national sovereignty, but a sovereignty at the level of territories historically defined par the communities. They must respect their own history. We defend solidarity between communities in order to manage common resources and exchange them on the basis of solidarity and complementarity rather than on competition and over exploitation.

11.3. In general, various formulas of "Left-wing Protectionism based on solidarity" support the idea that competition from low-wage countries that do not protect the environment are the decisive cause of industrial job losses in developed countries. Yet the main cause of these job losses is the increase in labor productivity, whether through intensifying the work day, automation or outsourcing to facilities where workers have fewer rights and a lower wage package. The obvious solution is to reduce working hours but that has been blocked by the deterioration of the balance of power between labor and capital.. By adopting the obsolete vision of a global economy based on competition among countries, while the dominant role today is played by multinationals, "left-wing protectionism" divert attention from the capital-labor contradiction to an interclass front in defense of competitiveness. "Left-wing protectionism" pretends to be internationalist, but it is silent on the destructive competition of low-cost agribusiness exports from developed countries to the South—such as corn shipped from the United States has destroyed most Mexican milpa farms—and other manifestations of imperialist domination. The danger of racist contamination starting with chauvinist positions is significant. Indeed, in the more developed countries, the defense of employment by safeguarding the competitiveness of firms against the competition of low-wage countries can easily be transformed in the defense of employment by combating illegal or foreign workers' competition, since the latter represent, so to speak, "a third world at home". It is precisely in this deadly trap that the extreme right wants to attract the labor movement and the environmental movement.

There is no shortcut, no possible front between capitalists and their work force, that can confront both unemployment and destruction of the ecosystem. Instead workers must develop solidarity campaigns where they can find unity and strength to overcome the crisis.

11.4. An Ecosocialist government, brought to power as the result of the mobilization of the exploited and the oppressed, would begin to break with capitalism through measures such as the monopoly of foreign trade, control of capital movements and so on. But this does not mean protecting capitalist companies from international competition. Quite the opposite, it is a matter of protecting anti-capitalist policies while calling on the exploited and oppressed of other countries to join the fight. This is an internationalist perspective for overthrowing world capitalism. Such a policy is at the very opposite of "protectionism", which always amounts to subordinating ecological and social demands to the needs of strengthening national capitalism on the world market, that is to say, ultimately, to free trade.

11.5. Ecosocialism can begin at the national level but can only be achieved at the world scale. Rational and prudent management of the Earth System asks for global democratic planning. The global scientific work realized by bodies like the IPCC, the IGBP and others shows this global democratic planning is possible. Their model of international cooperation could be carried out by democratically elected representatives of the social movements too. In fact it is partly accomplished today by organizations like Via Campesina.

## **12. Conclusion: ecosocialism and revolution**

The absurd capitalist logic—the irrational expansion, unlimited accumulation as well as a productivism obsessed by the search for profit at all costs—are responsible for placing humanity at the edge of the abyss: facing climate change and



ecological destruction.

Moving from the “destructive progress” of capitalism toward ecosocialism constitutes a historical process, a revolutionary permanent transformation of society, culture and consciousness. This transition will not only bring us to a new world of production, to an egalitarian and democratic society, but also to an alternative way of life, a new civilisation, beyond the rule of money, beyond habits of consumption artificially produced by advertising and beyond the unlimited production of useless commodities. And, as Marx has said, the Kingdom of Freedom start, with diminishing working time...

It is important to underline that such a process cannot happen without a revolutionary transformation of social and political structures through mass action by a large majority of the population. In the development of a socialist, feminist and ecological consciousness, the collective experience of people's struggles is the decisive factor, from local

confrontations to a radical change of society.

To dream and to fight for green socialism or as some say, for solar communism, does not mean that we do not to fight for concrete and urgent reforms. Without any illusion in “green capitalism”, we must try to win time and impose on the powers in place concrete measures against the ongoing catastrophe, starting with a radical reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases.

These urgent ecological demands can favour a process of radicalisation under the condition that we refuse to limit their objectives by obeying the capitalist market or accepting “competitiveness”.

Each small victory, each partial advance can immediately bring us to a higher and more radical demand. These struggles on concrete problems are important, not only because partial victories in themselves are welcome, but also because they

contribute to the growth of an ecological and socialist consciousness, and promote autonomy and self organisation from below. This autonomy and this self organisation are the necessary and decisive preconditions for a radical transformation of the world. This means a revolutionary transformation is only possible through the self-emancipation of the oppressed and the exploited: workers and peasants, women, indigenous communities, and all stigmatized because of their race, religion or nationality.

The leading elites of the system, retrenched behind their barricades, are incredibly powerful while the forces of radical opposition are small. Their development into a mass movement of unprecedented number, is the only hope to stop the catastrophic course of capitalist “growth.” This will allow us to invent a desirable form of life, more rich in human qualities, a new society based on the values of human dignity, solidarity, freedom and respect for “Mother Nature”.

# Capitalist globalization, imperialisms, geopolitical chaos and their implications

27 July 2017

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The generalisation of neoliberal policies - originally applied from the 1970s in countries such as Chile, Britain and the USA, but extending as far as the Eastern European countries, - quickened brutally after the implosion of the USSR and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, at the beginning of the 1990s. Capitalist globalization really took off, giving

birth to a new mode of international domination with many and deep implications.

The neoliberal order remains nevertheless unfinished, unstable and has engendered a chronically chaotic international situation. The first financial crisis related to globalization dates back to 1997-98 and then rebounded to the major one in 2007-08. The crisis of capitalist overproduction is deep. The geopolitical relationship of forces is in imbalance. Some traditional imperialist powers have continued to decline, while new capitalist powers are asserting themselves, heightening geopolitical rivalries. In several

countries and regions, the universal violence of neoliberal diktats has led to the decomposition of the social fabric, to acute regime crises, and indeed to popular uprisings, but also to dangerous counter-revolutionary developments. Many peoples are already paying a heavy price for the global ecological crisis – in particular but not only to global warming – which is getting continually worse.

We now have an experience of capitalist globalization and its effects which make it possible for us, to update our previous analyses and to deal with new themes. The “theses” that follow do not claim to be exhaustive or to present finished conclusions. Their main purpose is to nourish an international process of collective reflection. They often rely on already shared ideas, but try to push further the discussion of the implications of these analyses. To this end, at the risk of oversimplifying complex realities, they “filter” present evolutions, which are often incomplete, in order to highlight what seems new.

## I. A new imperialist galaxy

First observation, the situation today is quite different from those that prevailed in the early twentieth century or during the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s. Of particular note:

â€¢ A profound change and a diversification of the status of the traditional imperialisms: a United States “super power”; failure of the constitution of an integrated European imperialism; “reduction” of French and British imperialism; militarily “toothless” imperialisms (Germany especially, but also Spain in relation to Latin America); continuing subordination of Japanese imperialism (which although it has a big army has neither nuclear weapons nor aircraft carriers), crises of social disintegration in some Western countries (Greece) belonging historically to the imperialist sphere...

â€¢ The affirmation of new (proto) imperialisms – China, which is now

affirming itself as the second world power, and Russia which is succeeding in imposing its interests in the Syrian war theatre.

â€¢ Significant changes in the international division of labour, with the “financialization” of the economy, the de-industrialization of various Western, particularly European, refocusing global production of goods, particularly in Asia – without neglecting the fact that the United States, Germany, Japan remain major industrial powers.

â€¢ An uneven development of each imperialism, strong in some areas, weak in others. The hierarchy of imperialist states is accordingly more complex to establish than it was in the past. The United States obviously remains No. 1; it is the only one that can claim to be powerful in almost all areas, but it nevertheless is registering a relative decline in economic terms and is experiencing limits to its global power.

The characterization of the new powers is not the only question that is posed to us. We also need to better reassess the changing status of the traditional imperialisms – and of the imperialist order as a whole. Classic notions such as “centre” and “periphery”, “North” and “South” must be reassessed in the light of growing internal diversification of each of these geopolitical groups.

## II. Chronic geopolitical instability

Second observation, capitalist globalization has not given birth to a stable international “new order”, quite the contrary.

There is a dominant imperialist bloc that can be called the “Atlantic bloc” – because it is structured around the axis of the North America / European Union –, if we give this term a geo-strategic and not a geographic sense; it includes in fact Australia, New Zealand and Japan. This is a hierarchical block, under US hegemony. NATO is the privileged,

permanent armed wing. Its deployment at the European border of the Russian sphere of influence shows that its original function has not lost its relevance, as the border has again become a conflict zone.

NATO wanted to act further east, without great success. The crisis in the Middle East shows that NATO is not an operational framework capable of imposing its rule everywhere. Tensions are high with its regional pillar, Turkey. Alliances of variable geometry have been forged to suit each theatre with regimes opposed to each other such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. The military contribution of its European members remains marginal. This situation fed the attacks on it by Donald Trump at the beginning of his term of office

Inter-imperialist competition has revived. On the geopolitical level the newcomer China is demanding to enter the top league. Russia has become unavoidable in its enlarged zone of influence (Syria). The Japanese government is trying to reduce its military dependence on the US and to free itself from the pacifist clauses of the Japanese Constitution. Economically, competition is intense, the freedom of movement granted to capital even making it possible for “sub-imperialisms” to enter the lists beyond their regional spheres. Ideologically, the ruling classes are facing a crisis of legitimacy, and often, important institutional malfunctions. – they are losing control of the electoral process in key countries like the USA (Trump’s victory in the republican primaries and then the presidential election) and the United Kingdom (the Brexit victory). The state of war is permanent. The global ecological crisis is already strongly felt. In various parts of the world, the social fabric is disintegrating. Humanitarian disasters and forced movements of population have reached a level not seen since the Second World War.

The peoples are paying an exorbitant price for the imposition of the new neoliberal order. The current chronic crisis has multiple causes.

â€¢ The imperialist states still have the role of ensuring favourable conditions for the accumulation of

capital, but the global capital operates more independently from them than in the past. This separation has helped to make porous the former "private hunting grounds", the areas of almost exclusive influence of traditional imperialism in the world (except to a large extent in Latin America). The high mobility of capital has had devastating effects on social equilibrium, undermining the possibility of stabilizing action by national governments.

Capitalist globalization, financialization, the increasing internationalization of production lines have also reduced the capacity of governments to implement economic policies.

The unprecedented level of financialization, the development of fictitious capital, which is inherent in modern capitalism, has taken on considerable proportions in recent years. Without the link being broken, it is leading to a higher degree of dissociation of fictitious capital from productive processes, while the link between initial borrower and initial lender becomes distended. Financialization has sustained capitalist growth, but its overdevelopment accentuates the contradictions of this growth.

The debt system now operates in both North and South. It is a key instrument of the dictatorship exercised by corporate capital and plays a directly political role, as the case of Greece confirms, in imposing the maintenance of the neoliberal order. Together with the free trade agreements, it blocks a national government implementing alternative policies to get out of the social crisis.

A real "currency war" (currency) is engaged; it is an aspect of inter-imperialist conflicts, the use of currency defining areas of control.

The geopolitical alliances were yesterday "fixed" by the East-West conflict on the one hand and the Sino-Soviet conflict on the other; they have once again become more fluid and uncertain particularly in South Asia. Latin American regimes tried for a time to loosen the straightjacket imposed by Washington.

Inter-imperialist rivalries are feeding a new spiral in the arms race, from building new aircraft carriers to the "modernization" of nuclear weapons by countries like the US and France that are seeking to make them operational and politically acceptable as part of localized conflicts. The use of the "anti-missile shield" by the USA deepens this spiral, as the Korean crisis illustrates.

At first, after the implosion of the USSR, the bourgeoisie and the (traditional) imperialist states had a very conquering attitude: penetration of Eastern markets, interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) ... Then they became bogged down militarily and there was the financial crisis, the emergence of new powers, the revolutions in the Arab region ... all leading to a loss of geopolitical initiative and control: Washington today acts more by reacting to emergencies than by planning to impose its order.

The rise of revolutions in the Arab region, and then counter-revolutions, have helped create an uncontrolled situation in a vast area that goes from the Middle East to the Sahara - and beyond in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

In this context, the role of regional powers becomes important: Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, Algeria ... South Africa, Brazil, India, South Korea ... Although in a subordinate position in the global system of domination under US hegemony, they play their own game, in addition to being regional gendarmes (like Brazil in Haiti).

One of the questions that is posed to us by the evolution of the international situation is the link between the post-1989 turning-point (conquering imperialism) and the one that took shape in the mid-2000s (geopolitical instability).

From this point of view, the financial crisis of 1997-1998 and 2007-2008 were a real tipping point. Bringing up to date the contradictions inherent in capitalist globalization, it has had major consequences that are both political (delegitimization of the system of domination) and social (very brutal in countries directly affected)

and structural - including the explosion of debts. It is the background of the great democratic movements that emerged a few years later (the occupation of places), but also openly reactionary and antidemocratic developments nourished by the great fear of the "middle classes" (see for example in Thailand).

Combined with the ecological crisis and the massive displacement of populations, the structural instability of the global order creates new forms of poverty (see for example the Philippines), which require the progressive organizations to implement appropriate policies.

### III. Globalization and crisis of governability

The imperialist bourgeoisies wanted to take advantage of the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the opening up of China to capitalism to create a global market with uniform rules, allowing them to deploy their capital at will. The consequences of capitalist globalization could only be very profound - multiplied moreover by developments that, in their euphoria, these imperialist bourgeoisies had not wanted to foresee.

This project involved in fact:

Depriving elected institutions (parliaments, governments ...) of decision-making power on key choices and requiring them to incorporate into their legislation measures decided elsewhere: by the WTO, international free trade treaties, etc. It thus dealt a blow to classical bourgeois democracy - which is transcribed on the ideological level by the reference to "governance" instead of democracy.

Making illegal, in the name of the preeminent right of "competition", the "appropriate methods" of bourgeois rule, flowing from the specific history of countries and regions (historic compromise of the European kind, the Latin American kind of populism, state dirigisme of the Asian kind, many kinds of redistributive clientelism...).

In fact, all of these forms erect modulated relations with the world market, and thus barriers to the free deployment of imperialist capital.

â€¢ Subordinating common law to the rights of businesses, to whom governments should guarantee the profits expected when investing, against the right of the population to health, a healthy environment, a non-precarious life. This is one of the major challenges of the new generation of free trade treaties that complete the overall system formed major international institutions like the WTO, IMF, the World Bank.

â€¢ An endless spiral of destruction of social rights. The traditional imperialist bourgeoisies have taken the measure of the weakening and the crisis of the labour movement in the so-called "centre". In the name of "competitiveness" on the world market, they are taking the opportunity to conduct a systematic ongoing offensive with the goal of destroying the collective rights that have been won, particularly during the period that followed the Second World War. They do not aim to impose a new "social contract" that is more favourable to them, but want to do away with such agreements and to get their hands on all the potentially profitable sectors which, because they were public services, escaped them: health, education, pension systems, transport, etc.

â€¢ A modification of the role assigned to national states and of the relationship between imperialist capital and territory. With few exceptions, governments are no longer co-drivers of large-scale industrial projects or of the development of social infrastructure (education, health ...). Although they continue to support throughout the world "their" transnational corporations, the latter (given their power and internationalization) do not feel as dependent on their country of origin as they did in the past: the relationship is more "asymmetric" than ever... The role of the state, always essential, is contracting: contributing to establishing the rules universalizing the mobility of capital, opening up the entire public sector to the appetites of capital, contributing

to the destruction of social rights and keeping its population in line.

â€¢ So we are dealing with two hierarchical systems that are structuring the relations of world domination. The hierarchy of the imperialist states, already complex, as we have noted (point I) and the hierarchies of the large capital flows that encompass the planet in the form of networks. These two systems no longer overlap, even though the states are at the service of the second.

Capitalist globalization represents a new global mode of class rule, unfinished and structurally unstable. It leads in fact to open crises of legitimacy and of ungovernability in many countries and in entire regions; to a state of permanent crisis. The supposed centres of regulation on a world scale (the WTO, the UN Security Council ...) are unable to fulfil their role effectively.

A class does not permanently rule over a society without mediations and social compromises; without sources of legitimacy, whether their origin be historical, democratic, social, revolutionary... The imperialist bourgeoisies are liquidating centuries of "know-how" in this field in the name of the free movement of capital, while the aggressiveness of neoliberal policies is destroying the social fabric in a growing number of countries. The fact that, in a Western country like Greece, much of the population is deprived of access to health care and services, says a great deal about the uncompromising line of the European bourgeoisie.

At the time when there were empires, it was necessary to ensure the stability of colonial possessions - as well as (although to a lesser extent) that of the spheres of influence during the Cold War. Let us say that today, because of mobility and financialization, it depends on the time and the place... Thus, entire regions may enter into chronic crisis under the blows of globalization. The implementation of neoliberal diktats by worn-out dictatorial regimes provoked popular uprisings in the Arab world and vast mobilizations in Africa, open regime crises and violent counter-revolutionary ripostes, leading

to acute instability.

The particularity of globalized capitalism is that it seems to accommodate itself to crisis as a permanent state of affairs: crisis becomes consubstantial with the normal functioning of the new global system of domination. If this is really the case, we must profoundly change our view of "crisis" as a particular moment between long periods of "normality" - and we have not finished measuring, and suffering, the consequences of this.

## **IV. The new (proto) imperialisms**

The traditional imperialist bourgeoisies thought after 1991 that they would penetrate the market of the former so-called "socialist" countries to the point of subordinating them naturally - even wondering whether NATO still had a function in relation to Russia. This hypothesis was not absurd, as was shown by the situation of China at the beginning of the 2000 decade and the conditions of accession of the country to the WTO (very favourable to international capital). But things turned out differently - and this does not appear to have been initially or seriously considered by the established powers.

In China, a new bourgeoisie has been constituted from within the country and the regime, mainly via the "bourgeoisification" of the bureaucracy, which transformed itself into a property-owning class by mechanisms that are now familiar to us. Therefore it has reconstituted itself on an independent basis (the legacy of the Maoist revolution) and not as a bourgeoisie that was from the start organically subordinated to imperialism. China has thus become a capitalist power, and moreover a permanent member of the UN Security Council with a right of veto (all of which is true also for Russia), even if its social formation, legacy of a very specific history, remains original.

Can we call it a new imperialism? It is obviously necessary to define what we

mean by this term in the present world context, which is the subject of this text. But since China has become the second world power, it seems more and more difficult to deny it that status, regardless of what may be the fragility of the present regime and of its economy.

Russia remains economically dependent on exports of primary goods (of which petroleum products account for two-thirds). Its international role is largely linked to the size of its nuclear arsenal (world balance of forces) and the effectiveness of its regional striking power (Crimea, Syria)

The BRICS have tried to act together in the arena of the world market, without much success. The countries that make up this fragile "bloc" do not all play in the same league. Brazil, India and South Africa can probably be described as sub-imperialisms – a notion that dates back to the 1970s – and regional gendarmes, but with a significant difference in relation to the past: they benefit from a much greater freedom to export capital (see the "great game" that has opened up in Africa, with competition between the United States, Canada, Britain, France, India, Brazil, South Africa, China, Qatar, Turkey, Nigeria, Angola...).

Three conclusions here:

1. The competition between capitalist powers is reviving, with the affirmation of China in East Asia and farther afield, but also of Russia in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East. These are really conflicts between capitalist powers, therefore qualitatively different from those of the previous period.

2. More generally, concerning the free movement of capital, the bourgeoisies (even subordinate ones) and transnational corporations of the "South" can use the rules conceived after 1991 by the traditional imperialist bourgeoisies for themselves, particularly in terms of investment, making competition in the global market more complex than in the past. As far as the flow of commodities is concerned, the generalized setting of workers in

competition with each other admittedly remains largely driven by the enterprises of the traditional imperialist centres, and it is they and not the firms in producer countries who control access to the consumer markets of the developed countries; however this is less true today for China and indeed India or Brazil.

3. There is not only a crisis of legitimacy of the ruling classes, but also an ideological crisis. This is shown in the scale of the institutional crisis, when the "wrong" candidates assert themselves against the establishment (Trump in the US), when the election itself loses all credibility in the eyes of a growing portion of the population. Unable to answer, they will increasingly resort to "divide and rule", using racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, xenophobia and stigmatization, whether Koreans in Japan or Afro-descendants in the USA and Brazil, Muslims in India, Shiites, Sunnis or Christians in Muslim countries ... the fight against racism, and xenophobia is more than ever a critical area of resistance at the international level. The same the same for other forms of discrimination (gender, sexual, social ...).

## **V. New far right forces, new fascisms**

One of the first consequences of the phenomenal destabilizing power of capitalist globalization is the equally spectacular rise of new far right forces and new fascisms with a (potential) mass base. Some take relatively traditional forms (neonazis), such as Golden Dawn in Greece, the German NDP, the Jobbik in Hungary. Others are based on new xenophobic currents and those based on a return to national identity. Their growth is particularly pronounced in some European countries (not the case in Spain or Portugal), including the Dutch PVV, the French National Front, the Italian Northern League, the Austrian FPÖ, the "True Finns", the British UKIP ... They benefit from the triple social, institutional and identity crisis. Their economic programme

varies, but they have in common a violently anti-immigrant discourse and islamophobic racism. Thus, in the Netherlands, Geert Wilders goes so far as to demand the closure of all the mosques!

Other far right currents emerge in the form of religious fundamentalism, and this is the case in all the "great" religions (Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim...), or of "national religious" fundamentalism (the Zionist far right)... These currents represent today a considerable threat in countries like India, Sri Lanka and Israel.

They have been able to influence the policy of governments as important as that of the United States (under Bush, or today under Trump). In France, the presidential candidate of the governmental right, François Fillon, is supported by the most reactionary Catholic sectors. Christian radical evangelicalism is wreaking havoc in Latin America and Africa. So the Muslim world has no monopoly in this domain; but there it has taken a particular international dimension, with "cross-border" movements like the Islamic State or the Taliban (see the situation in Pakistan), and networks connecting up more or less formally, from Morocco to Indonesia and in the south of the Philippines.

In general, we have to further analyse the new far right movements, whether they are religious or not: they are not mere replicas of the past, they are expressions of today. This is particularly true for religious fundamentalist currents. It is important to define them politically in order to understand the role they play (remember that not so long ago, a significant part of the international radical left saw in fundamentalism Islam an expression of an "objectively" progressive, although ideologically reactionary, anti-imperialism). This is also necessary to combat "essentialist" interpretations of the "clash of civilizations".

These movements are far-right and counter-revolutionary currents. They have contributed to bringing to a halt the dynamic of the popular revolutions born of the "Arab Spring". They do not have a monopoly of extreme violence



(see the Assad regime!) nor of "barbarism" (the imperialist order is "barbaric"). But they exercise over society a control and a terror that comes "from below", which in many cases recalls the fascisms of the inter-war period, before they came to power.

Like all political terms, that of fascism is often overused or interpreted in various ways. However, our own organizations are discussing this question - how fundamentalist and far-right nationalist movements are evolving, which of them can be defined as fascist or not - for example in countries like Pakistan (the Taliban movement) and India (RSS), in addition to Islamic State. "Theofascism" could be a generic term used for this type of current, including all religions.

Whatever the most appropriate adjectives to describe the new extreme right movements, their growing power poses to our generation of activists political problems with which we had not been confronted in the previous period - that of large-scale "antifascist" resistance. We have to work on this and to do so we need to pool national and regional analyses and experiences.

More generally, the renewal of the radical right strengthens a dangerous reactionary thrust that aims to put into question in particular the fundamental rights of women and LGBT+ people, often relying on the institutional churches concerning abortion (in Spain, where a reactionary proposed law abolishing the right to abortion was defeated, in Italy, Poland, Nicaragua...), family law (advocating a return to a very conservative view of the role of women...), and even triggering real witch hunts against homosexuals (Iran, African countries where evangelical currents are powerful...) or transsexuals. Reaction is thus frontally attacking the right to self-determination of women and of individuals (recognition of the diversity of sexual orientation), rights that were won after long struggles.

## **VI. Authoritarian regimes, demand for democracy and solidarity**

This rise of the reactionary right is encouraged by the ideology of national security advocated today by bourgeois governments in the name of the fight against terrorism and "illegal" immigration. In return, these governments use the fears thus generated to strengthen the law-and-order state, to establish regimes where police have more and more power and to get authoritarian measures accepted: entire populations are now treated as "suspicious", subject to surveillance.

Even in countries of old bourgeois democratic tradition, we are witnessing a real change of regime. Laws amounting to civil war are adopted under the guise of counter-terrorism. Mass surveillance systems are being deployed. The army has police powers (France) or the police forces are militarized. Exceptional measures are introduced into current law. The executive extends its authority at the expense of the judiciary ...

The progressive generalization of states of emergency contributes to the denial of humanity for whole social groups: minorities, migrants, etc. The systematic use of the "crime" of blasphemy, lese-majeste, attacks on national identity or security contributes to this. The insidious return of the policy of dehumanization (which nourished the genocides of yesterday) is not only a sign of reactionary, but counter-revolutionary, tendencies.

Capitalist globalization has provoked the crisis of so-called democratic institutions (where they existed) and of bourgeois parliamentarism. Faced with this loss of legitimacy, the dominant trend is towards the establishment - sudden or creeping - of authoritarian regimes not subject to popular sovereignty (exceptions confirming the rule, former military dictatorships can still have to give up

or share part of their power, as in Burma).. The right to choose is simply denied to peoples in the name of treaties and regulations endorsed by their governments.

The democratic imperative - "real democracy now!" - thus acquires a more subversive dimension that is more immediate than was often the case in the past, making it possible to give it an alternative, popular content. Similarly, the universality of neoliberal policies and the accompanying commoditisation of "common goods" make possible the convergence of forms of social resistance, as seen in the global justice movement. The consequences of climate change, which are already being felt, also offer a new field of potentially anti-capitalist convergences.

However, the lasting effects of the defeats of the workers' movement and of neoliberal ideological hegemony, the loss of credibility of the socialist alternative, counteract these positive trends. It is difficult to situate within a longer-term perspective the - sometimes considerable - success of protest movements. The acuteness of oppression can, in this context, strengthen "closed", identity-based resistance, where an oppressed community remains indifferent to the fate reserved to other oppressed people (as in the case of "homonationalism"). The religious character taken by many conflicts also contributes to the division of the exploited and oppressed.

The neo-liberal order can only be imposed if it succeeds in destroying the old solidarities and stifling the emergence of new solidarities. As necessary as these are, we cannot consider that solidarity will develop "naturally" in response to the crisis, nor internationalism faced with globalized capital. A concerted and systematic effort must be made in this domain.

## **VII. Capitalist expansion and**

# climate crisis

The reintegration of the Sino-Soviet "bloc" into the world market has led to a huge expansion of the geographical area in which capital dominates, which is the foundation for the optimism of the imperialist bourgeoisies. It is also the foundation for a dramatic acceleration of the global ecological crisis, on multiple terrains. We have arrived at a point where the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions must begin without any further delay in the major emitting countries of the South and not just of the North.

In this context, the settlement of the "ecological debt" to the South must not favour world capitalist development and benefit either the Japanese-Western transnational corporations implanted in the South or the transnational corporations of the South (such as Brazilian agribusiness, etc.), which would only generate ever more social and environmental crises.

There is certainly always the need for "North-South solidarity", for example in defence of the victims of climate chaos. However, more than ever, it is a common "anti-systemic" struggle that is on the agenda in "North-South" relations from the point of view of the working classes: that is to say a common fight for an anti-capitalist alternative, another conception of development in the "North" as in the "South" (the quotation marks are there to remind us that the heterogeneity of the "North" and the "South" is now such that these concepts can be misleading).

The starting point is the socio-environmental struggle to "change the system, not the climate"; its base is composed of social movements and not just specific coalitions on the climate. We must therefore work on the articulation between the two. If we do not "ecologise" the social struggle (following the example of what can already be done in peasant and urban struggles), the numerical expansion of "climate" mobilizations will remain on the surface of things.

The organization of the victims of climate chaos, their defence and help

with their self-organization, are fully part of the basis of the ecological struggle.

The consequences of a global fossil fuel based energy system are today clear. As a result of the rising global temperature the ice caps are shrinking, sea levels are rising, water tables dry up, deserts extend, fresh water becomes rarer, agriculture is under threat and extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. The effects of super-typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines surpassed in scale what we had already been warned about. The future that is announced is already part of the present. This has destabilizing consequences that extend far beyond the regions that are directly affected and gives rise to a chain sequence of tensions (see the tensions between Bangladesh and India on the issue of migrant refugees, or inter-state conflicts for the control of water reserves).

Scientists agree that a global surface temperature rise of 2°C over preindustrial levels would trigger climate feedbacks, which, once started, will be impossible to stop. With this in mind there are a number of major issues that remain entirely unresolved.

Melting ice sheets and glaciers threaten a catastrophic rise in the sea level threatening coastal cities around the globe as well as island communities and low lying countries and regions (Bangladesh).

The vast Western Antarctic ice cap is showing signs of instability, if it melts this could raise the sea level by 7m.

As the earth's temperature rises we can expect a devastating impact on fresh water resources with increasing droughts and heat waves. The glaciers are retreating at an unprecedented rate and the aquifers are drying up. The rivers are losing their capacity. More than 50 percent of the world's freshwater comes from mountain runoff and snowmelt. Wars over water resources will become far more prevalent.

The problem of how to feed the rising global population of the planet without increasing resorting to factory farming

(agribusiness) and the ever increasing use of pesticides and herbicides and GM food that destroys the biosphere. The key issue is food sovereignty that gives people the rights and means to define their own food systems. It would give control to those who produce, distribute and consume food rather than the corporations and market institutions that dominate the global food system. It would mean an end to land grabs and would require extensive land redistribution to put the land in the hands of those who produce the food.

Possibly the biggest single most damaging aspect of the environmental crisis is the impact it is having on biodiversity – what is called "the sixth extinction". An increase in global average temperature of around three degrees, for example, would mean that 50% of all species – plants and animals – will be driven to extinction. A quarter of all mammal species are at risk. The acidification of the oceans that is taking place means that coral reefs are dying off, as are organisms that rely on calcification for their shell structure. Our own future as a species cannot be separated from this crisis of biodiversity.

## VIII. A world of permanent wars

We have well and truly entered a world of permanent wars (plural). This situation of permanent war does not only relate to international conflicts. It also characterises the internal situation in some countries in Africa or Latin America, such as Mexico.

Wars are here to stay, with many faces. We need to look again at how they are conducted, particularly by popular resistance movements, in order to better understand the conditions of a struggle, the reality of a situation, the concrete requirements of solidarity ... To do this every war must be analysed in its specificities. We are confronted with very complex situations, as today in the Middle East where, in the framework of a single theatre of operations (Iraq-Syria) there are interlocking conflicts with specific characteristics which feed tensions and contradictions between

progressive forces.

However, we must keep a compass point in a very complex geopolitical situation: class independence against imperialism, against militarism, against fascism and against the rise of identity movements' that are "anti-solidarity"(racist, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic, xenophobic, casteist, fundamentalist, homophobic, misogynistic, masculinist...).

## IX. The limits of the superpower

The common set of rules of the global capitalist order does not prevent some countries from being more equal than others; the United States takes the liberty of doing things that it does not allow elsewhere. It plays on the place of the dollar to "export" its "right" to legal proceedings; controls much of the most advanced technologies, and has at its disposal unmatched military power. Its state continues to maintain global sovereign functions that others no longer have - or no longer have the means of having.

The United States remains the only superpower in the world - and yet, it has lost all the wars that it has engaged in, from Afghanistan to Somalia. The fault lies perhaps in neoliberal globalization, which prohibits it from consolidating socially (in alliance with local elites) its temporary military gains. This is perhaps also a consequence of the privatization of armies, of firms of mercenaries playing an increasing role, as well as the "unofficial" armed gangs in the service of particular interests (big companies, big land and business-owning families...).

It is also the case that this power, as "super" as it might be, does not have the means to intervene in every direction in the conditions of generalized structural instability. It would require secondary imperialisms capable of supporting it. France and Britain have now only very limited capacities; Japan has yet to break the civic resistance to its complete remilitarization. Brexit is the final blow to the constitution of a unified European imperialism: the United

Kingdom commands one of the only two significant armies of the Union (as well as one of the main diplomatic and financial networks and one of the major economies).

The election of Donald Trump and his unilateral declarations posed in acute terms an older problem: to what extent is the "strategic umbrella" assured by the United States guaranteed? The answer is clear: to an uncertain extent. The hawks of the Japanese right draw the consequences. What will happen in Western Europe? Imperialist Germany is under pressure. Can it continue to take advantage of its dominant economic position without assuming military responsibilities? The EU crisis, Russian pressure and Washington's stance pose objectively the question of German rearmament - although (like in Japan) hostility to militarism is very deep in the population.

Whoever says war should say anti-war movement. Since the wars are very different from each other, the building of anti-war movements in synergy does not go without saying. The way activists in (Western) Europe approach this question seems pessimistic, a consequence of how "campism" has gnawed at and rendered impotent the principal campaigns undertaken in this field. But there are anti-war movements, particularly in Asia - and in Eurasia; the overcoming of the frontiers inherited from the era of the blocs will take place particularly around this question.

## X. Internationalism against campism

There is no longer a "non-" "or "anti-" capitalist *great power* (a category to which Cuba does not belong). We must draw all the conclusions from this.

In the past, without ever aligning ourselves with Beijing's diplomacy, we defended the People's Republic of China (and the dynamics of the revolution) against the Japan-US

imperialist alliance - we were *in this sense* in its camp. We were opposed to NATO, whatever we thought of the Stalinist regime; we were not however "campist" because that did not limit our struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy. We were simply acting in a world where there was an articulation of lines of conflict: revolutions/counter-revolutions, East/West and Sino-Soviet blocs. This is no longer the case today.

"Campist" logic has always led to the abandonment of victims (those who happen to find themselves on the wrong side) in the name of fighting against the "main enemy". This is even truer today than in the past, because it leads to lining up in the camp of a capitalist power (Russia, China) - or on the contrary in the Western camp when Moscow and Beijing are seen as the primary threat. In this way aggressive nationalism is encouraged and the borders inherited from the era of "blocs" are sanctified, whereas they are precisely what we should efface.

Campism can also lead to support in Syria the murderous Assad regime and the Russian intervention - or the coalition under US hegemony, including in particular Saudi Arabia. Even facing the martyrising of Aleppo, a section of the international radical left continued to look elsewhere, so as not to break with its campist tradition. Other currents content themselves with condemning the imperialist intervention in Iraq and Syria (which we must certainly do), but without saying what the Islamic State is doing and calling for resistance to it.

This type of position makes it impossible to pose clearly *the whole range* of solidarity tasks. To recall the historic responsibility of imperialism, from the intervention in 2003, the undeclared objectives of the present intervention, to denounce one's own imperialism, is not enough. It is necessary to think about the concrete tasks of solidarity *from the point of view of the needs (humanitarian, political and material) of the populations who are victims and of the movements engaged in struggle*. Which cannot be done without attacking the Assad regime and the counter-revolutionary fundamentalist movements.

Similarly in the case of conflicts at the border that currently divides eastern Europe, as in the case of Ukraine, our orientation has been to fight in every European country, in or outside the EU, for another Europe based on free association of sovereign peoples against all relations of domination (national, social) – which means for us socialism.

## **XI. Humanitarian crisis**

Neoliberal policies, war, climate chaos, economic convulsions, social breakdowns, exacerbated violence, pogroms, the collapse of social protection systems, devastating epidemics, women reduced to slavery, dying children, forced migration... Triumphant capitalism, unbridled, is giving birth to a world where humanitarian crises multiply.

The breakdown of social order has impacted the state head-on in countries like Pakistan. In Latin America, especially in Mexico, the decomposition of capitalism has not led to the emergence of a new fascism, but it has transformed the marginal criminal gangs operating underground, into power groups associated with the dominant political class and international financial capital. They are extending their networks to the rest of Latin America and the United States. In addition to drug trafficking, these gangs are involved in the kidnapping and trafficking of women. They control large strips of territory and have a social base. The so-called war on drug trafficking, disputes between different criminal gangs and collateral damage have produced more deaths than the Iraq war. Their existence facilitates capitalist accumulation by dispossession through expelling thousands of peasants and indigenous peoples from their lands, to the benefit of transnationals mainly engaged in extractivism. It justifies the militarization and criminalization of social protest. Although they do not have a political profile, these bands underpin the process of capital accumulation and promote a misogynist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic culture. They can become

a breeding ground for the formation of paramilitary groups at the service of the oligarchy.

Instead of being strengthened faced with this urgency, humanitarian law is trampled by national states. The European Union does not even pretend to respect international law regarding the reception of refugees. The wicked agreement negotiated with Turkey is an illustration. The same applies to the fate of the Rohingya in Southeast Asia.

Unlimited violence often appears openly. Hyper-violence is no longer denied, but staged, as the Islamic state does. Femicide in countries such as Argentina or Mexico takes extreme forms: impaled, burned bodies. They have nothing to envy to the “traditional” violence of “honour crimes” (rebels against the patriarchal order buried alive ...).

Since George W. Bush and the attacks of September 11, 2001, the very humanity of the enemy is denied by a growing number of governments. In the name of the struggle between Good and Evil, “humanitarian war” has indeed been liberated from humanitarian law and the law of war: the “absolute” enemy no longer has any right – they rot in the “black hole” of Guantanamo and the secret prisons of the CIA.

This modern barbarism must be met with a widening of internationalist fields of action. Militant left currents and social movements in particular must ensure the development of solidarity “from people to people” and from “social movement to social movement” with the victims of the humanitarian crisis.

After a period when the very concept of internationalism was often disparaged, the global justice wave, then the multiplication of “occupations” of public squares or districts, have restored it to its full importance. Now it is necessary for this revived internationalism to find more permanent forms of action, on all the terrains of contestation. This will not happen spontaneously, we can see a shrinking of the meaning of solidarity or its practice in many countries.

## **XII. A globalized class war**

Globalized capitalism leads a globalized class war.

It is difficult to foresee the medium-term development of the international situation, particularly in economic terms. A new financial crisis threatens, without us knowing what the detonator and the implications would be. Will computer-related technological innovations have or not a significant effect on labour productivity? Are we in a period of long stagnation? Are significant sectors of the bourgeoisie able to choose a new protectionism? Does global warming contribute to imposing absolute limits on capitalism? Is the main reason for the capitalist crisis the decline in the rate of profit (as in the case of “classical” crises), or should other factors be fully taken into account (the mode of governance of globalization, impact of the ecological crisis ...)?

At the moment, however, there is no lack of certainties. The precarity of employment and the general living conditions, the destruction of the social fabric, will continue in most countries. Oppressions will be accentuated if interlocking solidarities do not oppose them with sufficient force. The ravages of the ecological crisis will spread. Geopolitical instability will be further aggravated by the growing tension in East Asia. Conflicts in the control of resources, markets and channels of communication will multiply.

The first consequence of the election of Donald Trump is to accentuate all these tendencies. Worse, we are in the process of passing new thresholds of dangerousness. The acceleration of the arms race (construction of aircraft carriers, etc.) is one of the most glaring symptoms. This latter has again acquired a nuclear dimension. Countries such as the United States and France seek to make politically possible the “tactical” use of this weapon of mass destruction – now, in the face of the acute crisis of the Korean crisis and the deployment of a US base in the South of Thailand.

intercept missiles, China is considering strengthening its arsenal and deploying its strategic submarines in the oceans. The construction of walls and the closure of borders are becoming widespread, with all the implications of demonization and maltreatment of “foreigners”; But demagoguery against immigrants can not hide the violence of attacks on the working population as a whole. The

historical alternative “socialism or barbarism” now takes on its full meaning.

By their very violence, reactionary attack can provoke massive democratic mobilizations, as in the United States with the election of Trump or in Argentina against the extreme violence inflicted on women, even on the international level. Thus,

8 March 8, 2017 acquired an unusual spectacular scope. These attacks can, however, also inflict severe defeats on combative, labour and peasant social movements, as in Pakistan. The analysis of the dynamics of popular resistance is the subject of the second text presented for discussion at the next World Congress; and the conditions of construction of militant parties that of the third.

# Towards a text on Role and Tasks of the Fourth International

27 July 2017

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## 3. In 2003 we reaffirmed:

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**programme**, the ultimate goal of such a party being obviously to get rid of the existing (capitalist) system, in whatever general terms this may be expressed. This perspective commits the forces of the FI to being an integral and loyal part of building and leading these new parties, not simply aiming to recruit or wait to denounce eventual betrayals.

Our orientation follows as a conclusion from the analysis of the world situation discussed in the other two reports developed in the perspective of the World Congress, which note on the one hand the geopolitical chaos, and on the other the uneven and contradictory processes of radicalization, against a background of a crisis of class-consciousness.

The key idea is that we cannot generalize a model for what FI has to do, although it is obvious that some apparently more successful experiences will tend to be imitated; but we have to get used to a situation in which the concrete experiences are different and maybe sometimes apparently going in a different direction. One of the problems that we have had is the involuntary tendency sometimes to consider only what is going on in some key countries (France a few years ago, etc), and not internationalize enough our thinking; the discussion on different

experiences in the last ICs [2] has been good to pluralize more our perspective; and this is the focus of this role and tasks resolution.

## A reorientation in the 1990s

In 1995 we decided that the perspective of building small mass vanguard parties based on the full programme of the FI had met its limits, although many valuable lessons about building activist parties had been learnt. In the new situation created by the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet bloc – reconfiguring the delimitations between organizations – it was possible to build radical class-struggle parties involving more forces that could have a positive and weightier effect on the class struggle. [3]

The resolution “Building the International today” thus laid out an approach to party building focused on building and strengthening the International’s organizations at national level through assembling forces more broadly than those that would be won to the historic programme of the FI.

It described the context in this way: *“The project of a socialist society*

## Introduction

Our understanding of the role and tasks of the Fourth International at a national level is that we want to build parties that are useful in the class struggle. That is to **say parties that can assemble the forces and decide on actions that have an effect and advance the class struggle** on the basis of a **class struggle approach and**



offering an alternative both to capitalism and to the disastrous experiences of bureaucratic "socialism", lacks credibility: it is severely hampered by the balance sheet of Stalinism, of social democracy, and of populist nationalism in the "third world", as well as by the weakness of those who put it forward today.

"In a large number of dominated countries, broad vanguard forces are now sceptical about the chances of a success of a revolutionary break with imperialism; and sceptical about the possibilities of taking power and keeping it in the new world balance of power"... "revolutionary internationalism appears as a utopia". (Chapter 1)

We should note that the reports in preparation for the upcoming World Congress do not indicate any qualitative improvement in the relationship of forces and level of political class consciousness. This is not to say that the situation has not changed at all since 1995, there have been important movements that have left their mark on political consciousness (among others the Zapatistas, the Global Justice movement, Bolivarian revolution, the Occupy movement, the Arab revolutionary process as well as some massive workplace strikes and feminist mobilizations) but they have not been sufficient to roll back the unremitting attacks and thus have not changed the overall balance of forces. No strong political current has emerged on the left that has restructured the game, thus the building of new parties remains a viable perspective.

The two terrains for such party-building were indicated as follows): *"the collapse of the Stalinist system has had the positive effect of serious shaking sectarian prejudices against us in the ranks of the working class, trade-union and political vanguards. The triumphalism of capital has also had the effect of encouraging the unification of all anti-capitalists who are now conscious of their weakness. We are better able today to build up relationships of active solidarity and unity in struggle with forces that until recently balked at the very idea of*

*talking to us."*(Chapter 2)... *"We hope to welcome into our ranks revolutionary Marxist organizations which do not necessarily claim to be "Trotskyist" nor identify with out history, but which join with us on the basis of a real programmatic coming together."*(Chapter 3)

"We should also take up the new topics of political thought that interest the young generations, which will develop, from now on, in a "post-Stalinist" context, where new ideological concerns and experiences must be combined with the century old lessons once more confirmed by capitalism in crisis. Taking up new topics is not simply a question of "pedagogy" towards the struggling youth, but much more fundamental question of our capacity to elaborate theory, update our programme and assimilate the new political experiences, original forms and themes of struggle, socio-economic changes, etc."

The document went on to outline different methods of moving towards this aim of strengthening our organizations:

A) *United front in concrete struggles and mass movements.*

B) *Unity with other revolutionary organizations*

C) *Broader regroupment with other left organizations*

Already in 1991 the resolution on Latin America had stated: **"It is obviously impossible to offer a single orientation for all our sections. There is no one single model for party building nor a single line for party building valid for all times and all places. It is now clear that the Nicaraguan revolution and the constitution of the Brazilian PT gave rise to attempts to repeat these two experiences. We are for building big mass revolutionary parties, but there are countless different variants possible for getting there."** (emphasis added).

It enumerated the different options chosen by our organizations at the time:

***The emergence of a mass workers'***

***party like the PT made possible the growth of a revolutionary Marxist current within it that works in the most loyal possible way to build it. ...***

The Mexican PRT has basically developed as an **independent revolutionary party with mass influence**. Before the emergence of neo-Cardenism, we were close to obtaining the convergence of the bulk of the revolutionary left around the PRT. ...

**Entering revolutionary organizations already existing or in formation.** This is the path followed by our Colombian section. Our comrades went into A Luchar on the basis of political agreement, basically around the situation in Colombia. ...

**Participation in a revolutionary political front while maintaining an independent existence.** At this level, the experience of our Uruguayan comrades in forming the MPP through the convergence of several currents - the MLN-Tupamaros, the PVP, the MRO and good section of independent individuals - is very important. ...

**In 2003 we reaffirmed:**

*(2) The struggle for such Parties will go through a series of stages, tactics and organizational forms, specific to each country. Such an anticapitalist recomposition must pursue a key objective from the outset: creating an effective, visible polarization between it and all the forces loyal to social neoliberalism (social democracy, post-Stalinism, ecologists, populists) in order to accelerate their crisis and give it a positive outcome.*

This requires:

- the presence of significant political forces, in which revolutionary marxist currents collaborate with important or emblematic currents or representatives who are breaking with reformist parties without necessarily arriving at revolutionary marxist positions;

- a respectful but close relationship with the social movement, where the recomposed organisation puts forward the movement's demands and actions;

- a formation recognized as representing something real in society, breaking the monopoly of parties loyal to social-neoliberalism, thanks to the presence of elected representatives in assemblies on the local, regional national and (possibly) international (European) level elected by universal suffrage;

- a pluralist functioning that goes beyond simple internal democracy in a way that fosters both convergence and discussion, allowing for the functioning of a revolutionary Marxist current as an accepted part of a broader whole.

In the case of Latin America, our objective is to build broad, pluralistic anti-capitalist parties and/or regroupments with a real presence in the proletariat and the social movements, that express a resistance to neoliberalism in the framework of the struggle against capitalist globalisation. As a revolutionary Marxist current, we are in favour of building a "hard core" of the left. This perspective cannot be successful if it takes the place of strategic thinking, radical action, and bold initiatives, through a sectarian attitude of "self-affirmation" striving to maintain "our own identity".

**In 2010 our emphasis had largely shifted from stressing the possible relations with already existing left organisations of different types to rebuilding the left:**

***4. We want to get involved in this reorganisation to create a new left that is capable of meeting the challenge of this century and rebuilding the workers' movement, its structures, its class consciousness, its independence from the bourgeoisies at the political and cultural level. (our emphasis)***

â€¢ An anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist left;

â€¢ A left that is clearly alternative to social democracy and its governments

â€¢ A left which fights for a socialism of the 21st century, self-managed and democratic and which has a coherent programme for getting there;

â€¢ A left that is conscious that for this goal it has to break with capitalism and its logic and thus that it cannot govern with the political representation with which it wants to break;

â€¢ A pluralistic left rooted in the social movements and the workplaces which integrates the combativity of the workers, the struggles for women's and LGBT liberation and emancipation and ecologist struggles;

â€¢ A non-institutional left which bases its strategy on the self-organisation of the proletariat and the oppressed on the principle that emancipations of the workers is the task of the workers themselves;

â€¢ A left that promotes all forms of self-organisation by workers and by the popular classes that encourages thinking, deciding, and doing things for itself and on the basis of its own decisions;

â€¢ A left which integrates new social sectors, new themes such as those expressed by the World Social Forum in Belem, and above all the new generations because you cannot make new things with old material;

â€¢ An internationalist and anti-imperialist left which fights against domination and war and the self-determination of the people and which lays out the framework for a mass democratic international;

â€¢ A left able to link the precious heritage of critical and revolutionary Marxism with developments of feminism, ecosocialism and the indigenous movements of Latin America.

â€¢ An independent and class-struggle left which fights for the broadest united action against the crisis and for the rights, the gains and the aspirations of the workers and all the oppressed.

These are the criteria and the general content of our orientation for building new useful anti-capitalist instruments for fighting the current system.

## Different paths to the same objective, breaks and bifurcations

As we reiterated in these different resolutions, the decision about which political instrument fits the **definition in any particular country at any particular time has to be based on a concrete understanding of the situation** - the dynamics, the existing forces. No recipe from outside with whatever label can replace that understanding of the actual situation.

Because the usefulness of a political instrument can only be determined by this understanding it follows that **the type of political instrument necessary changes as the situation changes**. The best scenario is that the instrument we are involved in building changes in tune with the changing needs - therefore we fight to develop the political basis/programme of the parties of which we are part so that they do so.

But it may be the case that it does not, indeed that it betrays what is necessary. In that case we have to be prepared to break and form a new instrument when we judge that we have lost the political battle.

However this does not mean that the previous choice was wrong (we also know that parties that proclaimed themselves to be based on the full programme of the Bolshevik revolution betrayed/ became reformist etc). We have to assess whether at the point in time that they were formed and in their first (more or less long) period they had a positive effect on the national situation.

Therefore while we may judge the evolution of the Brazilian PT, or Rifondazione in Italy as in the end leading nowhere this not mean that we were wrong to participate in them or that at some point (for a shorter or longer period) they were not a positive expression of the aspirations of those desiring systemic change or were not able to achieve concrete gains.

It may also be the case that very

rapidly it becomes obvious that the political instrument is a transitional one and its goal must be to wage the battle to create a new political party.

Because we say that the nature of the political instrument necessary evolves with the situation we know that when the revolution is on the horizon we will need a party capable of understanding and seizing that opportunity. However we know that proclaiming the revolutionary party today does not necessarily/in most cases lead to fulfilling the criteria we give for being useful to the class struggle.

This is not to say that we cannot point to experiences in which parties that openly characterised themselves as revolutionary had a real impact: the US SWP in the anti-war movement, the French LCR, or from outside our movement the British SWP with its launching of the Anti-Nazi League in the 1970s. However their impact was the product of a particular political situation and can only be understood in that context. Moreover, their impact was still moderate and these parties did not achieve a critical weight in the political life of their countries - with the exception of the LCR through the two Besancenot campaigns in 2002 and 2007, during the last decade of its existence.

## **The balance sheets of our experiences since the beginning of the 1990s**

Almost all the national organisations of the Fourth International have tried in the ways they thought corresponded to their national situation to build and be part of broader political formations.

The first experiences were in the 1980s, and they have taken many different forms. The comrades in Brazil participated in the creation and building of the Workers' Party from 1980 onwards. We can note the formation of Solidarity in the US by the regroupment of three organisations from the revolutionary

left in 1986, and of the Red Green Alliance in Denmark in 1989 by an agreement between the Communist Party, the Left Socialist Party [4] and our own section. Ten years later, in 1999, the Left Bloc in Portugal was also created by the FI section, a current from the CP and a Maoist organisation.

In Asia substantial organisations coming from other currents (the Philippine comrades breaking with Maoism, the Pakistani comrades formerly in the Militant Tendency, the Sri Lankan comrades with their origins in the former Sri Lankan section of pre-1964 and also having been for a while in the CWI, Bangladesh, originally Maoist but become Gramscian)) have joined us through the 1990s and 2000s.

These organizations in particular have had to confront situations of extreme violence although in different ways, in the Philippines through the self-organization of the threatened communities and clandestine armed organization supporting negotiation with government, and in Pakistan an open political campaigning activity denouncing the violence of the state and the Taliban.

Some of our national organisations, particularly but not only in Europe, have participated in several attempts to build lasting broader organisations during these decades, for example in Italy or Britain, but also South Africa and Puerto Rico. The Brazilian comrades also, following the betrayal of the PT, participate in the building of the PSOL.

Some attempts at fusion of revolutionary currents have failed more or less rapidly (in the Spanish state with the Maoist MC/MKE (dates), in Germany with the post-Stalinists in the VSP), while others such as Solidarity US or Socialist Resistance in Britain continue after 15 or more years. A central point in the balance sheets has been that these initiatives survive when there is agreement on tasks in the national situation.

Other experiences have also failed to reach their hoped-for potential, one of the most notable being the creation of

the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) by the French section in 2009, as well as Left Unity in Britain in 2014. In both these cases one factor was the unexpected emergence of a left current from within social-democracy (the Parti de Gauche in France, the Corbyn phenomenon in Britain) which undercut the dynamic of these new projects. However, in neither case have these developments yet been proved to be a longterm credible new radical political instrument they show that although in its decline social democracy is not yet dead. (This is not to say the crisis of the NPA was caused by this single factor.)

On the other hand both the RGA of Denmark and BE in Portugal continue to have a certain role and influence as left parties in their respective countries - as does Podemos whose impetus and base is much more linked to the development of the spontaneous resistance movements and radicalization that characterised the Indignad@s movement.

Podemos is at this point the only political force that can be characterised as being a product of that type of movement, although the support for Sanders in the US or Corbyn in Britain has some common elements. However these latter phenomena seem to be in contradiction to one of the characteristics of the new radicalizations: rejection of political parties in general, most often as a result of disillusion with the established parties, although in the cases of more radicalised elements also because of the elitist and or sectarian behaviour of far left groups in the social movements.

However in the last period in Europe and US it is possible to note that although there is still suspicion towards parties and so on, a strategic shift towards political-electoral arena has taken place, because of several factors: the depth of the economic/social/political crisis; the example of the Arab revolutions that were projected towards bringing down governments and regimes; the difficulties in obtaining victories only through the social struggle; and because of the deepening of the discredit of the political elite itself

that offers a image of weakness.

Tragically the Arab revolutionary process did not give rise to strong organized political forces capable of giving leadership to the mass movement, with the partial exception of the Front Populaire in Tunisia.

Our experiences in building useful parties for class struggle have in general been participation in parties that achieved a certain influence in their countries, although they were minority parties (a percentage of vote usually under 10%, membership of few thousands, etc), in political situations in which there was a certain relative stability and in which it was not possible to foresee a collapse of traditional parties and where the “question of power” was not posed, or was only posed in terms of what links with social-democracy. But there are a few cases in which we have been involved in another type of situation that has other potentialities and poses other problems: situations of political crisis, where it was foreseeable that non-ruling class parties become a political majority, form a government and so on. The case of PT is one, Podemos another, and the case of a group with which we have comradely relations, DEA in Syriza is another; there is also Marea Socialista that was in the PSUV for some years, although in this case in a long process of a left government in power.

It would be time consuming to list all the different experiences of the different countries and a number of contributions on balance sheets have been made and published notably in *International Viewpoint* “[Building new parties of the left](#)”. However as a general conclusion we can say that while no one model has led to important breakthroughs, the failure to seize opportunities that arise when a qualitative or quantitative advance in assembling useful class-struggle forces could be made will have a long-lasting negative effect.

## Lessons from the balance sheets

The lessons that we have drawn out collectively from these different

experiences have been codified in the resolutions of World Congresses, and in the contributions since the 2010 World Congress in the series of balance sheet discussions that have been held in the IC meetings.

They have turned around the need to wage political battles within the political forces we are building on:

• participation in the social movements and struggles of the oppressed and exploited, not as a political elite intervening from the outside but as an organic part of those movements and struggles in developing political analyses and demands, continuing the fight for those demands to the end. In this process we also learn from these movement to deepen and enrich our own programme-as we have on feminism, ecology, LGBTIQ questions;

• building active, radical and class-struggle trade-unions, either through activity in existing unions or where necessary and appropriate building new workers’ unions;

• the attitude to the state, institutions; to elections **as a support** to the activity in the mass movement, which must remain the centre of gravity of our activity; the role and relationship to the party of elected representatives who are often the most visible representatives of the party, whose actions (through votes) may be seen to have the most effect, and who are often the most under pressure to be “useful” in the short term. It is the party’s responsibility to determine the political framework for their action;

• the importance of an international and internationalist understanding of the world political situation leading to activity in international campaigns and active and practical solidarity, as well as participation in the FI (see below);

• the necessity for democratic and transparent functioning with broad democracy including tendency rights, against verticalist functioning, based on the rank and file membership’s participation in the activity and decision-making of the party, with the necessary organizational structures to

ensure this; understanding the oppression that continues to exist even within parties that are against all forms of women’s and other specific oppression and developing structures, functioning and procedures appropriately;

• the importance of addressing the “new” questions thrown up in the struggles and fightbacks of the oppressed and exploited (notably feminism, ecology, LGBTIQI, and others);

• An unremitting fight against all forms of racism - including against indigenous populations, anti-Semitism, islamophobia and for free movement of migrants, on the basis of solidarity and unity;

• the importance of renewal of organisations through an open and dynamic attitude to recruiting radicalising youth and integrating them into the party.

## The importance of the Fourth International

A crucial element that has come out in the balance sheets, starting from that of the DS current in the PT, is the absolute necessity of maintaining at national and international level the framework of the Fourth International as a place to exchange, contrast and debate not only our understanding of the worldwide political situation but also of the actual experiences of building political organizations. This means being organized as Fourth Internationalists - retaining the possibility to discuss among comrades sharing a political framework, and renewing this political framework on the basis of the ongoing experiences.

We actively seek to build organisations with forces and individuals who do not share our whole historical programme, although within the perspective of creating a political force based on the essential elements of it. Nevertheless we consider that our shared political framework, shaped by the whole scope of historical and political events,

notably since the first contributions of Marxist thought and analysis but right up to the experiences and contributions up to the present day, creates an irreplaceable framework for fruitful discussion, where the weight of national experience can be counterbalanced by others, where the sharing of experience and opinions can help to chart perspectives for our comrades in their different national contexts. Thus the annual face to face discussion in the IC meetings between leading comrades from the maximum number possible of our organisations, and those with whom we have comradely relations such that we invite them to participate, are indispensable.

At national level the exact forms of these discussions and the corresponding forms of organization will vary as do the broader forms of political organization. There will be a tension between on the one hand going beyond the contours of the political currents that originally participated in building new parties, implying the dissolution of existing organizations, and on the other our conviction that maintaining a framework of the Fourth International is indispensable, for the reasons already given. Resolving this tension in the appropriate way in each specific context is one of the challenges facing us.

At an international level our press, in both printed and online versions, are also an important element of this exchange. This presence should be strengthened by (at last) the launch of a Fourth International website that is both up to date publication but also an archive resource for our resolutions and other important texts in at least the three working languages of the International, and the other languages in which they are available.

Our schools and seminars are invaluable opportunities to educate our comrades and also to invite comrades from political forces with whom we are developing relations. Participation in the schools played a crucial role for example in the strengthening of our relations with the Philippine comrades before they joined. The development of the IIRE in the regular Manila sessions and Islamabad seminars is a crucial aspect in developing our real presence as an International in this region of the world.

The youth camp is, essentially of course for the European organizations, a unique opportunity to bring young comrades, sympathisers and friendly organisations to a political initiative where, around the core elements of the FI programme, it is possible to engage them in discussion around the real activities they are engaged in as young people. This is a very important part of

training new cadre with an internationalist understanding of the complexities of our different experiences. While the camp has to remain a European initiative for practical reasons (cost, making self-organization in practice a reality through preparing and evaluating the camp together) the participation of young comrades from elsewhere, notably if this can be combined with attendance at the youth school or a seminar, is also an important investment in our future.

## Towards a new International?

The difficulties of building new organisations at a national level would only be greater at an international level. Nevertheless international contact between radical left political organizations is a priority for us. This can be through the development of our one to one relations with different organizations either from traditional far left organizations or newly emerging currents. At the same time we participate in forums of such organizations organized by others or indeed take the initiative in promoting such forums. With the decline of the Social Forum movement the possibilities are less frequent than in the 2000s decade but we should remain alert to all such initiatives.

# Social upheavals, fightbacks and alternatives

27 July 2017

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## **Introduction**

Recent years have been marked by waves of political and social mobilization that have met different fates. In the Maghreb and the Middle East, through the waves of the Arab Spring, though they are not exhausted, have faced a combination of reactionary forces... In Latin America, we have arrived at the beginning of a new cycle after the defeat of the Venezuelan PSUV in the elections. In Europe, after the capitulation of Tsipras, Syriza did not follow through on the dynamics opened by its election or the massive OXI vote of July 2015.

In 2008, Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy sparked off an international financial crisis that provoked many further crises, especially the sovereign debt crisis in Europe. It triggered new social attacks in addition to the upheavals caused since the 1990s by political, economic and social reorganization following 1989 and the new phase of capitalist globalization.

This text aims to provide a succinct analysis of social changes underway in this context and as well as the capacities and experiences of struggles of the exploited and oppressed and developments in social, trade union and political resistance movements and struggles against capitalist attacks.

The question we face is the reality of power relations between classes internationally. This means analysing:

• the social reality of the working and other exploited classes which

have experienced many changes over the last thirty years, with globalization and global reintegration of Russia and China into a worldwide capitalist economic system.

• the organized strength of the labour movement and social movements fighting exploitation and oppression overall, which have undergone many upheavals at various levels. The disappearance of the USSR and the end of the USSR / China competition for "socialist" hegemony over anti-imperialist resistance movements have largely changed the political geography in what we called "the three sectors of the world revolution". But now what is the real strength of each of the movements of struggle organizing the exploited and oppressed in these sectors?

• The new fields of radicalization in the last two decades, especially among younger generations. Although the global justice movement is weaker now than at the beginning of the century, nevertheless the question of social justice, the need to fight the power of banks, major international corporations and institutions remains a strong vector of radicalization. There is a clear link between social justice, fair work in factories, peasants' right to farm their fields, and environmental issues. We can also see, in terms of climate change and useless major projects, the desire to exert democratic control over big decisions and against the professional system of power with a lot of uncontrolled politicians. The liberatory desire to live without violence and the enforcement of unfair laws is also a strong impetus to LGBT+ and feminist mobilizations. This has also been the case in struggles against racist discrimination and violence and to put an end to the legacy of colonialist and slaveholding societies. Finally, we can observe the power of new ICT, especially social networks, as an organizer of demonstrations, as a means of information and mobilization in all parts of the world.

• the ability, above and beyond these demands for democracy and social justice, to provide political coherence to struggles, to integrate them into a global struggle against the

system in a situation where an "international workers' movement" no longer exists. Refusing the consequences of capitalist policies does not automatically provoke an anticapitalist consciousness. The social identity of workers does not create a class identity as such. What is the capacity to include these struggles in a strategic political programme of radical challenge to capitalist society, the oppressions it has created or restructured? In this context, how can we evaluate the global justice movement and various international networks that have sought to coordinate struggles in one sector or another? Finally what is the strength and direction taken by the political currents in these resistance movements, whether they define themselves as democratic, anticapitalist or revolutionary at the national, regional and international level?

## **I. Some analytical elements**

### **1 / What is the evolution of the situation of the working class and the exploited worldwide?**

Several important phenomena should be noted. Globalization has accelerated industrial and economic growth in a number of countries (India, China, Turkey, Mexico...) a phenomenon that should logically continue and diversify.

This leads to two important phenomena in so-called "emerging" countries: urban concentration, increase of the number of wagedworkers at a faster rate than that of the population (75% increase between 1992 and 2012 for a 30% population increase). Obviously, this corresponds to the development of new centres of economic development. Another significant feature has been the relative growth of the service sector as compared to manufacturing, together with the proletarianisation of many jobs previously seen as "professional" such as teaching and health care, with the consequent impact of these groups being increasingly likely to participate in industrial action to defend conditions

against increasing speedups, pay freezes, privatisations and other attacks.

But we must always take into consideration that, in the aggregate, a large majority of the workforce in these countries consists of workers in precarious employment according to ILO criteria (unpaid family workers or self-employed workers) and this proportion has been increasing since 2008, which is therefore a counter trend. Similarly, the ILO expects a steady increase in unemployment in the next five years in Asia, Africa and Latin America, already noted since 2008. The consequence is obvious: significant urbanization, rural population becoming a minority with the concomitant destruction of the social fabric, obviously leading to a deterioration in living conditions, even if peasants' solidarity networks persist.

So we see a numerical increase of the working class, but with different overall characteristics shaped by the overall development of societies where this development occurs.

In the "old industrial countries", the development of the proletariat, has most generally gone hand in hand with trade union and political struggles against the bourgeoisie in a national framework and, whatever the violence of class struggles of the twentieth century, with obtaining social rights on the nation-state level, crystallizing power relations between classes. Recognition of collective rights of the working class did not only concern employment contracts at the company level but also collective social rights as part of civil society; the bourgeoisie conceding that a share of capitalist profits should finance systems of contribution and tax redistribution on which most industrial societies were built in the twentieth century. Thus there were social compromises, development of the "welfare state", related to the ideological legacy of positivism and social Christianity. These ideologies and compromises were the necessary antidote to the significant development of Marxist and socialist currents. All this is no longer required today and industrial development in emerging countries has not at all come about in the same

context. For instance, the automotive production industry "moving east": Except for Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, the major development areas are in Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and China. In these cases, production lines and qualifications are the same as in old industrialized countries, but social rights and labour legislation are not at all the same. There are similar schemas in many other industrial sectors. In these new areas of industrial development, the social compromises of the last century no longer hold sway. In the old industrial countries, neoliberal austerity policies are already broadly challenging these compromises. Moreover, we can observe semi-slavery situations, especially for migrant workers, and underground factories escaping any legislation.

## **2 / Evolution of worldwide rate of exploitation.**

The economic changes of recent years have also produced various consequences. Not only have wages stagnated in the old industrialized countries, recent years have seen an increase in productivity at the expense of wages, accentuating the trend seen since the 1980s of payroll losses for the benefit of capital. In the same vein, more precarious contracts and moves to introduce new, more restrictive labour laws have been a key element in these productivity gains in the old industrialized countries (zero-hour contracts in Britain, the Italy Jobs Act, mini-jobs in Germany...). Despite the sudden brake on production in 2008, in most new production areas workers have won real wage increases, especially in China. Although these have been economic strikes, carried out workplace-by-workplace or company-by-company, they have had tangible effects.

So, elements of social tension in the labour market persist in both the "emerging" countries and in old economies, either through the increased pressure of unemployment or by a gradual deterioration of employment conditions and social protection systems. Almost half of the workers in the world live outside wage labour, in extreme precarity. And the

trend is the spread of precarious contracts and legislation minimizing legal protection against layoffs. These developments increase the flexibility and ability of capitalists to alter maximum working hours and number of employees according to daily needs. This goes along with a logistical organization of chains of production and distribution that reduces costs as much as possible by resorting to myriad subcontractors. Many new treaties allow big corporations to escape national laws: TTIP, TISA, etc.... Within the European Union, every month, new laws are superseding old national laws. De facto, at the international level there are now two levels of power: state power and corporate power and the second one is stronger and stronger in terms of trade organization and workforce contracts.

The debt crisis over the past decade has shifted from the South to the advanced capitalist countries: household debt crises in many countries (USA, India, etc.), sovereign debt crisis in Europe. These crises accelerate social attacks, precariousness and situations of social misery, they also sharpen the requirements for auditing, the control of populations to block these policies.

All these changes weaken the capacity for lasting collective organization and structuring collective resistance within companies. At the same time, they stimulate the need to fight back and the dynamics of self-organization. This also calls for the development of local social organizations able to regroup isolated or temporary workers above and beyond the workplace level.

## **3 / Concerted attack on peasant populations**

Although fewer and fewer people are farmers, agriculture employs 1.3 billion men and women, 40% of the working population. Peasants are still the majority of working people in Africa and Asia. Over the past two decades, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, peasants have faced "conservative modernization" policies that have posed deep challenges to peasant societies in the attempt to adapt them to capitalist globalization. The peasantry faces many threats, but

beyond the future of food systems and environmental balance; the powerful rise of agribusiness, land grabbing, and expansion of export-based monocultures at the expense of food-producing agriculture, pressure on natural resources. Takeover of lands is a global phenomenon, undertaken by local, national and transnational elites as well as investors and speculators, with the complicity of government and local authorities. It leads to the concentration of landownership and of natural resources in the hands of major investments funds, plantation owners and major firms involved in forestry, hydroelectric power stations and mines. It is also caused by the tourism and real estate industries, and authorities managing port and industrial infrastructure.

This concentration of property has entailed local populations facing expulsion from their lands and forced displacement – especially of the peasantry. It has brought about human rights violations, in particular of women's rights.

Financial institutions such as banks, pension funds and other investment funds have become powerful motor forces for land spoliation. Simultaneously, murderous wars and conflicts are waged at this very time to seize control of natural resources.

Land grabbing goes hand in hand with growing control by private business over agriculture and food through greater control over resources such as land, water, seeds and other natural resources. In this race for profit, the private sector has strengthened its control over food production systems, monopolising resources and gaining a dominant position in decision-making processes.

Peasant women and men, landless people and Indigenous peoples, and especially women and youths, precarious farm workers, are dispossessed of their means of subsistence. These practices also destroy the environment. The Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are chased from their lands, often by force, which makes their lives far more precarious and in certain cases amounts to their enslavement.

On all continents peasant movements lead mobilizations. These acts of resistance have multiplied over the past two decades, centred on food sovereignty. Moreover, these peasant populations are at the heart of all the crises the world is facing now; economic crisis and the consequences of public and private debt, food crisis, climate change that fuels migration, attacks on the rights of women and minorities. Governments of countries in the South, most often under the pressure of debt payments, have in recent years multiplied agricultural export and extractivist policies. There again, peasant populations have borne the brunt of the consequences via environmental destruction and control over their lands by agrifood trusts.

#### **4 / What are the consequences of the significant increase in migration?**

There are significant population displacements in several regions of the world: 250 million international migrants, 750 million internal migrants (displaced persons...). These movements are often due to structural economic changes with significant regional disparities: thus South Africa and Angola attract migrants from neighbouring countries, as do Argentina and Venezuela in Latin America, Australia and Japan in East and Southeast Asia. The Gulf States attract large numbers of migrants from the Horn of Africa, Turkey, the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines. In the latter country, nearly 20% of the working population live and work abroad, 50% in the Middle East, mostly women. Two-thirds of international migration is between countries of a comparable level of development of and a third turn to the USA (Mexico) and Europe, mostly from its former colonial empires. But added to these phenomena are also permanent displacements due to wars, in particular from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Afghanistan, and now climate change.

This acceleration of migration is obviously an important political question and an ongoing social phenomenon. The industrialized countries are perfectly capable of welcoming migrants who wish to go

there, but the latter have become the target of xenophobic campaigns in many countries including the US, Australia, Europe and South Africa. The dual challenge to the labour movement is to fight this xenophobia while helping the welcoming and organization of these migrant workers who are strengthening the working class in many old countries. Some Gulf countries and even Israel resort to immigrants reduced to a situation of semi-slavery on a mass scale to develop industrial activity.

#### **5 / Impact of the environmental crisis**

We are facing environmental disasters of unprecedented scale with anthropogenic climate change as their most dangerous feature.

Desertification, salinification and floods are making large areas of the planet unsuitable for human habitation or growing food. Climate chaos is creating extreme weather events in which loss of life and destruction of dwellings and infrastructure have brought death, disease and further poverty to millions.

In many parts of the world, the last decades have also seen population movements provoked by climate change and other facets of environmental catastrophe. These will become increasingly important, involving people who are among the poorest on the planet. One of the effects of capitalist projects (mega-dams for example) and devotion to even more extreme methods of fossil fuel extraction in many parts of the world has also taken the form of a new offensive against entire communities: in the Philippines, Canada, the Amazon, plans to transform entire regions are frontally attacking people who often belong to First Nations and other groups already facing discrimination. Fronts of popular self-organization and struggle against climate disasters and destructive projects are taking form in these areas.

**The overall picture is that of a world undergoing massive changes** in many regions with an increase of the number of wagedworkers bringing

about significant social upheaval. This is happening at a time when economic development is not occurring alongside nation-states developing structures and services able to ensure better living conditions. Exactly the opposite in most cases; we observe a worsening of daily living conditions in many ways, aggravated in many regions by war and climate change. Women and young people are the most severely affected by this situation.

## II / Resistance on different fronts

### 1 / The uneven development of the labour movement

We obviously see a significant growth of trade unionism among new employment sectors, in countries where there is expanding industrialization and significant resistance to management demands through strikes. But this occurs, overall, in a situation where the social gains won by the “old working class” (pensions and social security, in particular) far from being extended to emerging countries, are being challenged in Europe and other industrialized countries in the name of austerity plans. Likewise, in China, which has experienced in a large number of local strikes in recent years, especially over wage issues, this has not led to the creation of trade unionism independent of the state apparatus.

Quantitatively, the working class is constantly growing. It should be noted that its centres of growth have strongly shifted to Asia, probably tomorrow to Africa. In these areas the development of trade-union forces follows numerical growth, the growing social weight of wage workers, lay the bases for class consciousness but in general they do not have the strong political structures that provided a political backbone to the European labour movement, although the contradiction in that model was to often to delegate “political” questions to political parties.

Powerful workers’ struggles are still taking place not only in the old

industrial countries, in Latin America, but also in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, in Turkey, in the Indian Subcontinent, and in Asia.

But in the era of globalization the need for trade unions to take up broader issues including racism, all forms of discrimination and housing has become greater and a spur to radicalization. While there have been some attempts to organize some of the most precarious workers, such as fast-food workers in the US and to a lesser extent in Britain, in general, in old industrialized countries, the most precarious workers (younger with a higher proportion of migrants and women) are the least organized.

Other strategic questions are also posed by the current situation. Unions in many sectors are exploring the question of whether “chain of value” organizing should replace industrial unionism in the era of globalization, i.e., a coordination of all sectors that make a single production possible. This is all the more important as the maximization of profits leads to splintering of production processes, resorting to subcontracting, on the same site, or most often, on an international level. Further, the question of union democracy is essential in building effective organizations.

The creation of a single trade union, ITUC, bringing together the vast majority of union forces worldwide, cannot hide wide disparities especially in terms of capacity to defend the interests of employees and to oppose capitalist plans. The weakness of unions and political organizations with a Marxist and class-struggle background and conducting education among their membership has led to a lack of class-consciousness

The trade union movement is thus confronted with several crucial problems:

• Its ability to integrate all the social issues that arise in society (racism, homophobia and discrimination against women, housing). The need to integrate environmental dimensions is also a major imperative. The tension between safeguarding jobs and the

struggle against harmful factories and productions require establishing a system of demands making it possible to go beyond these contradictions.

• to take into account the reality of precarisation in all its forms and therefore stimulating and creating the structures to organize all those concerned, in particular by the development of structures beyond enterprises, in the zones of industrial activities, neighbourhoods and localities.

• the imperative need to co-ordinate this organizing on an international scale, relying on the actual networks of the production chains in which the workers are competing against each other.

• the pressing need to create, out of the struggle for rights, a class identity providing resistance movements the programmes necessary to challenge the capitalist structures of society and to carry through a project of overthrowing this system.

### 2 / Self-organization and cooperatives

In many countries, in the face of layoffs and business closings, most often by major international companies, there has been a movement to take back such firms, on the model of Zanon in Argentina, where in the wake of 2002, there are now more than 300 firms taken back by the workers. In the same vein, in Europe, a network of self-managed firms is developing around Fralib, Vio-me, and Rimaflo...

Moreover, up against major companies and agrifood trusts, many struggles by peasant communities have led to the founding of production cooperatives that seek to control distribution themselves.

These experiences, albeit limited, put forth the question of control, of workers taking back the means of production, and also the choice of production linked to social needs.

### 3 / Debt struggles

Over the past ten years and since the beginning of the financial crisis, the debt crisis has taken on a dimension

far exceeding its previous dimensions: beyond the North American sub-prime crisis and the sovereign debt crisis in the European Union, the populations of India, the Spanish state and many European countries have been and are affected, especially with the more than ten million families expelled from their homes in recent years, and also, as in the US, with student debts.

These illegitimate debts have been the vector of the creation of many movements and struggles for audits.

#### **4 / Peasant struggles**

Many local struggles have rallied peasant and Indigenous movements in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. The questions of land monopolies and of food sovereignty are at the heart of all these struggles. They have all been marked by transversality of struggles, anticapitalist, environmental, feminist, against discrimination and ethnic oppression, for migrant rights. The question of democracy, of sovereignty and the right to decide in the face of governments and multinationals is also at the heart of their demands. Via Campesina, which federates more than 160 organizations in 70 countries, has succeeded in over 20 years to bring together millions of peasant men and women, small producers. And in particular to put feminist, indigenous and environmental issues at the heart of its concerns.

In Central America, in Latin America, the struggles for the rights of Indigenous communities and the right to the land play a part, and often face murderous repression, as in Brazil and Honduras. In Asia, in Africa – for example, in Mali – peasants mobilise against land monopolization.

#### **5 / Place of democratic and social justice movements**

Starting out from the Indignad@s movement, de movement of Public Squares in major cities in the Arab regions, the Occupy movement, since 2011 a long wave of democratic struggles emerged in Africa, in Europe and in Asia, in Mexico, with a strong youth influence and linking democratic and social issues. The

wave of revolutions in the Arab region, in the Maghreb and the Middle East, had its source in democratic and social justice issues. The Indignad@s and Occupy movements in the USA and in Europe had the same roots. Recent years have seen many movements in Sub-Saharan Africa to impose democratic consultations (Nigeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso). In South Korea, President Park was brought down in March 2017 following a long democratic mobilization against corruption. Questions of dictatorships and presidents for life, postponements of elections, and corrupt regimes have been powerful motor forces for mobilization in recent years.

#### **6 / Place of youth without jobs in society**

In Africa, as in Latin America, young people, particularly young students, form a social stratum exposed to unemployment and the crisis. The revolts of young Brazilians against transport costs, the student strikes in Chile, Quebec, 15M, and the various Occupy movements echo the strength of social mobilization in Tunisia, and in Egypt. In the many democratic and anti-corruption mobilizations that have taken place in many West African countries, the question of living conditions and the future of youth was very present.

In all these mobilizations, the strength of youth is on the scale of the structural insecurity, the mass unemployment experienced by young people in many parts of the world, even as educational levels are rising. These movements highlight demands for political democracy, challenging the political system controlled by the capitalist and rentier oligarchies. Young people have been in recent years the driving force of revolutionary mobilizations, and have also played a key role in progressive political developments from the election of Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, the birth of Podemos or the movement behind Bernie Sanders in the US.

#### **7 / Women's rights and mass mobilizations against violence, rape and feminicide, for the right to abortion**

Another important factor of social mobilization in recent months has been the response to violence against women, in the first place feminicide in India, Turkey, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Mexico. Since the huge demonstrations in India in December 2012, many other mobilizations have occurred in other cities: Madrid, 500,000 women 7 November 2015 against the proliferation of violence and assassinations; in Argentina, hundreds of thousands of women rallied in 2015 after several murders that marked the country. In Mexico, the increase in murders and disappearances of women to a previously unknown level has also provoked strong protests in the states also marked by drug trafficking. These mobilizations also refer to the high level of violence experienced by several countries – violence which affects women in first place – and also impact social reality: most Central American countries, including Mexico and Brazil, almost all countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa are at the highest level for non-war killings.

The election of Donald Trump sparked off an international wave of demonstrations on 21 January 2017 called by the women's movement, not only in several US cities, but also in several cities in the world. In this dynamic, the 2017 IWD demonstrations saw a significant growth in mobilization leading to hopes for a new growth in the movement.

The different reactionary governments that have come to power on the wave of liberal offensives are all attempting to challenge abortion rights won through struggles in earlier decades. These challenges have faced mass mobilizations to defend and extend this right, notably in the Spanish state in 2014 and in Poland in 2016.

In general, on key issues of feminist struggles, the situation has been contradictory in recent years. With the current mass presence of women among wagedworkers, the women's movement has developed many different forms and mobilizations in all regions of the world but faces a reactionary offensive in many countries, linked to the rise of neoconservative and fundamentalist



currents. This offensive undermines fundamental rights, including the right to be financially and socially independent from men (fathers, brothers, husbands), to choose what to wear and to control their fertility – including access to free, safe and legal abortion.

## **8 / LGBT+ struggles**

In many countries (apart from the Muslim world and most of sub-Saharan Africa), the strength of LGBT+ organizing has made possible decriminalization of same sex relations and to limited rights for trans people. In this process, same-sex marriage has obtained recognition in many places, not just rich countries, but also for example South Africa and increasingly in Latin America with most often, a broad consensus in society. Other battles are still to be won – particularly full rights for trans people and for LGBT+ parents.

The issue of violence and homophobic campaigns weighs heavily. The key role of the reactionary religious currents in opposition to the LGBT+ movement is evident everywhere, whether these currents are Christian – Catholic or Protestant –, Hindu or Muslim as well as the violence and bigotry of far right groups not tied to any religion. In emerging countries, anti LGBT+ violence is often justified by a discourse against European/American cultural models. In return, in recent years a homonationalist current has developed justifying imperialism, notably US imperialism, against the Arab countries, as a force that can contribute to progress in LGBT+ rights. This also poses the question of intersectionality, the need to build links among all struggles against oppression.

## **9 / Organizations against racism and in defence of migrants**

The organization of the black-led Black Lives Matter movement in the US focused particularly against police racism but highlighting broader questions of state racism is the most significant development on racism in the US since the demise of the civil rights movement. In Europe, as the murderous effects of borders and

immigration policies become more visible we have seen the growth of important movements of practical solidarity as well as political demands most notably in Greece but also in Italy, Germany, Britain and in Catalonia. The context of the struggle against terrorism as well as austerity policies have led to the resurgence of a racist discourse, a legacy of the colonial past and restructuring discriminations against racialised popular classes, the first victims of unemployment and precarity, in particular in Europe and North America.

## **10 / The growing movement against global warming**

The rise of powerful movements against climate change in many countries can and must play a leading role in the coming years in challenging the overall system. These changes are harming and will harm the lives of hundreds of millions of women and men in the coming years. Indigenous peoples, populations living in the most precarious conditions are often the first affected, as they are affected by the policies of deforestations and large capitalist projects encroaching on their living areas. In many regions, the populations organize themselves and seek to build networks integrating other social organizations.

This shows that the questions of unemployment, working conditions are intertwined in many regions with many other social issues of prime importance and perceived as such by the populations concerned.

# **III / Questions of political change, struggles and anti-capitalist strategy**

The essential question is of course emancipatory perspectives able to structure these social and political movements. The experiences of Via Campesina, of several labour union sectors, and of climate coalitions show that, especially among youth, undertaking action directly on the

international field and challenging capitalist society is a natural process.

But many of the structures resulting from the rising wave of alter-globalization (WSF, World March of Women, ATTAC, ...) experienced a brake on their development in this confrontation and entered into crisis. Via Campesina and the CADTM have managed to ensure their development, with the central focus on the one hand on peasant resistance struggles and on the other on the debt issue in recent years as well as the process of citizen audits. The situation is difficult for the traditional labour movement on which national policies of consensus or compromise with austerity policies weigh heavily. And even the wave of alternative unions in Eastern Europe has run out of steam in recent years. Similarly, all the experiences of large-scale anti-capitalist groupings in the aftermath of the social forums were halted; also linked to the crisis of European organizations that were involved in it (SWP, SSP, LCR / NPA, etc.).

We must address new challenges in the construction of an international revolutionary movement, an anti-capitalist movement based on the defence of rights and social justice.

There is, of course, a battle of a new order in many parts of the world.

As discussed above, social attacks, austerity policies, and the fragmentation of old structures of social compromise create an increasingly powerful social anger. This anger turns against the national and international institutions, the leaders and the parties responsible for these attacks, which were often the traditional pillars of political systems. This wearing out, this erosion, poses a strategic question at the international level: it gives the revolutionaries, the currents of the social movements which fight against these reactionary policies, the responsibility of proposing a political perspective that can give a progressive, revolutionary vector to the rejection of the system.

Struggles for democracy and social justice as such do not automatically lead to a struggle for the overthrow of the systems of oppression.

The last few years have brought forth a clear political question. Confronted with the challenge to the dictatorships in Tunisia and the Middle East, the progressive regimes in Central America or the anti-austerity social eruptions, reactionary forces have taken an offensive course everywhere, notably by strengthening authoritarian regimes capable of confronting these movements of emancipation. This calls for implementation of a strategy capable of both organizing popular mobilization and being able to confront reactionary counter-offensives.

Moreover, a struggle is resurfacing among the popular classes, between class struggle or clearly socialist currents, and reactionary religious or fascistic far-right currents. The influence of religion has always been very strong in popular milieus; often when they organize, rural or urban communities use religious references in putting forward demands for social justice against the rich and the powerful. Cohabitation with organizations with such references is of course possible for revolutionary socialist organizations. But the problem we face in various regions is reactionary religious currents and far right currents. In Europe and the USA, these currents in popular circles play on the usual mechanisms in times of crisis to deflect the anti-capitalist struggle (fear of immigrants and foreigners, nationalist nostalgia...) plus, notably in Europe, on rampant Islamophobia. In other traditionally Muslim regions, organizations have built hegemony over a section of the popular classes that diverts aspirations for social justice or the fight against the imperialist countries to a mythologizing of ancient times of Islam. All these ideologies are based on the popular anger provoked by the crisis and / or the disappearance of the systems of social protection, of public services, the rise of precarity, diverting from an anti-capitalist struggle towards the return to a religious order, an imaginary identity

or a nation, evidently carrying all the ready-made reactionary submission to natural order, the patriarchal family, homophobia and misogyny. Often, identity-based issues thus become a structural framework both in imperialist metropolises as well as in dominated countries, which can lead to an infinite logic of falling back on confessional identities.

But this competition for the popular audience makes it necessary for anti-capitalist organizations in the social and political movements to give a new life and energy to the perspective of social equality in a society free from capitalism and exploitation.

But on another level, we must answer another challenge: building mass organizations in the social movement to face off against the attacks and aggressions of the system, and at the same time build all the links necessary to bring together the resistance on all fronts. The dangers of falling back on identities, the weakness of political responses advocating social change can become a common reference, imposing intersectionality more than ever, to work towards convergence of anti-oppression movements, as in the example of the dynamics of Black Lives Matter in the USA.

On the political terrain, the whole question is how to build political strategies which, far from being limited to institutional perspectives, provide the space needed for self-organization of social movements; are in the service of popular demands; and put experiences of institutional administration at the service of this social movement, while directly addressing the capitalists' economic power. On this point, the latest experiences are hardly positive.

In the first decade of this century, only Latin America witnessed the election of governments identified as the extension of these social movements, but without transforming the living conditions of the populations so as to revitalize prospects for social

emancipation. The evolution of the Ecuadorean, Bolivian, and Venezuelan governments has not brought about a change of cycle and the need to break with perspectives based on, in particular, extractivist policies. Trade unions and social movements find themselves having to resist politicians who have not kept their promises.

In another way in the Maghreb (North Africa) and Egypt, popular movements, based on the mobilization of youth and trade union forces, made it possible to overthrow dictatorial regimes. They also now find themselves in a stance of resistance. However, we can see the emergence of elements of regional dynamics between movements in the Maghreb countries and those in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Greece, the betrayal by the Tsipras government brought to power by the rejection of austerity policies is now leaving the social movement with the responsibility of rebuilding a political alternative with the radical left political currents. In the Spanish State, Podemos, a direct outcome of the Indignad@s social mobilizations, is today confronting the social movement with a similar situation. The strategic discussions in Podemos carried by Anticapitalistas for a direct confrontation with austerity policies is in resonance with the demands carried by the social movement from which it emerged.

Finally, in the various regions where political changes have taken place through social mobilization, social movements are facing a defensive situation in a context of the development of strong fightbacks that are signs of hope.

The key issue in the coming years will not only be organizing adequately to counter the attacks sustained, but also the political capacity to build, alongside the social mobilizations, a political movement for emancipation capable of frontally challenging capitalism.

# Let's seize the opportunities, and build an international for revolution and communism

27 July 2017, by **Manos Skoufoglou, Gaël Quirante, Jeff Mackler, Mathilde Stein**

## I- The current state of the Fourth International

### A) The "broad parties" policy: balance sheet of a catastrophe

The current leadership replaced the strategic goal of building revolutionary parties with the building of "broad parties". A century after the Russian Revolution, some ask: Is the principle "no revolution without a revolutionary party" outdated? We do not believe it is. Over the last few congresses, the FI leadership has been explicitly aiming at building "broad" parties, without clear programmatic and strategic boundaries. What are the results of this policy?

In recent times, we've seen major failures. In the Spanish state, Anticapitalistas are under the pressure of the Pablo Iglesias group and thus adapting to it. By trying to gain electoral or mainstream media influence, we are led to sacrifice our goal — the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The Syriza experiment was embraced to such an extent that the Greek FI section, which refused to support it, was even accused in the IC of being counterrevolutionary. Syriza was presented as a model for some time, yet it amounted to a catastrophe. It was introduced as an "anti-austerity" party and government. But it revealed itself to be a destructive machine against workers and the people. The worst onslaught we have seen in decades has been led by Syriza against youth and the working class.

But these are only two examples in a

series of catastrophes, and no serious analysis of these disasters has been undertaken to help draw conclusions. The list of failures is long: in Brazil, the FI section participated in the Lula government; in Italy, the FI comrades supported in Parliament the formation of a Prodi government and voted for the war budget; in Portugal, the section recently supported the SP government agenda. The common feature in all these failures is the support of political forces or governments acting in the framework of capitalist management, resulting in the dislocation of the FI sections.

The policy of building "broad parties" instead of revolutionary parties did indeed lead to the dissolution of our forces into reformist coalitions. Indeed, why build a revolutionary current if there is no revolutionary communist program to stand up for? The situation is alarming. Over the years we have seen FI sections disappear, dissolve or adapt at an accelerating rate. Our ability to defend either the principle of class independence or to maximize the ability of our social class to act independently from the bourgeoisie and its State, is undermined when support is given to a politician linked to a bourgeois party, like Bernie Sanders, or to a personality with no ties to the labour movement, like Pablo Iglesias.

### B) "New situation, new program..." or the present relevance of the revolution and a revolutionary communist program?

Why has the current FI leadership been steadily pursuing this policy for years in spite of the series of failures? It implicitly gave up on the relevance of revolution, seeing it as something to

be accomplished in the distant future. In its view, the balance of forces is so unfavourable that the task of the hour is to rebuild an elementary class consciousness, based on the struggles of the oppressed in reaction to the ruling class onslaught. 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. It is sufficient for them to regroup all those who are ready to resist, reformists and revolutionaries alike, to slowly accumulate experience and strength, and to wait for better days. In order to accomplish that goal, the adequate tool is indeed the "broad party".

This becomes a justification for allying everywhere with social forces who are not even reformist in the classic meaning of the term. They look to forces with no communist programmatic basis and with no social basis in the working class.

Yet the present relevance and necessity of a revolutionary program was demonstrated by the revolutionary processes south of the Mediterranean Sea and by the situation in Greece: the rising and more radical forms of class conflict call for revolutionary responses. Wasn't it absolutely necessary to stand for the abolition of the debt, the nationalization of the banks and key sectors of the economy under workers' control? These demands are not reserved for contemplation in history books of the Russian Revolution. The current FI leadership did not support its Greek section who, with its modest forces, tried to implement such a revolutionary policy. This of course implied a political battle against the Syriza leadership. That precise battle wasn't waged. In the name of the

necessity of a “new program” and “new parties” adapted to the “new situation”, the current FI leadership supported Alexis Tsipras right up to the 11th hour (quote from the FI declaration of August 2015). The example of Greece is extremely telling. It demonstrates the impossibility of reformism as a solution in periods of capitalist crisis. Not only did the Syriza-led government prove to be one of the harshest of bourgeois governments, but Syriza itself switched almost totally, in just about one year, from left reformism to bourgeois social democracy. The formation of the government along with the nationalist bourgeois ANEL party — which was never protested by those who later formed the Popular Unity party, currently the party that the FI leadership supports in Greece — the inclusion in it of many former political and administrative personnel from both main bourgeois parties, ND and PASOK, and above all the break with the vast majority of its youth and militant base, have irreversibly changed the character of Syriza party. This is a fate that is shared by all reformist parties that wish to handle the crisis inside the framework of capitalism, despite the intentions of their leadership. This is a conclusion that the FI leadership never reached. Instead, it refers to an unexplained “capitulation” of Tsipras, deprived of any class content. The practical consequence is the FI leaders’ eagerness to repeat the same mistakes. It continues to ally with and to adapt to Iglesias’ policy today, via the majority of the Spanish section.

### **C) A militant deficiency and a serious democratic problem**

FI International Committee meetings are now reduced to debates of analysis of no practical consequence. The debates go on without any internationally coordinated campaign being defined or planned. Yet, all around the world we have comrades leading struggles in direct confrontation with capitalism. Theoretical discussions must be informed by practice: balance sheets of the sections’ activities should feed the discussion. The confrontation of ideas should lead to defining common tasks. Without common goals, on an

international scale, and without political and material mutual support, it is impossible to grow our organizations beyond a certain point in each country. But above all, our international has to be more than a discussion club; it must be a tool for revolutionary action. Tackling the political problems of worldwide class struggle together, and thinking about the problems we encounter in each of our countries, and trying solve them together — that is what a “world party” should do. Building such an international party, at least taking steps in that direction, is today’s task.

The recent expulsion by the majority of the Spanish State section of the Anticapitalistas minority, which enjoyed 20 per cent support at the last congress, and which now constitutes IZAR, reveals a serious democratic problem. The current leadership has refused to open a real discussion. It obstructs left criticism to their orientation. Worse, the refusal to allow the Spanish minority current to address the IC, on the pretext of a veto by the section, is contrary to all of our principles of workers’ democracy. That includes the possibility of defending oneself in the process of an expulsion. The principle exists in many reformist organizations. But it didn’t exist in the FI for the IZAR comrades. So it became acceptable for the majority of a section to expel its minority at will... without any opportunity of appeal.

In Italy, instead of trying to recuperate all comrades lost in the dissolution of Sinistra Critica and to strengthen the influence of the FI, the leaderships of the two organizations already recognizes by the current leadership of the FI put a veto to the participation of Collettivo Guevara in the World Congress.

Fortunately the majority of the French section comrades, members of the NPA, do not hold this authoritarian view of political differences and did not act that way towards its minority! Our Socialist Action Canada comrades were expelled, and still are victims of the same kind of exclusion now.

Of course there is a political logic at work behind those expulsions. Basic democratic rules are cast aside when

it concerns comrades who disagree, to the left of the current leadership’s policy. At the same time, heads of the FI favour working with groups outside of the International, and apply pressure on the section to isolate it, as happened in Greece. The current FI leadership often introduces our international organization as the “most democratic” international tendency. Indeed, confronted with situations of split caused by political differences, the IST in the Spanish State and the IWL in Brazil showed more openness by maintaining, in both cases, relations with the various groups that emerged from the splits.

We cannot avoid drawing the balance sheet of the policy advocated by the majority at the latest (2010) congress of the FI. We have to clearly admit that the policy of the leadership of the FI since the last World Congress was mistaken and far below what historical conditions demand.

## **II- A situation with opportunities for the revolutionaries and for communist ideas to grow stronger**

We do not share the current FI leadership’s appreciation of the current situation. While it does feature an increasingly violent onslaught by the bourgeoisie, it is nonetheless contradictory and holds possibilities for revolutionary communists to be heard and to gain strength.

### **A) The tendency of the rate of profit to fall: the root of the crisis**

The fundamental problem for capitalists still is the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. The ecological crisis is combined with the economic crisis, and thus capitalism is in a situation of protracted crisis, which it cannot escape spontaneously. To restore the rate of profit, capitalists are forced to turn their mode of domination upside down, by inflicting an historical defeat on the working class. That is the meaning of the ongoing capitalist onslaught. Inter-

imperialist tensions are rising and military interventions are multiplying. The number of refugees is exploding, racism and xenophobia are openly encouraged by the governments of every great power. Barbarism is not just a predictable possibility for the future; it is the reality for a major part of humanity.

## **B) Traditional leaderships and the “new reformism” — Adapting to the current capitalist onslaught**

Far from fighting the capitalist offensive, the labor movement traditional leaderships are adapting to it. Social-democracy is completely integrated into the state apparatus and the leaders that arose from Stalinism go along with the national bourgeoisie’s policies.

The massive retreat of the social democracy and labor party-type formations is not limited to Europe. It is worldwide. In Canada, for example, we saw the trade union-linked New Democratic Party (NDP) leadership pledge, in the campaign culminating in the October 2015 federal election, a “balanced budget” come-what-may. Implementation of that policy would prevent an NDP government from reversing most of the harsh austerity measures introduced by the previous Stephen Harper-led Conservative Party regime. The political default of the NDP, and the “strategic voting” stance of much of the union bureaucracy, funnelled workers’ discontent with austerity into a victory for the Liberal Party of Justin Trudeau, which briefly feinted to the left of the NDP.

As far as the so-called “populist” currents in South America go, they demonstrated their inability to change the situation to any important degree, and they reject any clear break with imperialism and domestic capital.. Opposing the right governments in Argentina and Brazil does not entail an alliance with peronist and populist parties.

The so-called “new reformisms” are a symptom of rising political awareness, a reflection of the rise of struggles and of their limitations as well. But Syriza’s policy in power shows the extent to which these forces adapted

to capitalism in crisis, in record time, and are ready to implement the bourgeois agenda themselves, even lacking the mass working class roots the “old” reformists had acquired.

The anarchist or autonomous currents manage to channel part of the youth revolt. We must have a policy to address these currents, sometimes with possibilities of tactical agreements with some of them. In any case, we should not abandon the field of radicalism to them, while explaining why their policy is at an impasse.

## **C) Chronic instability of the system, mass resistance and politicization**

The balance of forces is very unfavourable to us. But mass resistance shakes every continent. The crisis of the system feeds a chronic political instability.

The brutality of the capitalist onslaught feeds phenomena of social and political regression. The traditional left, when it comes to power, leads the capitalist onslaught, thus opening a space for the far-right. But this is far from being the majority sentiment in the working class. In the electoral base of these far-right currents, we can nonetheless find a significant number of workers, who have been among the first victims of capitalism. A solid fightback of the working class, winning significant victories, could regain many of those who have been temporarily captivated by far-right demagoguery without, of course, having the illusion that we can avoid a confrontation also with the base of the extreme right and, even more, of neofascist and neonazi parties.

The effect of the onslaught, in the context of crisis, is not one-sided. It also spurs mass resistance movements and a new politicization. The dynamic of polarization is well illustrated by Trump’s election. Although he symbolizes the increasingly reactionary policy of the ruling class, he was elected in a situation where mobilizations are on the rise and the interest in socialist ideas is higher than in decades inside the main global power. In the same way, worldwide possibilities for social explosions and

collective struggles are rising.

Among significant sectors of youth and the working class, there is a perception that this is a rotten system leading to failure. Most of the time, struggling masses know what they do not want anymore, and have profound disgust for the capitalist system, without knowing with what to replace it, and how. But we are not only observing struggles as a mechanical response to the attacks, but also processes of accumulation of experience, politicization, regroupment and organization. Massive national mobilizations against the challenge to the Labor Law in France, the struggle of low-wage workers for the right to form a union and win a \$15/hour minimum wage, and the rise of Black Lives Matter in the United States, the unprecedented student mobilizations in Quebec, the massive workers’ strikes in Asia, particularly in China and India, are renowned. But we also see the renewed interest in socialism illustrated by Jeremy Corbyn’s double leadership victory in the British Labour Party, and the renewed interest in socialist ideas in the United States. All these signs indicate that the elements for anti-capitalist awareness are present. It is, nonetheless, a very uneven and limited process. Currents hostile to socialism are reaping the fruits of the deep discontent. The electoral audience of the FIT in Argentina, the recomposition of the union movement in South Africa, despite the limitations of both experiences, and above all, the renewed interest in “socialism” in the United States indicate that anti-capitalist ideas can acquire a mass audience.

## **III - The working class always plays a central role**

A commonly held view in militant circles feeds scepticism concerning the present relevance of revolution. It contends that the neo-liberal onslaught supposedly eliminated full time work and weakened the working class so badly that it no longer plays a central role. We see the working class



from a political viewpoint: it is the only social category that, because of its own position in the capitalist production and reproduction, can unify the struggles of all those layers who are oppressed in the workplaces as well as in the schools, in conscription armies, in the family. To unite with the struggles of women, LGBT people, immigrants, minorities, indigenous people, in a common project of emancipation, which is communism.

In fact, the working class is globally more numerous today than ever. In South Korea alone there are as many wage-earners today than there were in the whole world at the time of Karl Marx. The working class, which in our view is composed of wage workers who do not exercise management power, today constitutes between 80 and 90 per cent of the population in the most industrialized countries, and almost half of the total global population.

Globally, the number of industrial workers worldwide went from 490 million in 1991 to 715 million in 2012 (ILO data). Industry even grew faster than services between 2004 and 2012! The industrial sector did not shrink, but the agricultural sector did, from 44 to 32 per cent of the global workforce.

It is true that the industrial working class dropped numerically inside the old capitalist powers. But its role in class struggle is far from being secondary, as was proved for example by railroad and oil refinery workers in France in the mass strikes of 2010 and 2016. And the proletarianization of services created new wage-earning sectors in the old capitalist metropolises who recently proved their combativity. Cleaning workers, for example in the historic strikes in Netherlands in 2010 and 2012, and retail and fast-food workers involved in the Fight for \$15 movement in the United States, reflect this trend.

It is not true that the rise of part-time work made the working class unable to lead significant struggles and play a revolutionary role. In the past, much less job security and the absence of big industries did not stop the Parisian workers from taking power during the

Commune of 1871. Today, workers find the path to mobilization in spite of the obstacles created by the capitalist onslaught. The biggest strike in decades in France, biggest in numbers and length, was the strike of undocumented workers in 2009-2010, which involved 6000 strikers, including 1500 short-term contract workers organized in a strike committee, over 10 months. The 2009 general strike in Guadeloupe showed the ability of workers to unite the oppressed and threaten the power elite.

By reorganizing industry worldwide, capitalist globalization created new working classes in the southern countries, whose potential was shown by the recent mobilizations: the wave of strikes happening in China since 2010, the 2015 massive strikes in Bursa, Turkey, the formation of mass militant unions in Indonesia, the role of the union movement and of mass strikes demanding the resignation of South Korea's Prime Minister in late 2016.

These struggles develop, for the most part, despite the union leaders. For these struggles to end up challenging the system, it is necessary to rebuild a worldwide class struggle workers' leadership. Building a class struggle wing of the labor movement, independent of the official union leaderships, particularly able to launch the building of organs of self-organization, strike committees, is a central task for a revolutionary international. Differentiation or breaks inside the labor movement indicate the opening of new possibilities. Examples include the process of creation of a new union confederation, breaking with the ANC in South Africa, differentiation inside the CGT in France, and discussions on the prospect of forming a class struggle "workers' block" after the Labour Law Reform movement.

If we take into account all these factors, the global working class never had such a potentially powerful role. Every sector of the working class does not have the same objective weight in the production apparatus and is not able to play the same role. And we have to take that into account in our efforts to organize and recruit. But the

revolutionaries have to take seriously the central role of the working class, and develop a solid political intervention in relation to it. This task should be taken on not only by the national sections, but be the subject of regular discussions at the international level.

## IV- Our proposals

### A) Building revolutionary vanguard parties — the present relevance of Leninism

Here is how Lenin in "Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder" defined party discipline, how a party of cadres for the revolution is built, the opposite of the Stalinist caricature:

*"The first questions to arise are: how is the discipline of the proletariat's revolutionary party maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its tenacity, self-sacrifice and heroism. Second, by its ability to link up, maintain the closest contact, and — if you wish — merge, in certain measure, with the broadest masses of the working people — primarily with the proletariat, but also with the non-proletarian masses of working people. Third, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard, by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided the broad masses have seen, from their own experience, that they are correct. Without these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party really capable of being the party of the advanced class, whose mission it is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform the whole of society, cannot be achieved. Without these conditions, all attempts to establish discipline inevitably fall flat and end up in phrase-mongering and clowning. On the other hand, these conditions cannot emerge at once. They are created only by prolonged effort and hard-won experience. Their creation is facilitated by a correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not a dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly*

*revolutionary movement."*

"No revolution without a revolutionary party." This means that beyond the diversity of tactics revolutionaries may adopt in building their party according to the country and the situation, building revolutionary parties, parties to take the power and for communism, is still the strategic goal. For this purpose, political independence from reformism and total independence from bourgeois governments (even if "left"), from the state and its institutions, is crucial.

In order to build revolutionary organizations who are not content with proclaiming principles, our goal is to build a party of cadres capable of giving life to the programmatic principles, which means trying to give each of our members the means to acquire the highest possible level of education, to be able to play a part in the destruction of capitalism and the building of another society. But education must be consistent with our political militant practice. To be able to get rid of the system that generates exploitation and oppression, we have to narrow the gap between the private sphere and the public sphere as much as we can. That gap is the product of the capitalist system we live in. Against that logic of "separation", we consciously pursue the prospect of revolution and are consistent in our choices and ways of life. It's the complete opposite of individual frustration. On the contrary, it is a freely agreed emancipation and association against the dominant ideology disseminated by the state, school and family. It is designed to regroup in order to reach a common goal — the destruction of the capitalist system, based on exploitation and oppression, to build another society, the communist society.

Seeking to plant roots in the working class and in oppressed sectors is instrumental. It must be systematically discussed and conducted with dedicated tools. The present relevance of the insurrectionary general strike as the main "strategical hypothesis" in most of the world, our analysis of the central role of the working class thus must have immediate consequences in practice, in our sections and internationally. What does it mean? It

means that we have an active approach to gaining a base in the key sectors of the capitalist economy. An effort must be made in that direction, in each section, but also that the International should help to reach that goal, and participate in the effort. Through theoretical input, but also centralization of information. It also means that we systematically develop an independent political intervention to address our class.

Every revolutionary must think about how we can fight back against both the austerity policies and the capitalist-patriarchal system. The only way to defend our social achievements and to gain new ones is still the mobilization of the working class and the youth. Every social achievement has been reached as a result of the mobilization. Twentieth-century history demonstrates it. Workers' and women's rights have not been gained at the polls but through strikes and demonstrations. In that sense, our main task is to re-build class consciousness. The most effective way to do so is still by the struggle of the working class interest against that of the bourgeoisie. Rallies, demonstrations, occupations, assemblies, strikes — those are still the best tools for raising the consciousness of the oppressed. This does not mean that we ignore parliamentary elections. But we do subordinate them to mobilization. In our strategy, the elections cannot be a goal but a means for strengthening our class's mobilization towards raising class consciousness. The workers and the youth must adopt the struggle against every kind of oppression and link it to their struggle for class emancipation. For doing so, it is necessary that the working-class mass organizations include in their platforms elements like equal pay for equal work, respect for LGBTQI rights and the socialization of domestic labour.

The strategic hypothesis we advance to end capitalism and patriarchy is a non-stop series of mobilizations that make the working class aware of the necessity of taking power for real social change. Strikes are not a fetish but an essential route to raise workers' reliance on their own potential power. Strikes are "schools

of class struggle" because they are moments in which the working class can self-organize. It is by means of conflict that workers create automatic responses and mechanisms to resist the bourgeoisie's policies. Revolutionaries should not ignore today's struggles, even if they are small. To the contrary, we must take part in them. Therefore, we need to find solutions to our deficiency in having a strong presence within the working class and taking part in its battles.

### **A revolutionary International that does not prioritize youth is doomed to disappear**

Youth still plays the role of tactical vanguard. The theory developed by Ernest Mandel is still relevant today. Whether we look at the processes of the Arab revolutions, or at the mobilizations in Latin America, in Mexico and Chile, or in France in the mobilization against the CPE, and in all likelihood soon in the USA with the anti-Trump mobilizations, we see this. Its role in struggles is always paramount, and recruiting youth is plainly vital for any revolutionary organization. To be consistent with that stance, we reaffirm our current's theoretical, practical, and militant hallmarks. We stand up for youth autonomy, an autonomy subordinated to the proletariat and its historical interests but with forms of organization that are not independent but autonomous from the labor movement organizations and the parties we build. So we set as a goal, when it is possible, the building of revolutionary youth organizations. The youth sectors in our parties are a mediation to achieve that goal. We should also have a specific orientation to address students. It is a part of youth that actively participates in the overturns during revolutionary processes. So the international youth camp plays a fundamental role for this policy. But it should not become a space where voicing disagreement with the current FI leadership is excluded. Forbidding the participation of the NPA youth sector in the last camp shows a worrisome theoretical and practical/political weakness. Similarly disturbing was the refusal to allow four IZAR comrades into the camp to have a workshop. Some of

them have been building the FI for 15 years. They had to host their workshop in the parking lot, with over 70 young comrades who wanted to understand, debate and share, in attendance. These episodes are symptomatic of a paralyzing and fearful sectarianism. It is a de facto form of mis-education, as young comrades become accustomed to such exclusionary practices on the pretext of ideological purity and struggle against "factionalism".

There is no Chinese Wall between the project for the society we advocate, communism, and the party we are trying to build. There has to be consistency between those two forms. Our party won't be an island of communism because it lives and develops in a framework of social relations determined by patriarchy and the capitalist system. But we must get as close as we can to our goal. This of course regards the relations between members, which have to abide by democratic principles and not contradict our program of struggle against all oppression. But beyond that, it is the freely agreed association of men and women struggling for communism and abiding by relations which cannot be in contradiction with these emancipation principles. We oppose every form of "separation" forged by Capital between intellectual work and manual work, between men and women, between nationals and foreigners, between the private and public spheres. We reject every form of taboo inside the organization, but instead build a programmatic and practical/militant unity of all the comrades, through debate and verification in practice.

(+++We should add a paragraph about revolutionary feminism) Motion

## **B) Advocating for a transitional program for the 21st century**

The FI should advocate a set of key measures, a transitional approach, starting with everyday issues and demands, linking them to the question of power and to the aspiration for a new society. Eventually, the connection of the current struggles is established to the aim of challenging the pillars of the capitalist system.

A primary focus of this program is the expropriation of the key sectors of the economy. The bank crisis and bail-outs provided a new opportunity to explain and popularize the need for bank nationalization. Company bankruptcies, massive lay-offs, and the struggles to which they give rise, also offer an occasion to bring the struggle for workers' control up to date and explain the need to requisition the great means of production, distribution and exchange. A transitional approach is embodied in the demand "No layoffs, for workers' control over hiring."

Fossil and mineral resources are not infinite. The maximum peak of extraction will soon be reached. Capitalism with its structural logic aims always to increase consumption — to utilize more raw materials and energy. The goal of capitalism is to always produce more and maximize profit. Capitalism cannot be "green". Capitalism destroys the environment and species. It destroys our planet. But, once again, there cannot be a consistent ecological policy without a consistent struggle against capitalism and without understanding that the only subject able to end capitalism, and the ecological disaster it provokes, is the working class. If we share this analysis, we should draw the conclusions from it, in terms of our social basis, our intervention and our orientation. Indeed, the working class, allied with other sectors, is the one force, in the face of the ecological catastrophe, that is capable of imposing a program of anti-capitalist ecological transition. Such a transition will focus on replacing fossil and nuclear energy with green, sustainable alternatives, and on the need for a worldwide planned economy.

The capitalist world still is structured and organized by imperialism whose interests are never bound by any commitment to any people. This is notwithstanding the fact that Capital can sporadically choose to support a specific struggle with its own methods and goals.

Anti-imperialism should be a central focus of our propaganda and activity. We are against all imperialist interventions and for the withdrawal

of all imperialist troops. By standing in solidarity with, for example, the Kurdish people, we do not avoid pointing to the central responsibility of imperialism for the development of reactionary currents such as ISIS, and for the horrendous conditions experienced by the peoples of the region. Even so, recognizing that the reactionary currents also have their own logic and autonomy, we participate in demonstrations to defend the Kurdish people, while linking our unconditional defence with our clear-cut rejection of imperialist intervention. That is why we do not endorse calls to action that ask our government to provide weapons to the Kurds. We do not foster the illusion that our bourgeoisie could defend the peoples of the region.

Facing our own imperialism, it is not our role to create illusions on the theme: arms, not bombs. That is exactly what happened when the Red Green Alliance members of parliament voted for the war budget on the pretext that it would allow sending weapons, but who were very quickly faced with the second step, the only important one for the Danish government, and the others, sending Danish F-16 jets which are today bombing Iraq, in alliance with France and the United States.

Insurgent working classes will have to confront both "their own" national state apparatus and international imperialist institutions such as the European Union. "The main enemy is at home" means that we fight simultaneously against the international imperialist coalitions in which "our own" bourgeois class takes part. While firmly opposed to any nationalist, capitalist alternative, we know that an anti-capitalist revolutionary policy is incompatible with membership in the EU.

We know that the struggle against imperialism, racism, austerity and capitalist domination is not a struggle to be waged only at the level of a single country. But neither can it be waged without breaking with the capitalist policies of the EU, the ECB, with European finance capital, with the xenophobic, anti-immigrant policies of "fortress-Europe". To attack the national bourgeoisie's

power is to break with all the institutions of the EU. Against the Europe of the Trojka we defend international solidarity, we strive for a free socialist alliance of the workers and peoples of Europe.

Inseparable from the imposition of worldwide austerity is the corresponding rise in imperialist wars and interventions. Led by U.S. imperialism, the world's sole superpower, and its historic imperial European counterparts, we are almost daily witness to wars of saturation bombing, mass murder, wars of privatized or mercenary armies, drone wars, sanction and embargo wars, and near-secret wars, as is the case with the U.S. Africa Command's re-colonizing and plundering of Africa. French imperialism too, as well as other former European colonizing powers, increasingly intervene in Africa and elsewhere to maintain and expand their interests.

There are no "humanitarian wars" conducted by the imperialist beast. There never have been. The term itself is repulsive to revolutionaries, whose *raison d'être* is opposition to all imperialist interventions and wars. Unconditional support for the right of oppressed nations and peoples to self-determination is a fundamental revolutionary socialist principle. The FI must unconditionally reject any and all calls on imperialism to aid in the defeat of local tyrants and dictators. Such "aid" inevitably comes with strings attached - lethal strings that are more akin to the hanging rope than to any kind of "benign" or "democratic" assistance.

The liberation of the oppressed can only be achieved through their own independent mass organizations and through the construction, in time and regardless of the difficult circumstances, of revolutionary socialist parties of the Leninist type. Rejection of imperialist intervention in all its variations is the prerequisite for successful national liberation struggles, and for all other gains.

In the face of imperialism's incessant wars of conquest, the FI's central demands should focus on "Bring the Troops Home Now!" and "Right to self-determination for all oppressed

nations!"

We defend the peoples' right to self-determination. But we do not follow the leadership of any national bourgeoisie, even if it comes from an oppressed nation. In the oppressed nations we support a balance between the democratic fight for the right to self-determination and the fight for a society without classes. It means that, according to our strategy, the struggle for national freedom can be useful for working class emancipation only when led by the working class itself. Thus, we fight for working class independence from the bourgeoisie in the oppressed nations. For example, the struggle for the right to self-determination of the nations oppressed by the Spanish State would be useful if linked to the fight against capitalism and led by our class.

This program is not an electoral platform, a program for government. It can only be realized by a joint mobilization of the working class and the oppressed, bringing a Workers' Government to power, to destroy the bourgeois state by relying on self-organized organs arising from the mobilization of our class in alliance with all sectors of the oppressed.

### **C) Building a revolutionary international**

We insist, we have to set as a goal the building of a militant international, an organization capable of leading internationally coordinated campaigns. Even with modest forces, an organization based in several countries, acting in coordination, can magnify the effectiveness of its political intervention.

Our international must renew its discussion of a revolutionary communist program that addresses the reality of 21st century capitalism, instead of holding disjointed theoretical discussions with no real link to political practice.

A global revolutionary strategy cannot be based on the experiences of certain countries only. We need to overcome the eurocentrism that can be found also in the FI, where European experiences are often projected as a universal model. The experience of

comrades in other continents has never been in the centre of our debates and elaborations. This is not just about a task of recording experiences, but about a strategic comprehension of the global revolutionary process under different social conditions.

We, alone, cannot embody the revolutionary communist international. We must try to unite revolutionaries from various traditions, based on an agreement on the current situation and the tasks. It is through common practice that political discussions may lead to principled unity. Regroupment of revolutionaries internationally should be one of the goals to be discussed in the FI. Building a revolutionary international capable of having a significant influence will not happen only by recruiting to our organization. The FI should invite other revolutionary national or international groups to start discussing the need for a common response to the crisis of capitalism, common campaigns, and to address what type of organization can and should be built.

We know that a policy of seeking discussion with militants from other political traditions won't lead to unity in the short term. We realize that leaders of each of the various Trotskyist "internationals" are convinced that they are correct in their programmatic, strategic and tactical stance. Moreover, it is the rule that each group is convinced of the need to build an "international" around its own group exclusively. Even so, we have to recognize that we won't build an international for revolution and communism simply by primitive accumulation around our own nucleus. There is always something to learn from the various Trotskyist revolutionary traditions, and even from forces beyond that sphere. There are different experiences and activists of value in many currents and organizations. It is through theoretical and programmatic debates, in creative combination with intervention in the field of class struggle, that the national and international explosions, regroupments and recomposition of forces will occur.

## Initial conclusion

We defend the present relevance of an international that grasps the opportunities in the present situation, and that builds an international for revolution and communism. Based on the political key points of this contribution, we want to foster a broad debate addressed to revolutionary currents both inside and outside of the FI. From that point of view, we will initiate a debate with every FI comrade and section. We intend that this debate be respectful of differences, and for the unfolding process to help reinforce our international in a context of global capitalist crisis. Our over-riding aim is to build a political current as broadly as possible to defend the prospect and to affirm the present relevance of building an international for revolution and communism.

A number of FI comrades from various countries have already expressed their support to the views expressed above. Not all of them have been aperrmitted

by the FI Bureau to formally sign the text, as they are not formally members of FI sections, in most cases (Spanish State, Canada) because they have been undemocratically excluded from those sections. Since they are still comrades of the FI political project and tradition, we have to mention their names here, before the list of signatures of the FI members who are submitting this text :

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## The new era and the tasks of revolutionaries

27 July 2017, by **Jakob Schaefer, Yvan LemaÃ®tre**

### A turn in the neoliberal and imperialist globalisation

1) The year 2016, with the vote for Brexit, Donald Trump's election, and the fall of Aleppo retaken by the troops of the bloody dictator Assad with the support of Russia and the complicity of the great powers of the coalition, marks the beginning of a turn in the neoliberal and imperialist globalisation.

The bourgeoisie's attempt to construct a myth of "happy globalization" in which the market would bring

democracy, peace and well-being, a myth president Obama tried to embody, is in tatters.

Until the beginning of the 21st century, technological advances combined with the massive proletarianization of the ruined peasantry in the so-called emerging countries like China, India and Brazil lowered production costs and fuelled the profit machine, the financial casino. But at the cost of a generalized debt and an "exuberant" financial bubble. The anticipation of profits gave rise to unbridled speculation.

The accident triggered by the subprime crisis in the US was inevitable.

The real shock that propelled Trump

and all the reactionary far-right and populist currents to the forefront, was the crisis of 2007-2008.

The balance of power has changed, the combination of economic neoliberalism and imperialist militarism has destabilized the entire planet. The first world power no longer has the supremacy it enjoyed: a new rival, China, is emerging in a multipolar world. The instability of international relations can no longer be contained by a single power which, in turn, feels threatened.

Behind the slogan "Make America great again", Trump has, in his own way, defined a perspective which meets the imperialist needs of the US and which is shared by a large fraction of the establishment he claimed to



oppose. Behind this slogan lies the defence of the interests of American capital faced with global competition, against the peoples and against its own working class. Nationalist and protectionist rhetoric aims at associating peoples with the politics of the bourgeoisie faced with exacerbated competition, to create the illusion that the policies of the ruling classes might address the anxieties and meet the demands of the popular classes.

The workers' movement is confronted with this new attempt to turn the dissatisfaction and revolt of the popular classes against themselves in order to subjugate and subordinate them to the politics and defence of the interests of the ruling classes by dividing them and making them scapegoats in the name of nationalism, racism and xenophobia.

Our orientation, in response, is organized around class independence and its corollary, internationalism in the perspective of socialism, of communism.

2) The second major capitalist globalization - a century after the first which led to the development of imperialism and two world wars - has deeply transformed capitalism, the planet and the very conditions of class struggle worldwide. We are witnessing a new phase of capitalist development.

The upheavals resulting from what is known as the great tilting of the world have been accelerated, accentuated by the crisis that began in 2007-2008 and seem to turn into a chronic crisis, a long process of stagnation and decomposition of capitalism.

The exacerbation of international competition resulting from the crisis has led to a strengthening of the role of States, which are as many instruments of security and militarist policies, a growing instability, geopolitical chaos, and a multiplication of military conflicts.

This second great globalization took place after a long period of defeats and decline of the labor movement. After its betrayal by social-democracy, the labor movement was choked,

crushed, its leadership physically eliminated by the Stalinist bureaucracy allied with the capitalist reaction. This left the revolt of the oppressed peoples the prisoner of nationalism in the aftermath of World War II.

The proletariat was unable to give it an internationalist perspective. This revolutionary wave, however, shook the world by enabling millions of oppressed people to break the yoke of colonial and imperialist oppression. But far from moving towards socialism, the new regimes sought to integrate the world capitalist market. Cuba was the last state born of this revolutionary wave to stand up to the world's leading power, a challenge that testifies to the strength of peoples when they dare to confront the dominant classes and states.

Capitalism has triumphed worldwide. By disintegrating the old frameworks of domination of the great powers and capitalist classes, it brings only crisis, social and democratic regression, wars, ecological disasters and opens a period of wars, instability and revolutions.

3) This new stage of capitalist development combines the old imperialist relations with the new balance of power of global neoliberalism. One can speak of imperialist and neoliberal development.

In Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, Lenin shows that imperialist development is linked to the very nature of capitalism. *"Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general. But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and very high stage of its development, when certain of its fundamental characteristics began to change into their opposites, when the features of the epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system had taken shape and revealed themselves in all spheres."* We can take up this reasoning to explain the new phase of capitalist development we are now facing.

"The monopolistic stage of capitalism"

has given birth through neoliberal globalization to that of multi- and transnational companies and the global financialization of the economy. This new stage results from the development of the properties and contradictions of capitalism, which it accentuates and brings to a higher level, an *"epoch of transition from capitalism to a higher social and economic system"*, the objective conditions of which have matured and strengthened worldwide.

4) The imperialist development and the struggle between the imperialist powers to carve up the world triggered a first imperialist war and a revolutionary wave which was defeated and broken by the Fascist and Stalinist reaction and was unable to prevent the second barbarous moment in the fight to carve up the world - the second world war through which the American imperialist power established itself as the only force capable of managing the capitalist world order. Then came twenty years of wars and revolutions, the uprising of the colonial peoples.

A new phase begins in the late 70s with the neoliberal offensive under the leadership of the first great world power, the US and its ally Britain. Then begins the second globalization in response to the declining rate of profit, with capitalism established as a global mode of production reaching the limits of the planet.

This neoliberal offensive at the end of the post-war boom led to the collapse of the USSR, the collapse of the bureaucracy, which had both played a part in the national liberation struggles while maintaining global equilibrium in the name of peaceful co-existence, that is to say the defence of the interests of the bureaucracy.

The end of the USSR marks a further offensive of the capitalist classes under the leadership of the USA. The neoliberal and imperialist euphoria prevails during the Bush era, capitalism triumphs on a worldwide scale but the myth of the "end of history" will not stand the test of time. The first Iraq war opens a long period of offensives against the people to impose globalized neoliberalism, a strategy of chaos that leads to a new

destabilized world order and new wars.

At the end of the Bush era, Obama vowed to turn the page. But unable to provide a political solution to the situation created by “the strategy of chaos”, he had no other choice but to adapt to it.

Since the financial crisis of 2008, this period of international neoliberalism tends to give way to a phase of reorganization of international relations while the global economy is unfettered since no power has the means of implementing any regulation. The contradiction between the instability caused by the globalized competition and the need for a common framework to ensure the production and trade is increasing.

In 30 years, the balance of power has shifted, the BRICS and mainly China, all the peoples are striving, despite the crisis, to participate in the global economic development. While the US remains in all areas the first world power, it must compromise and find allies. Half of global manufacturing is now conducted by the emerging countries.

The contradiction between nation states and the internationalization of production and trade is stronger than ever while no dominant power is able today to regulate international relations. Both factors combine and destabilize international relations.

Cartels and international monopolist associations cope with free global competition. Monopolies have grown into transnational corporations with a diversified industrial, commercial and financial activity to a point where 147 multinational companies own 40% of the economic value of all the multinational corporations worldwide. If they keep a national basis, they are engaged in interdependent relationships worldwide.

The parasitic growth of finance capital has led to a considerable amount of speculative capital and a fall in productive investments.

The debt economy and the fact that the USA are net importers of capital (along with other old imperialist

powers to varying degrees) express the parasitic nature of finance capital. The import of capital is a way to drain the wealth produced by the working class in developing countries to the old imperialist countries.

We are witnessing an unprecedented concentration of wealth. Through public debt, a banking oligopoly which controls finance has put the states under its heel.

A new international division of labor is taking place through the economic development of former colonial or dominated countries, especially the emerging ones – a globalization and not a mere internationalization of production, “an integrated world economy” in Michel Husson’s words.

The territorial division of the world which was challenged by the two world wars and the wave of national liberation movements was replaced by free international competition shaped by multinational corporations. The division of the world has given way to a struggle for the control of trade routes, of places of production, of energy supply... In Harvey’s words, capitalist logic and territorial control combine in new ways.

The growing instability of the world that results of this situation leads to a rise of militarism, to growing tensions that have forced the US to redeploy its forces while seeking the support and involvement of the old powers, Europe, Japan and the emerging countries to maintain the world order. This policy is a failure which has led to growing instability and the development of religious and terrorist fundamentalism, a factor of permanent instability.

6) At the same time that global capitalism reaches the limits of the planet, it causes an unprecedented global ecological crisis which raises the question of the future of humanity. The logic of profit leads to a worldwide organization of production which completely disregards the people and the ecological balance.

The combination of the ecological and climate crisis with the economic and social crisis represents unprecedented challenges for humanity. There is no

way forward without the end of capitalism, no solution within one country, without democratic planning based on worldwide cooperation according to social and ecological needs.

The crisis encourages an internationalist awareness, not only in the sense that “our homeland is humanity” but also in the sense that, locally and globally, the struggle against the threats that endanger the planet is one that transcends borders. A struggle which is part the fight for socialism in connection with the social and political class struggle.

The ecological question and the social question are related, both must be tackled together.

7) The tragedy of the migrants epitomizes in a shocking way the effects of the process of social decomposition caused by wars, economic neoliberalism, the control of transnational corporations, the dispossession of land and the destruction of large sections of the peasantry, the rise of fundamentalist reactionary forces along with the ecological and climate crisis.

These extreme and irreversible trends have reached a point not seen since World War II. They feed on the instability generated by capitalist globalization, the permanent state of war to answer the ongoing instability in which it has plunged both the Middle East and a large part of Africa. They also feed on the acute competition between old great powers and new ones, between regional powers, such as the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Also, on the social war major financial groups and their states are waging against the workers and peoples. The focus of the crisis is in Europe and reveals the failure of the construction of a capitalist Europe.

We are facing a grave humanitarian crisis. Our response must take into account the solidarity movements that take place especially in Europe. If our policy cannot restrict itself to humanitarian aid, it is nonetheless part of our action in particular in trade unions or labor organizations.

Migrants are part of the proletariat of Europe, of the USA and elsewhere.

This crisis generates more and more fear and xenophobic rejection and impacts all political forces. It can be a revolutionary ferment in the sense that international solidarity is the only solution against those who promote war and police repression to contain the dramatic instability caused by their policies.

8) Expanded financial accumulation based on the exponential growth of credit and debt has reached such limits that it leads, in Harvey's words, to the development of "accumulation by dispossession". Unable to develop the economy to increase the mass of surplus value needed to feed the appetites of capital, capitalism finds a way out of its accumulation difficulties in a double offensive against the workers and against the peoples to impose an increasingly unequal wealth distribution.

This results in a bitter struggle for the control of territories, of sources of energy, raw materials and trade routes... Free global competition turns into a struggle to control wealth, reshape the world, but with power relations that are radically different from those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The development of the crisis since 2007-2008 has exacerbated tensions.

The situation in the Middle East demonstrates that the US can no longer impose its hegemony on other powers and nations. The US is forced to adapt to new power relationships both to maintain its own hegemony and world stability. The two are linked. The hegemony of the USA is conditional on its ability to maintain world stability, "global governance". It requires that the dominant power gives credibility to its claim to act in the public interest.

But today it is no longer able to do so. No power is able to. Hence the rising tensions and militarism. The emergence of new powers with imperialist views or regional powers which defend their own interests increasingly undermines America's leadership capacity and makes the

international situation more chaotic. The US response is Trump's policy "Make America great again", to assert their economic and military supremacy through trade war, protectionism and militarism.

How far can the tensions and imbalances go? In the long run, nothing can be ruled out. We need to understand the possible evolution of the world situation to formulate a solution to the crisis we are being dragged into by the ruling classes. There is no reason to rule out the worst hypothesis, a globalization of local conflicts or a widespread conflagration, a new world war, or rather a globalized one. The evolution of the war in Syria is another example of that as was the war in Ukraine.

The key issue is the nature and possible developments of Chinese-US relations.

A more aggressive imperialist policy of China could result from its internal contradictions, from the inability of the Chinese ruling classes to address social issues, to perpetuate the social order without providing an outlet for social discontent. We are not there, but nothing allows us to rule out the possibility that a war for global leadership may be the outcome.

The answer is conditional upon the ability of the proletariat and the peoples to intervene directly to prevent the worst from happening. The question is not to predict but to base our own strategy on the understanding of the development of class and international relations.

The ruling classes and countries face a crisis of hegemony which opens a revolutionary period. It creates the conditions for the birth of another world.

## **The rise of a powerful international working class**

9) The world working class has grown considerably within a global labor market in which workers compete,

jeopardizing the gains of the "labor aristocracy" in the old imperialist countries and undermining the material basis of reformism of the last century.

The working class is more numerous than ever: in South Korea alone, there are more wage-earners than there were in the whole world at the time of Marx. The working class forms between 80 and 90% of the population in the most industrialized countries and almost half of the world population. Overall, the number of industrial workers rose from 490 million worldwide in 1991 to 715 million in 2012 (the data is from the International Labor Organization). The industry's rate of growth was even higher than that of services between 2004 and 2012! It is not the industrial sector that has declined, but the agricultural sector whose overall workforce has dropped from 44% to 32%. If the industrial working class has shrunk in the old capitalist powers its role in the class struggle remains preponderant. The proletarianization of services has created new wage-earning sectors in the old capitalist countries, workers who have started to struggle, in cleaning, retail and fast food companies with the Fight for 15 movement in the United States.

10) It is not true that the development of part-time work makes the working class unable to wage important struggles and play its revolutionary role. In the past, at a time when the workers' condition was much less secure, and in the absence of big industries, the Parisian workers were able to "storm heaven" during the Paris Commune... and today, workers find a way to fight back despite all the obstacles created by the capitalist onslaught. The biggest strike in France in several decades, in terms of numbers and in length, was the 2009-2010 strike of undocumented workers. That strike involved 6 000 strikers, including 1 500 short-term contract workers, organized in a strike committee, over a period of ten months. By reorganizing industry worldwide, capitalist globalization has created new working classes in southern countries, whose strength was shown recently with the wave of strikes in China since 2010, the massive strikes in Bursa, Turkey, in

2015, the formation of important trade unions in Indonesia, the role of the trade-union movement and mass strikes in the resignation of South Korea's Prime Minister at the end of 2016...

Never has the world's working class had such power, one that makes it the class capable of bringing together all the oppressed to end capitalist domination. It is necessary to contribute to its political organization on the basis of class independence and to develop a systematic political intervention in relation to it. We must make our main concern the task of rebuilding or building a class consciousness.

11) "The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie", wrote Marx in the Communist Manifesto describing the unceasing fight of the proletariat to organize itself "into a class, and, consequently into a political party". Today, this fight takes place on an international scale and the proletariat's activity is felt daily on the whole of society even if its old parties have collapsed or integrated the bourgeois order and even if its trade unions are mired in class collaboration. The competition between workers on a global scale undermines the social benefits enjoyed by workers in the most developed capitalist countries on which the bourgeoisie and the states relied in order to reach a consensus on the basis of their policies and maintain class collaboration. That era is over.

Today, the bourgeoisie and the states seek to involve the proletariat in their economic and commercial war in the name of protectionism and nationalism, of national neoliberalism.

The labor movement is on the defensive but is engaged in a long and deep process of reorganization we want to help and contribute to its organization as a class, "as a party".

## Defining a

## revolutionary strategy

12) Strategic questions have to be considered in a new light at a time when the proletariat is the target of a global and reactionary drive after the collapse of the political movements born from the workers' movement and the nationalist currents that led the colonial revolutions.

The evolution of capitalism has several implications in terms of revolutionary strategy. We can try to summarize the main trends of this evolution.

It tends to undermine the material basis of reformism because it limits imperialist superprofits, which were once the cement of class collaboration at a time when we witness a considerable concentration of wealth, growing inequalities and impoverishment. Whether they serve it or not, the dictatorship of capital leaves no leeway to states or politicians who stay within the system. The tragedy of Greece and the capitulation of Tsipras illustrate this fact.

It gives internationalism a concrete expression rooted in the daily life of millions of proletarians. Social issues and international issues are perceived as much more interdependent than in the past. The increasing instability of international relations is as much the result of domestic tensions as that of the rivalry between major powers, or between major and regional powers. An instability which opens new opportunities for the intervention of the exploited classes.

The neoliberal and imperialist offensive has completely changed the old political relations even in the oldest and most stable countries of capitalist Europe. The French presidential election has illustrated this further. The parties like the institutions are fully under the control of capital, with no independence or room to manoeuvre whatsoever. The old left-right parliamentary divide is devoid of any content.

The only relevant divide is a class divide, the irreconcilable opposition

between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, between the exploited classes and the capitalist class.

The fight against the rise of reactionary, nationalist, neo-fascist, or religious fundamentalist forces generated by the social decomposition produced by the policies of the capitalist classes is now the central political issue. The solution lies in a class policy for the revolutionary transformation of society.

13) Terrorism and Jihadism, the most radical forms of religious fundamentalism, spring from the policies of the great powers but are more broadly the child of liberal policies that generate poverty and exacerbate inequality as never before.

In rich countries, it would be a mistake to prioritize threats. The threat of religious fundamentalism feeds the threat of neo-fascism in western countries. Both are the enemies of progress, of democracy and freedom, enemies of the workers and the peoples they would like to dominate.

The fight against the rise of reactionary, right-wing, fascist and religious fundamentalist forces requires a global struggle against the social and political decomposition generated by the policy of the capitalist class.

Such a situation where national and international problems, social and political issues are bound together in a complex manner renders Manichean, campist or moralistic stances inadequate, if not dangerous. We fight everything that may or might, one way or another, trap us in a clash of civilizations, in communitarianism. We determine and develop our policy with the interests of the international working class in mind, a policy of class independence capable of giving substance to the democratic aspirations, solidarity, of the popular classes, against all forms of racism.

Our approach aims to reveal the objectives pursued by the great powers, the link between class-war and the war against the peoples, between global competition and international rivalries between

countries.

We denounce the so-called fight against terrorism and radical Islam by the Western powers which leads to war and encourages religious fanaticism which seeks to subject populations.

We condemn these forces unambiguously and fight them, we are in solidarity with the progressive movements that oppose or resist them while denouncing at the same time the propaganda of the great powers invoking a new version of the "clash of civilizations" to justify their policy. This solidarity cannot be confused in any way with the policy of the great powers.

Our struggle for peace, democracy, for the rights of peoples is inseparable from our fight for socialism.

14) In this context of rising reactionary forces caused by the effects of capitalist globalization, women's struggle for gender equality and women's rights is of particular importance. It represents a major revolutionary factor. We are fully involved in all aspects of this struggle be it in the workplace or in the living places or in education. We make our own the democratic demands against male domination and the patriarchal family, a corollary of private property, which is a form of oppression and domination of women and youth more and more at odds with the modern world and social progress.

Women are the first victims of exploitation as well as the victims of the devastating consequences of neoliberal globalization. At the same time, more and more women are wage earners. Their struggle is that of all the exploited and oppressed people. Far from dividing oppressed people, far from opposing the women's and men's struggles, we campaign for the entire labor movement to make feminist struggles its own, for the political and social emancipation of women. The two struggles are one and the same. If the woman is the proletarian in the home, men can only be truly emancipated when they treat women as their equals.

The struggle for gender equality is

inseparable from the struggle against fundamentalism and prejudice promoted by religions, all of which justify and support the subordination of women.

15) Our solidarity with the peoples cannot appeal to the so-called "international community" nor the UN, whose role is to provide a democratic screen to the policies of great powers, a role which is increasingly neglected. Our position is to underline again and again the necessary solidarity between the workers and the peoples. It is the only way to put an end to the aggressive and militaristic policies of the great powers that manipulate the peoples and set them against each other.

Being an internationalist means striving to define an independent policy for the working class combined with the struggle against our own bourgeoisie.

16) The experiences made and the results of the strategy of building "broad parties", without clear programmatic and strategic delimitations lead us to question it. Such a strategy was based on the perspective of a process of recomposition that could have been boosted by the collapse of the former USSR and Communist parties. Independently of the assessment that we can have of it, it no longer takes into account the new trends of the period.

This evolution underlines the idea that to get rid of this odious dominant order the working class needs to organize and fight capitalism utterly, and to commit itself to a revolutionary transformation of society.

The experience of the workers' movement of at least a century and a half teaches us that this struggle demands a party that is both radical and well-formed, having endorsed the conceptions of Marxism, in short a socialist, revolutionary communist party.

There is no third way. Either the workers or organized youth are aware not only of the threats that the continuity of capitalism poses to all mankind but also of the necessity and

possibility for the working-class to conquer the right to decide and to control the future of society, in a word, power, or society will be caught in the trap of the various dead-ends of reformism as it has been repeatedly paving the way for the reactionary forces, for the far right.

A revolutionary party cannot be proclaimed. It is formed in the struggles and will only play a decisive role when it becomes a mass party and has the political and organizational means of putting forward a consistent revolutionary orientation, of organizing mass struggles and of leading broad sectors of the working class.

If struggles and mobilisations are the necessary conditions for the growth of revolutionary forces, this development requires an organized nucleus, united by a common consciousness based on the vision of the future of human society, on a transitional approach and program.

Aware that this mass party cannot be the result of a linear development of any small organization whatsoever, we seek to bring together and unite the revolutionary forces, organizations and militants who fight against capital and the bourgeois order, for the abolition of the capitalist system and for socialism.

We know the price paid by the exploited class because of reformist illusions, the dangers represented by the various reformist ways, including their modern form of leftist populism. We know that the proletariat has always paid dearly for the experiences of the impasses of reformism. Consequently, our efforts of political and organizational regroupment can in no way allow any misunderstanding: an association of revolutionary and reformist forces can ultimately only weaken the strength of our program and our intervention. At best, this can lead to centrist organizations, which are also incapable of building a revolutionary party ready to seize power. Failing to have the strength and the will to put forward a revolutionary perspective, we adapt to electoral policies at the risk of postponing indefinitely our objective of overthrowing the capitalist system.



Experiments with so-called broad parties (including revolutionary and reformist parties) have nowhere contributed to the creation of a revolutionary party, a prerequisite for the decisive struggle of the working class. Being clear about what we want is a sine qua non for regrouping revolutionary forces, training cadres, convincing newly politicized forces and converging greater forces into common fronts, into new organizations and - ultimately - a mass revolutionary party.

Moving in this direction implies that we should define the central elements of a transitional program for the twenty-first century and its declination according to the different regions of the world, especially at the level of Europe, and from there, the bases and the framework from which we could combine construction policy and initiatives for regrouping anti-capitalists and revolutionaries.

It is a political and programmatic work which can only be collective and requires time and energy but it is an indispensable and unavoidable task.

17) The great global shift is no mere rhetorical formula. It is written in drama and blood and forces us to reconsider everything. How can we help emerge a revolutionary movement on a national, European and international level? The question is raised again in new terms.

We must promote a strategy to regroup anti-capitalist and revolutionary forces on the basis of a program for the revolutionary transformation of society, rooted in the basic demands of the exploited, the guarantee of decent wages and pensions, the end of unemployment by the sharing of work among everyone, the defence of public services, which raises the question of the conquest of power to cancel the debt, of the creation of a public banking monopoly

and the socialization of the major industrial and commercial groups.

If this strategy and this program are adapted to each situation and country, they are organized around a transitional approach that raises the question of the workers' and the population's power, that of the 99 %, to abolish the debt and to ensure that banks and multinationals can do no further harm.

We must identify from past defeats and setbacks as well as from current upheavals the elements that contribute to the revolutionary transformation of society, to help the independent organization of the working class to enable it to express the social, democratic, ecological demands of other social classes, of all society.

In response to the ravages of globalization, the reactionary forces exploit the despair and fear of the working classes to develop their xenophobic and nationalist propaganda. At the opposite, we must unify the working class against capitalism and its institutions.

We work for the unity of the exploited classes, their organizations on the basis of this class independence.

We are well aware what difficulties we face. The collapse of the old parties born from the struggles of the workers' movement sows demoralization, disorientation and disarray while the bourgeois and reactionary forces are on the offensive. But we believe that in this context of fragmentation of the anti-capitalist and revolutionary forces the IV has an important role to play.

## **Building a new international, regrouping the**

## **anticapitalists and the revolutionaries**

18) The Fourth International, like all other international groupings, cannot claim to represent by itself the future of the revolutionary movement. It must strive to build other regroupings in order to pave the way for a new revolutionary international.

The future depends on those who want to gather revolutionary forces in the same movement by breaking with the past sectarian and undemocratic practices that have divided the revolutionary movement.

In the short and medium term, the great instability in the world opens opportunities the new anti-capitalist and revolutionary movement must seize.

We cannot embody revolutionary internationalism alone. We must seek to bring together revolutionaries from different traditions, based on a shared understanding of the situation and tasks.

To help the gathering of forces claiming to be revolutionary Marxists we need to work on the development of strategic and programmatic answers for the movement as a whole, to put on the agenda the discussion of a socialist program, a revolutionary communist one.

Beyond the diversity of tactics adopted by the revolutionaries in the construction of their party depending on countries and situations, building revolutionary parties, parties for the seizure of power, for socialism and communism remains the strategic objective.

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