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Fourth International

Amendments to the resolution "Role and Tasks of the Fourth International" from Davies

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The Role and Tasks text has been under discussion for a year in the Bureau, at an expanded meeting of the Bureau and then at the IC. I have been critical of it at each stage and it was very contentious amongst a number of the European sections at the expanded Bureau meeting. When it came to the IC I was one of only two votes against. There were modifications made to the text in the course of this which took out some of worst examples of the problems I was raising, but in my view this did not change the overall character of the text.

My problem is not with the general political framework of the text on world politics and the crisis. It does do a good job in integrating the twin crises of ecology and economy.

I have a problem with the call it makes for a new international and what it implies as to the character of such an international.

The EC text presents two possible ways in which the new international it advocates could emerge. One is that it could emerge out of a coming together of the various broad parties which have emerged to the left of Social Democracy in recent years – at least from those which are anti-capitalist in character. This would be an anti-capitalist international comprised of anti-capitalist parties, presumable with the sections of the existing FI inside them.

This perspective is expressed in section 5 as follows:

“The Fourth International is confronted, in an overall way, with a new phase. Revolutionary Marxist militants, nuclei, currents and organizations must pose the problem of the construction of anti-capitalist, revolutionary political formations, with the perspective of establishing a new independent political representation of the working class. That is true on the level of each country scale *and at an international level.*” (My emphasis)

This is also reflected in the following quotation from section 7:

“In the new anti-capitalist parties which may be formed in the years to come, and which express the current stage of combativeness, experience and consciousness of the sectors that are the most committed to the search for an anti-capitalist alternative, *the question of a new International is and will be posed.*” (My emphasis)

It is true that this is contradicted in other parts of the text but this sentence is absolutely clear – that the existence of these broad and diverse parties objectively poses the question that they should come together at some stage and form a new international organisation.

Of course we all want a bigger stronger and more effective Fourth International with bigger stronger and more effective national sections. And we want an international which is politically broader than the current FI and politically broader than Trotskyist tradition itself – although the Trotskyist tradition has a very important role to play. In fact this process has already started to happen and we need to ensure that it continues.

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The point of principle, however, is that it continues to be a programmatically based revolutionary international as spelled out in the statutes of the FI.

Even if an international comprising of anti-capitalist organisations was possible – which seems very unlikely given the diversity and instability of most such organisations – it would not be a revolutionary international as outlined above and would not be an alternative to the existing FI.

If it happened against the odds it would be an important development and one to which the FI would have to relate, but not by dissolving into it or using it to replace our own international.

It is important, therefore, that we recognise the difference between revolutionary organisations/internationals and anti-capitalist formations, and avoid conflating the two. Revolutionary formations are those which reject capitalism and put forward both a socialist alternative and a revolutionary means of making the transition between the two. Anti-capitalist organisations are those which see capitalism as the problem and socialism as the answer but have no agreed programme for transition.

The second possibility posed by the text is that a new international could emerge out of the various European far left organisations via the process initiated by the NPA last year with the Conferences of the Radical Left held in Paris. This proposition is contained in section 6:

“We must discuss how to strengthen and transform the Fourth International in order to make it an effective tool in the perspective of a new international grouping. We already have started, with limited results it has to be admitted, conferences of the anti-capitalist left and other international conferences.”

But this is equally unlikely. The Paris meetings were a collection of actively rival far left and revolutionary organisations competing with each other at both the national and international with no detectable sign of a change in this which could bring about such a convergence. The conferences included the IST the CWI. There were 12 separate competing organisations from Greece. And whilst these meetings did have value in terms of an exchange of ideas amongst the far left the idea that they could initiate a process out of which could come a new united international was excluded. Neither the IST or the CWI were there as a part of any convergence process. They were there because the emergence of the NPA was a very important development and they wanted to know what was going on. And even if a process of convergence was possible amongst the revolutionary left it would be a very different thing from the coming together of anti-capitalist forces, it would be a process of revolutionary unity.

In the same paragraph the document lists a number of other initiatives we have been involved in at an international level including meetings held around the world social forums and the European Anti-capitalist Left (EACL) as if these initiatives were all a part of a process towards a new anti-capitalist international. But they are not and never have been. Some have formed the radical left intervention into the global justice movement and others have been attempts to influence emerging organisations to the left of Social Democracy in a radical direction.

The EACL was certainly never seen that way. It was an important initiative but it was never more than a co-ordination aimed at strengthening the process of the emergence of broad parties through practical collaboration and the exchange of ideas. In any case the EACL has been overtaken by events and the last meeting of the Bureau proposed that it be closed down – so it is not useful to list it as one of the ways that a New International might emerge.

There is no difference here over the importance of building of broad parties. It is crucial that task of building broad parties to the left of Social Democracy should remain central to our response to the current stage of the crisis of capitalism and of Social Democracy. But the text talks almost exclusively about broad ANTICAPITALIST parties and some of the most important of these parties are not anti-capitalist but left reformist, or radical left reformist parties – the most important being Die Linke.

Remarkably Die Linke is not even mentioned in the text although it is amongst the most important of such parties. In fact throughout the discussion around this text there has been a reluctance to recognise the importance of Die Linke and even scepticism about it.

Of course we can say that we prefer a radical left party to be anti-capitalist rather than left reformist but it is a meaningless observation. We are in favour of broad parties to the left of social democracy but we cannot determine, in most cases, what the character of those parties will be. Their character will be determined by the state of the class struggle and the political conditions in the country in which they emerge. The history and shape of the labour movement and whether there has been a mass CP will also be a factor.

When we set ourselves the task of building and working inside broad left formations at either the national or the international our own organisation needs to be more defined better organised and more politically coherent in order to do so. Working through a broad organisation may be more effective than simply raising our own banner but it is also more complex and demands a lot more political resources.

In working inside broad organisations we need to have a twin objective. The first is to address the crisis of working class representation which becomes increasingly acute in today's conditions. The second, which is generally a more long term perspective, is to win the broad organisation, when the conditions are right to our own revolutionary politics. This implies that when we work in such organisations we remain organised in our own right and ensure that our politics are a factor in its development.

This is also the case if we want to be a facilitator of convergences amongst other organisations as is outlined in section 9 or to generally play a role in the development of the radical left.

To this end section 10 of the text which deals with strengthening our own structure is very welcome. Whilst it is true that we are a small organisation it is also true that we are not meeting the potential which exists as far as a revolutionary alternative is concerned.

Amendments to parts 5 and 6 of the Draft Resolution on the role and tasks of the Fourth International

Deletions are in italics and additions are in bold.

5. *This is the aspiration in which the problems of building the Fourth International and new anti-capitalist parties and new international currents are posed.* **This is the context in which the problems of building the Fourth International are posed.** We expressed it in our own way, from 1992 onwards, so in the last two world congresses, with the triptych "New period, new programme, new party", developed in documents of the International. We confirm the essential of our choices at the last World Congress in 2003 concerning the building of broad *anti-capitalist parties to the left of Social Democracy*. The Fourth International is confronted, in an overall way, with a new phase. Revolutionary Marxist militants, nuclei, currents and organizations must pose the problem of the construction of *anti-capitalist, revolutionary* such political formations, with the perspective of establishing a new independent political representation of the working class. *That is true on the level of each country scale and at an international level.* On the basis of the experience of the class struggle, the development of the global justice movement, defensive struggles and anti-war mobilizations over the last ten years, and in particular the lessons drawn from the evolution of the Brazilian PT and of Communist Refoundation in Italy and from the debates of the French anti-liberal left, revolutionary Marxists have engaged in recent years in the building of the PSOL in Brazil, of Sinistra Critica in

Italy, of the new anti-capitalist party in France, Respect in England and **Die Links in Germany**. In this perspective we have continued to build the experiences of the Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal and the Red Green Alliance in Denmark. The common goal, via different paths, is that of broad *anti-capitalist* parties **to the left of Social Democracy**. It is not a question of taking up the old formulas of regroupment or revolutionary currents alone. The ambition is to bring together forces beyond simply revolutionary ones. These can be a support in the process of bringing forces together as long as they are clearly for building *anti-capitalist broad left* parties. Although there is no model, since each process of coming together takes account of national specificities and relationships of forces, our goal must thus be to seek to build broad **left anti-capitalist** political forces, independent of social democracy and the centre left, formations which reject any policy of participation or support to class-collaborationist governments, today government with social-democracy and the centre left. It is on the basis of such a perspective that we must be oriented. What we know of the experiences of differentiation and reorganization in Africa and Asia point in the same direction. It is through this process that we can make new advances. *It is this question which must form the framework of the next congress of the FI.* **On this level, we created bonds of solidarity with the Brazilian PSOL in its break with Lula's PT. We have supported the efforts of our Italian comrades to build an anti-capitalist alternative to the policies of Communist Refoundation in Italy.** (Moved from paragraph 6)

6. *This is the framework in which we must approach the question of the relationship between the building of the Fourth International and a policy of anti-capitalist coming together at the national, continental and international levels. We must discuss how to strengthen and transform the Fourth International in order to make it an effective tool in the perspective of a new international grouping.* **At the same time we have to work towards greater understanding and cooperation between both the revolutionary left and broad left organisations at the international level.** We already have started, with limited results it has to be admitted, conferences of the anti-capitalist left and other international conferences. On the international level, we have initiated, on this political basis, many conferences and initiatives of international convergence and coming together: the constitution of the European Anti-capitalist Left (EACL), with the Portuguese Left Bloc, the Danish Red-Green Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party. We worked with organizations like the English SWP. Other parties - even left reformists of who had at one time or another a political evolution "to the left", like Communist Refoundation in Italy, tor Synaspismos, also took part in these conferences. We also held international conferences of revolutionary and anti-capitalist organizations, on the occasion of the World Social Forums at Mumbai in India and Porto Alegre in Brazil. These few elements show the type of orientation that we want to implement. The different conferences this year such as those in Paris or Belem show the necessity and the possibility of joint action and discussion by a large number of organizations and currents of the anti-capitalist left in Europe. It is now necessary to continue a policy of open meetings and conferences on topics of strategic and programmatic thinking and joint action through campaigns and initiatives of international mobilization.