IC 2007

The new internationalism and the Fourth International

11 May 2007

The DS document comes after almost two years in which the comrades of the National Coordination of the DS have absented themselves from the meetings of the IC of the Fourth International, and in a period in which there has been almost no discussion with them. Therefore, we hope sincerely that this document can mark the resumption of a frank and open debate with these comrades with whom we have covered so much history together. So we do not wish that this document serve to justify the present freezing of our mutual relations.

We understand that the DS document has two axes. The main one calls for a discussion on the nature and place of internationalism in the new conjuncture of the 21st century. We think that this subject is of great importance and the invitation to discuss it extremely opportune. On this question we think that most of what is written in the DS document are reflections that would be shared by most of the militants of the Fourth International in their respective countries. Also we think that there are aspects of this subject whose treatment in the document seems insufficient or incorrect - in particular on the role of some Latin American governments today in the new internationalism it includes a series of characterizations of and accusations about the behaviour of the Fourth International and its leadership. We think that these are based on mistaken or badly interpreted information, and need a clear and categorical answer. We will take it in parts.

2) Perhaps it is not surprising that we agree on many of the outstanding subjects with the DS. They are positions --- on the new world situation and the crisis of legitimacy of neoliberalism, the important role of the social movements, the construction of the Social Forums and the movement for global justice, the at least partial erosion of the old ideological divisions that marked the workers' and popular movement over the last century and so on ---- that for about fifteen years we have been constructing together as the central part of the analysis and practices of the Fourth International, a process in which the DS comrades have played an indispensable role. So the central resolutions of the 15th World Congress – which we understand were debated among the militants of the DS, and in favour of which all the delegates of the present DS voted, along with the great majority of the delegates of other countries - try to systematize this set of reflections. They are the essential content of the document, "Resistance to capitalist globalisation: the opportunity for a new internationalism", and some of the main parts of the document, "Role and tasks of the Fourth International". Similar concepts have been elaborated in individual debates, documents, and publications of our movement, including, for example, writings by comrades like Michael Löwy, Daniel Bensaïd and Pierre Rousset. Also, we share the preoccupations expressed in the document on the necessity for revolutionary Marxism to put down national and regional roots, to acquire or to fortify a Latin American identity (and Asian, also African, and so on). In the Latin American case, for example, for many years we have identified with the reference to the Indo-American Marxism of Maria'tegui.

The comrades make a connection between this necessity of "an endogenous" Marxism and their own history in the PT. Agreed! Indeed the positions elaborated by the DS on this question, at the beginning of the 1980s, were elaborated in close collaboration with other comrades of the Fourth International. An example would be the original document, "PT and "Revolutionary Party", which sought to explain that the participation of revolutionaries in the PT could not take the form of "entryism". This elaboration and this practice of the DS had a Brazilian characteristic specifically. But for the Fourth International it also had a broader resonance. It made a re-connection with previous experiences of the international workers' movement in the construction of mass parties. And it served as a departure point so that other comrades in other

countries began to reframe, in diverse circumstances, the challenge of constructing broad anti-capitalist mass parties. So what is "new" in the internationalist exposition of the DS that allows comrade Joaquim to finish his text with the following challenge to the leadership of the Fourth International: "The revolutionary lefts, including the Fourth International, are called on to respond to this challenge. It is to that task that the militancy of the DS is devoted. (But, careful! to repeat an eroded and "bad internationalism" will irremediably remove from this road those who insist on errors of the past)"?

Here we enter the land of ambiguity and insufficiency that we mentioned above, because the present document of the DS, like the text of Joaquim, speaks of "identifying the new actors" and of "the errors of the past". But they do not say precisely what they are referring to. To seek greater clarity, we will return to the schema already raised in the previous discussions on the Fourth International, and try to compare this with "the new" expositions of the DS. Often we have spoken in the FI of 3 levels at which the possibilities of a new internationalism operate. In simplified form, these are a) the social and civil movements - many of which come together in the WSF; b) the new parties and broad political, anti-capitalist and/or anti-imperialist spaces; c) the regroupments between revolutionary socialists. Chapter 8 of the Tasks document of the 15th World Congress synthesizes it thus:

"*8. TOWARDS A NEW MASS REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONAL*

1. ...This "new internationalism" has been appearing in force since Seattle. ...

2. ...We cannot imagine the qualitative step towards the creation of a new International without an important contribution from these new forces. These important but diverse forces cannot be formed into a new international political organisation at this stage but they can be strengthened politically through a process of experience and clarification and by the intervention in these debates of the revolutionary forces, in particular the FI.

3. ...Pluralistic left-wing, anti-capitalist/ anti-imperialist regroupments are still weak ...Only direct clashes between the ruling class and the proletariat... will be capable of shaking up the relationship of forces, putting down social roots and producing the activists who can build, at the national level, a new political force - anti-capitalist, internationalist, feminist - in the perspective of building a new International.

4. ...Third, there has been a major development within and among some of the currents that originated or identify with "Trotskyism". ...This is even truer of ex-[1]Maoist[1] organizations... Rapprochement between organizations identifying with Marxism and the socialist revolution can make sense only in relation to the battles, the real movement and the tasks of today and the future.

We note that there are these three internationalist politico-organizational developments that exist alongside each other: the real movement against globalisation and its socio-political currents; the convergence of anti-capitalist and pluralist political currents; currents of the revolutionary left. This situation can continue for a whole period. However, where agreements and rapprochements are possible, we will take unitary initiatives to advance towards serious regroupments."

So, how does this compare to the outline of the internationalism of the 21st century that the DS raises now?

On the first level, as already we said, there do not seem to be great differences. The DS document of the DS puts a special emphasis on this level - in collaboration between the social movements of Latin America and the world, and indicates the important role played by militants of the DS in these convergences. Without a doubt, this is the most evident aspect of the "new" internationalism that is being born. The Fourth International as a whole feels it participates in this process.

We have been together, and we hope to be able to continue together, both in the construction of specific movements, like the World March of Women, and the campaigns you specify, like those relating to the debt or the Tobin Tax, and also strengthening broad spaces like the WSF, not only in Latin America but also in Europe, Africa and Asia (see, for example, the exemplary work just done by the comrades of the LPP of Pakistan - permanent observers at the IC of the Fourth International - in the Karachi WSF).

On the second level the DS document says little, but it seems that here also there is agreement although there can exist different appreciations as to the details. It would be necessary to discuss, for example, to what extent the São Paulo Forum can or cannot serve as a useful space in the articulation of broad political forces, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. It would be necessary to discuss to what extent organizations like the Mexican PRD or the Uruguayan Frente Amplio can be identified as "new actors' of the internationalism of the 21st century. But the basic idea of the DS - of broad political spaces - apparently fits in with the positions elaborated previously in many spaces of the Fourth International.

3) But on the third level an important difference seems to exist. Rather, in the present document of the DS, the third level does not exist. In the discussions of the Fourth International, the participation of Marxist, revolutionary, organized forces national and internationally, has been always outstanding as an indispensable component (not an exclusive feature of the Fourth International or Trotskyism') in the successful development of the new internationalism at both first levels. Now, it is not clear what importance, if any, the new expositions of the DS attribute to the organization of revolutionaries at the international level. It is very important that the comrades clarify this. It is necessary to know that the very existence of the Fourth International - this is the necessity of Marxist revolutionaries organizing at

an international level around a shared vision of socialist democracy and the struggle to attain it - has not now become, for the comrades, another one of the "errors of the past". Let us hope that the comrades of the DS do not think that an informal and informed relation between the frameworks of the PT, the Frente Amplio, the MVR, and so on can substitute for democratic spaces for elaboration, decision and action between organized revolutionaries. There is another aspect of this third level that deserves to be discussed. As we say, in the present document it is absent. But in the first part of the Political Resolution of the Extraordinary Conference of the DS, from April of last year - from where many of the formulations of the present document come - as also in some of the interventions of leaders of the DS at the Caracas WSF, there seems to be another type of third level. This is the idea that new left governments, at least in Latin America, would form another link in the internationalism of the 21st century. The formulations are not very precise. A new internationalism "working together" with the new governments is spoken of. The strengthening of Mercosur, or the formation of blocks like the G20 in the ambit of the WTO, are mentioned as expressions of resistance to neoliberalism. Now, we do not deny the significance of such phenomena, nor the necessity for revolutionaries of incorporating arelation' of these things to the tasks of impelling a new internationalism. But what type of relation, and with which of these governments? And this takes us to the heart of the matter.

Because there is also a contradictory and increasingly conservative carácter of the Brazilian government's international policy within the WTO as for example when it signed the Hong Kong agreements at the end of 2005 concerning in particular cotton, which harm the interests of the milions of à frica producers. We should also not forget Brazilian participation in sending troops to Haiti.

Because behind all the new formulations and documents of the DS on the internationalism of the 21st century lies the question of the participation of most of the leadership of the DS in a Lula government, whose policy is globally social-liberal. The same comrades who indicate the problem with perfect clarity in this same document: "In this period, the risks must be fought of pragmatism, of the conforming of utopian horizons to a supposedly reformable capitalism, of the sterilization of emancipator forces by integration into the bourgeois state order or the market. These risks are central for parties of socialism that have taken on the central government of its country, like the PT" But it was exactly this preoccupation that the IC expressed in the past. The results of the 13th National Meeting of the PT confirm this prognosis. No matter how much the comrades of the DS fight to incorporate in the resolutions of the PT more advanced positions on the necessity of changing the economic model or extending participatory democracy, Lula has made it very clear that the political and economic foundations of his second government are not going to change.

It is to us obvious that, at the international level, the Venezuelan government, and so far also the Bolivian, have a character different from the other Latin American governments. To the extent that they rest on the struggle and interests of the social movements (and in variable degrees they give a political leadership to those struggles), yes they can be identified' as"new actors' in this emergent internationalism of the 21st century. The increasingly iconic figure of Hugo Chavez for the popular forces and left at a worldwide level is clear in this sense.
Also it seems legitimise to us, indeed necessary sometimes, to look for precise and limited alliances around limited objectives with some of the other Latin American governments. But this does not mean the governments of Argentina, Uruguay or Brazil can become strategic allies for the construction of a new internationalism.

The events of May 2006 seem to demonstrate with clarity that these governments are not safe allies for Venezuela or Bolivia, far from being actors of the new internationalism. This cannot be constructed in defence of the investments of Petrobas against the Bolivian people, or in favour of the Brazilian agro-exporters in the WTO, or of the paper joint-ventures stationers of the Uruguayan state against Argentine environmentalists.
We are not in agreement with the affirmation of the DS that the Lula government is a strategic ally of the Bolivarian revolution. To the extent that Brazil opposes a direct aggression against Venezuela, or has joined the latter in blocking the reopening of negotiations on the FTAA, it is necessary to support it. But also it is obvious that the clearest heads in Washington have subtler proposals – see the declarations of Senator Richard Lugar, Tom Shannon or indeed Condoleezza Rice – which see the Lula government as their best option to contain the radicalism of the Venezuelan process. (If it is true that some in the Chavez government have illusions in Lula, there are others who are perfectly clear on his limitations.)

4) We turn, more briefly, to the second axis of the DS document. This leads us to understand that the foundation of the problems between the National Coordination of the DS and the IC of the Fourth International is located in a regression of the latter, from an open and plural position of the Eighties - document on Socialist Democracy, support for the construction of the PT and so on - to a dogmatic and narrow programmatism that reproduces the errors of the past'. We already indicated the general direction of the Fourth International concerning the new expressions of internationalism. Therefore it is hard for us to understand to what comrades refer when they write that "most of the IEC (sic) chose to move away from the processes of recomposition

underway of the Latin American left and to privilege a dialogue and joint action with small "Trotskyist" groups that abound in our continent". They cannot be speaking of the participation of the comrades of the Mexican PRT or LUS in the Other Campaign of the Zapatistas or in the Frente de la izquierda Socialista. They cannot be referring either to the participation of the Ecuadorians in Pachakutik, or the Puerto Ricans in the Frente Socialista, or to the central role played by the Colombians in supporting the Alternative Democratic Pole and the presidential campaign of Carlos Gaviria. And as we indicated above, such a narrow and sectarian approach in Latin America, if it existed (and in fact it does not exist) would make minimum sense when one sees the efforts of almost all the other sections and supporters of the Fourth International to construct broad anti-capitalist regroupments in very varied national or regional conditions. The examples of the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the WASG in Germany, the SSP in Scotland or Respect in England, all with parliamentary representation, certainly are not reduced tosmall Trotskyist groups'. And in the case of Italy, the comrades have participated from its birth in the Party of Communist Refoundation - they were part of the majority when the general orientation of the party allowed it, and constructed an opposition when the orientation of the majority current towards a social-liberal government imposed such an option, as is the case at the moment.

As part of this orientation, certainly we are agreed "to engage in a dialogue and joint action with Trotskyist groups that abound", where it is possible and useful, as we are with many other revolutionary forces. There have been several of diverse origins participating at our side in some of those national initiatives, as also in the various meetings of the anti-capitalist left at European, Asian, international and Latin American levels. For sure, we are not in agreement with all their priorities or analyses of the situation in certain countries or regions - Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Latin America and so on. But to deny such exchange or collaboration would be in our view sectarian - and equivalent to denying the necessity of the third level of the new internationalism of which we spoke above.

5) On the other hand, the accusation that the leadership of the Fourth International has tried to "intervene" in the DS (a concept with an especially negative charge for the Brazilian left), we think stems from a misunderstanding. At the least it would be based on a deeply mistaken interpretation as much on the facts as the statutes of the Fourth International. (NB. The new simpler version of these statutes were also approved at the 15th World Congress with quasi-unanimity, including the vote of the delegates from Brazil).

1. The International Committee has not decided who would represent the DS in the IC. The comrades must know that the members of the IC are elected on an individual basis by the World Congress and that only a World Congress can change the composition of the IC.

2. The International Committee has not determined who the members of the DS are. It resolved to recognize as militants of the Fourth International all those who were members of the DS, whether inside or outside the PT. This is a procedure absolutely within the powers of the IC, that it lamentably has had to apply several times in recent years, including with the participation of the leaders of the DS, as in the cases of Mexico and Uruguay.

3. The IC has not tried "to define in Europe what the DS would have to do in Brazil". What the IC did was, after a long delay and many discussions, to express its opinion on an aspect of the policy in Brazil that affected the interests of all the sections and also the political identity of the International. It has been the tradition of the Fourth International - a tradition that we continue to defend with pride - that only the comrades in a certain country can decide the tactics to be applied in their national reality. Now the comrades of the DS knows that the question of the participation of revolutionary Marxists in bourgeois governments, or coalition, or pro-capitalist, or neoliberal, or social-liberal governments and so or governments including nationalist, reformist or social democratic forces, has a long and very controversial history for the international workers' and popular movement. (And not only in Europe, but in Asia and Latin America also.) It amounts to much more than a tactical question.

It relates to fundamental subjects of the programmatic identity of our movement, like class independence, permanent revolution. Therefore it is not surprising that the Brazilian situation not only provoked a wave of discussions and questions in the ranks of our own Fourth International but in many other sectors of the international left. Therefore it is not necessarily fetishism of defence of the program to understand that the leadership of our International had, and still has, an absolute obligation to discuss and to arrive at a collective evaluation of this situation. It was what it did. Let us hope sincerely that the comrades of the leadership of the DS return to share these discussions and these evaluations with the rest of the International.

Bureau of the Fourth International