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World Social Forum

A festival of multicoloured plurality ... unlike Davos

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No repressive brutality. No riot gas. Neither blows nor arrests as in the mountainous Swiss bunker. Porto Alegre, on the contrary, was a multicolour fiesta of an insolent, chaotic, resistant plurality. Everything was permitted.

Social movements, NGOs, ATTAC groups, community networks, committees for the cancellation of the foreign debt, trade union and peasant co-ordinations, ecologists, Black and Afro-identity movements, Feminist and lesbian-gay organization, human rights activists, alternative media, punks, "moradores de la rua" (street dwellers), neighbourhood movements, Christians for liberation, musical bands, all mixed up together.

Parties of the left and centre left in different variants. Intellectuals, academics, economists, parliamentarians, "social entrepreneurs", a few ministers. Historic figures of the anti-colonialist struggle like the Algerian Ahmed Ben Bella. Personalities like Danielle Mitterrand. Well known individuals like Cuathemoc Cárdenas, Ricardo Alarcón, Eduardo Galeano, Frei Betto, Buenaventura de Souza, or the irrepressible Hebe de Bonafini, president of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Old guerrilla chiefs like the Venezuelan Douglas Bravo, some nationalist military figures like the Ecuadorian Lucio Gutierrez, and radicals from Euskal Herritarrok.

Also some notable absences: among others US intellectual Noam Chomsky, Portuguese writer and Nobel Prize for Literature winner José Saramago, Germany's Gunther Grass, the president of the Frente Amplio of Uruguay Tabaré Vázquez and the Zapatistas.

The agenda was scarcely affected by the ridiculous act of the Brazilian Federal Police who sought to deport José Bové for participating in the destruction of genetically modified crops in a plantation owned by the multinational Monsanto.

There were 4,702 delegates from 117 countries, 165 special guests, 2,000 youth and 700 indigenous people camped in the city parks, 764 media outlets represented by 1,870 journalists. Around 20,000 people were on the march through the main streets of the city which opened the event. There were more than 400 workshops, oficinas and panels.

The organization of the WSF would not have been possible without the support of the state of RÃo Grande del Sur, governed by Olivio Dutra and the prefeitura (municipality) of Porto Alegre - both ruled by the Workers'Party (PT). In particular, all the press coverage emphasized the role played by vice-governor Miguel Rossetto and his collaborators, mostly militants of the Democracia Socialista tendency of the PT.

The Fourth International at Porto Alegre

The World Social Forum was attended by supporters of the Fourth International from a variety of countries: France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Spanish state, South Africa, the Philippines, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, not to mention our Brazilian hosts.

In all cases, as members and activists of social organizations, trade unions, groups from the ATTAC networks, committees of solidarity, community radios and as political militants. The workshops, camps and conferences saw

them participating as animators, coordinators, organizers and panellists. Simultaneously, various activities took place. On January 26, there was a discussion on the book "Marxism, Utopia and Modernity" by its authors Daniel Bensaid and Michael Lowy, with an attendance of more than 350 people and Emir Sader, Isabel Loureiro, Raúl Pont, and José Correa Leite among the panellists. On January 31 at midday, a comradely lunch and in the evening a meeting where comrades Alain Krivine, Pierre Rousset, Christophe Aguiton and Raúl Pont, spoke to 400 people on their first impressions on the Forum and its challenges.

Throughout the five days of activities, 3,000 copies of the publication "Resistences" in three languages (Portuguese, Spanish, English) which included the draft resolution on "Resistances to Capitalist Globalisation" which will be put to the vote at our next World Congress, were distributed. In the prologue there was a text by Michael Lowy entitled "What is the Fourth International?" which summed up our position in relation to the WSF.

"The Fourth International is present at the World Social Forum through its militants, its parliamentarians, trade union leaders and activists from various social movements. We bring our contribution: the internationalist revolutionary Marxist viewpoint, but also we are here to listen to and learn from the experience and thinking of others. Because we know that it is through combats in the streets like Seattle and meetings like this in Porto Alegre that the seeds of the internationalism of the 21st century are being planted".

Also, 500 copies of the review Desde los Cuatro Puntos, edited by the Mexican comrades of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, were distributed, as were the draft resolutions for the FI's World Congress, the resolution of the International Executive Committee on Plan Colombia and the campaign of solidarity with the political and social organizations of this country.

For their part, the comrades of Democracia Socialista brought out a special edition of 1,500 copies of Raúl Pont's "Participative Democracy: the experience of Porto Alegre".

The press of the Fourth International, Inprecor and International Viewpoint, were sold on the stand of the Partido de los Trabajadores, as were new editions of the books "The Place of Marxism in History" by Ernest Mandel, and "Democracia, Participación, Ciudadanía" by Raúl Pont.

Dick Nichols, a leader of the Australian revolutionary organization the Democratic Socialist Party, which has fraternal relations with the Fourth International, also participated in all these activities.