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FI Youth Camp 2006

Pasta, politics and parties

- IV Online magazine - 2006 - IV381 - September 2006 -

Publication date: Sunday 24 September 2006

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More than 550 young participants met at the youth camp this year near the Umbrian town of Perugia in the largest FI youth camp since 1995. This was thanks to an impressive mobilisation by the youth of Sinistra Critica in Italy who brought 230 Italians to the camp. The 130- strong delegation from France and 70 from the Spanish State made it a camp with a strong Latin language dominance. It was of course a pleasant internationalist atmosphere that made the smaller delegations from Belgium, Britain, Scotland, Denmark, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the Philippines feel "at home".

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/camp2.jpg>]

The presence of the comrades from Mindanao in the Philippines brought home to the participants the reality of a constant struggle against military occupation by the Philippines government, backed by the US. "We were saddened, yet inspired, after speaking with the Filipino comrades, who shared their experiences of state repression, armed resistance movements and comrades being brutally murdered by Maoist guerrillas," wrote James Nesbitt in Scottish Socialist Voice in his account of the camp.

The participation of 12 Scottish youth was also a big step forward in relations with the Scottish Socialist Youth even though they are facing a crisis in the SSP. The Greeks were also much more numerous than in any previous camps due to the geographic proximity as well as a growth in youth membership in the OKDE-Spartakos. They found the experience very positive and will put mobilising for the camp as a high priority on their agenda for next year. The Portuguese delegation was back after having giving priority to the Left Bloc youth camp in the last couple of years.

Under the shadow of war

The question of war became a more central theme than predicted in the planning because the camp took place while Israel was in the midst of its attack on Lebanon. The camp was a chance to enhance the understanding of the Middle East and discuss how to improve solidarity work with the peoples of Lebanon and Palestine. A "permanent workshop" to exchange experiences and coordinate the activities throughout the week was added to the programme. The planned central forum on international resistance to imperialism and war was strengthened by the participation of a young Palestinian comrade as well as a young woman from the Spanish State arriving directly from solidarity work in Gaza.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/CAMP5.jpg>]

"A new generation for a new Europe - building the anti-capitalist left"

The experiences of building radical anti-capitalist parties in Europe was another central point on the agenda of the camp. The exchange of experiences between the comrades involved in such projects were a central theme both of forums and workshops and of the bilateral inter-delegation meetings where comrades could discuss face to face their experiences, successes and failures whether they had already a relative long experience such as in the Left Bloc of Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the Scottish Socialist party or within the party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) in Italy or newer experiences such as the WASG-Linkspartei in Germany or Respect in Britain.

Crucial moment for anti-capitalists in Italy

The camp was an important occasion for the young people of the FI and the left current Sinistra Critica inside Rifondazione. Several of the dissident Rifondazione parliamentarians had a chance to explain the situation. The

Rifondazione majority had decided to be in favour of the Italian troops in Afghanistan in contradiction with its earlier position. They wanted to influence the military presence to make it less harmful. "But how do you make war and kill people in a less harmful way", asked Franco Turigliatto, one of the dissident senators. The two senators from the Fourth International section could have the decisive vote in toppling the government and bringing back Berlusconi because it was made a vote of confidence. In the end the dissident senators voted in favour of a motion that prolonged the Italian troops in Afghanistan. But they also presented an ultimatum backed by 16 senators which made it clear that at the next time in six months they will not save the Prodi government if it insists on maintaining the troops in Afghanistan.

From the movements to the camp

The camp was full of enthusiasm and there was a rich exchange in experiences due to the recent movements in various countries. In several countries the students have mobilised against austerity and commodification of education. The withdrawal of the CPE (first job contracts) in France after a broad mobilisation was an inspiration for others. "After the mobilisation against the CPE an enormous student movement started in Greece. ... The students, to state that they were going to win, said they would "talk French" to the government. We discussed the lessons we had learnt from our different mobilisations, knowing that in Greece they won the postponement of their reform."
(Rouge-France)

Revolution in the 21st century

Another constant thread was the need for a new generation of political activists to look at the world as it is today and build the political instruments necessary for the fight to change it without forgetting to learn from past experiences. The camp is an important moment forming that new generation to take forward the revolutionary struggle in the 21st century.

"Learned a lot, had fun"

The Fourth International seems to have worked to recognise the crucial nature of class issues such as LGBT liberation, internationalism, women's liberation and Marxist ecology. In particular, they make no bones about their commitment to feminism, something which would undoubtedly be contentious in the SSP.

Our delegation came home satisfied, having learned a lot, had fun and made important new contacts.

The FI is not the only show in town on the international far-left, but SSY were glad to have been involved and grateful to the organisers and delegations for their friendliness, hospitality and solidarity. I would strongly recommend young members attend next year and to learn more about the FI, their history and their current perspectives.

(Scottish Socialist Voice)

"A mini dream world"

The experiences of the camp have had a profound effect on those that went. Tamir Nasrallah from London says "The camp was like a mini dream world, it was a platform for the young to express themselves politically and allowed us to break the barriers of the capitalist system and question things in a highly critical way."

Run by the youth, the camp is able to instil knowledge and confidence in a socialist structure. "The Fourth International youth camp samples a utopian society and creates a microcosm of a socialist civilization where the

class war is won, gender is indifferent and equality is absolute" comments Jamie Smith (Sheffield, South Bank University).

(Socialist Resistance, England and Wales)

The red thread...

It was interesting to meet historical fighters like the French philosopher Daniel Bensaid sitting down with a group from a younger generation exchanging impressions, taking the temperature of the new rebellious youth, and, undoubtedly, remembering his own and never renounced fights as a "sixty-eighter" . Because not all the rebel students from that era have been integrated into the system as the mass media would like us to believe in an irreversible logic that one is radical left at 20 but inevitably rightwing at 40 (...) The educational and the informal conversations in the camp are a necessary transmission of militant experience, they tie the knot firmly in the red thread that links the different generations.

(Espacio Alternativo, Spanish state)

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