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Fourth International 16th World Congress

Role and Tasks of the Fourth International

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The preparation of the next World Congress is underway in a context marked by an unprecedented combination of a global economic crisis and a worldwide ecological crisis. This is a major turning point. This dual crisis shows the failure of the capitalist system and puts on the agenda the reorganisation and reconstruction of an anti-capitalist workers' movement.

1. The social and economic attacks and neoliberal counter reforms against the popular classes are going to increase. There will be more wars and conflicts. Ecological catastrophes will hit millions of people. A new historical period is on the horizon. New relationships of forces between imperialist powers on world economy and politics are taking shape, with the emergence of new capitalist forces like China, Russia, India and Brazil. The combination of the weakening of US hegemony and the sharpening of inter-capitalist competition between Europe, Russia, Asia and the USA also has geo-strategic effects in new political and military configurations, with an increased role for Nato, and new international tensions. In recent years, American imperialism has compensated for its economic weakening by redeploing its military hegemony in the four corners of the world. The social and economic contradictions have led even in the USA to the discredit of the Republican team around G.W. Bush. The election of Obama is a response to this discrediting as an alternative solution for US imperialism, even if his election also responds to a desire for change on the part of a section of US society which will be disappointed but is real.

In conclusion, the crisis makes obvious the failure of neoliberal ideology, incapable of offering a solution. All the contradictions inherent to this social system are going to explode without social democracy and the centre left being able to offer an adequate response. Even neo-Keynesian measures, which have not been adopted anyway, would not be enough to resolve the crisis.

2. Social fightbacks are continuing to rise on a world scale but in a very unequal fashion and remain on the defensive. The global justice movement lost its dynamic that it had had up to 2004. The Belem WSF shows, nevertheless, the need and the possibility for international convergences, but in a framework where struggles are more fragmented and dispersed.

– In certain European countries – France, Greece, Germany, Poland, Italy – social struggles have a central impact on the political scene, but these struggles are not sufficient to block or turn around the underlying trends in the capitalist offensive and the effects of the crisis. They have not succeeded in overcoming the process of division and fragmentation of workers. These struggles remain defensive. They have not yet found an expression in terms of anti-capitalist consciousness. In this framework, in the absence of an anti-capitalist left reactionary, even xenophobic and racist alternatives and trends can get stronger.

– In the Middle East, peoples are continuing to resist Western and Israeli occupation and aggression, in Palestine, in Iraq and in Lebanon. The murderous aggression waged by the Zionist government in Gaza, two years after that in Lebanon, has not been able to defeat the resistance. Although Hamas and Hezbollah are now the main political references in this resistance, there are sectors situating their action in a context of social as well as national liberation.

– Latin America remains the continent with the most socially explosive situations, although these have been unequal and limited in countries such as Argentina and Brazil. This is where there have been experiences of partial breaking with imperialism, in particular in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador and Paraguay.

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– In a series of emerging capitalist countries or those resulting from capitalist restoration, – China, India, Russia or the former eastern bloc – the whirlwind of globalisation is tending to proletarianise hundreds of millions of human beings. But this new social power, which can play a key role in the coming years, has not yet formed mass independent organizations – trade unions, associations, and political organisations capable of facing the challenge of this global reorganisation.

– The pillaging of resources in Africa to the benefit of big capitalist multinationals is increasing with the complicity of the existing governments. The continued growth of GDP in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa does not benefit the population, only social inequality is increasing. Faces with the deterioration in living conditions, there have been major struggles, such as the general strikes in Guinea, the demonstrations in Togo, the general strike in the public sector in South Africa. The food crisis at the end of 2008 sparked many demonstrations. However, the absence of a political alternative is a heavy obstacle to the success of these struggles, such as in Guinea or in the Cameroons. They are either diverted to wards bourgeois political formations as in Madagascar or they lose themselves in religious dead-ends as in Nigeria or Congo (DRC) or worse in ethnic or racist ones like in Kenya or South Africa.

The building of democratic peoples' and workers' organisations' remains an absolute necessity for the success of struggles.

– The combined long-term effects of the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and financial globalisations continue to be felt in Asia : centres of hot wars (Afghanistan, Sri Lank, Mindanao island in the Philippines), zones of international confrontation (Korea, Pakistan, India), challenge to previous geopolitical balance of forces (South East Asia, China, Japan), reduction of democratic spaces that had been previously won (Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia...).

These imbalances are today sharpened by the financial economic and food crisis, which pushes towards more and more regional coordination and a greater convergence of social fightback movements existing in different fields: anti-war and anti-nuclear, against the debt and for food sovereignty, i defence of social and ecological rights...

3. The dynamic of capitalist globalisation and the current crisis have also changed the framework of evolution and development of the traditional left. Reformist bureaucracies have seen their leeway considerably reduced. From reformism without reforms to reformism with counter-reforms, social democracy and equivalent forces in a series of dominated or developing countries are experiencing an evolution towards social-liberalism; that is these forces are directly underwriting neo-liberal or neo-conservative policies. All the forces politically or institutionally linked to social-liberalism or to the centre left, to varying degrees, are being dragged into these qualitative changes in the workers' movement and are incapable of formulating a plan for getting out of the crisis. What is more, we are seeing policies, such as that of the Lula government in Brazil, which are making the ecological crisis worse.

The traditional communist parties are continuing their long decline. They try to break this decline by grabbing onto the coat tails of the leading forces in the liberal left and the institutional apparatuses or falling back on their nostalgic and self-affirming positions. While there are sectors or currents who wish to build the social movements with anticapitalist forces, such as Synaspismos in Greece, they are doomed to have contradictions and divisions because of their reformist nature. The combination of social resistances and this evolution of the apparatuses of the traditional left open a new space for the radical left. This puts on the agenda the reorganisation and rebuilding of the workers' movement on a new basis, that of anti-capitalism and eco-socialism.

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.

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â€¢ An anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist left;

â€¢ A left that is clearly alternative to social democracy and its governments

a left which fights for a socialist 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 what it wants to break from;

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 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 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.

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. 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 anticapitalist parties. 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. 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. 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. 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 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 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.

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. 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. 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. 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.

7. The Fourth International and its sections have played and still play a vital road in defending, promoting and implementing a programme of demands that are both immediate and transitional towards socialism; a united-front policy that aims for mass mobilization of workers and their organizations; a policy of working-class unity and independence against any type of strategic alliance with the national bourgeoisie; opposition to any participation in governments in the advanced-capitalist countries that merely manage the State and the capitalist economy having abandoned all internationalism.

The Fourth International has played and still plays a functional role to keep alive the history of the revolutionary Marxist current, "to understand the world", to confront the analyses and the experiences of revolutionary militants, currents and organizations and to bring together organizations, currents and militants who share the same strategic vision and the same choice of broad convergences on revolutionary bases. The existence of an international framework that makes it possible "to think about politics" is an indispensable asset for the intervention of revolutionaries. Consistent internationalism must pose the question of an international framework. But for historical reasons that it has itself analyzed, the Fourth International does not have the legitimacy to represent in and of itself the new mass International that we need. So when it is a question of taking a step forward in the bringing together of anti-capitalist forces, these new organizations, in particular in Europe and Latin America, cannot relate to and join this or that current identified with the Fourth International, and this is true whatever the reference point – the various Morenoites, the Lambertists, the SWP or other variants of Trotskyism. Let us note, nevertheless, a major difference between the FI and all these tendencies, over and above political positions, and which is the credit of the International is that it is based on a democratic coordination of sections and militants, whereas the other international tendencies are "international-factions" or coordinations based on "party-factions" which do not respect rules of democratic functioning, in particular the right of tendency. The historical limits of these international "Trotskyist" currents ", like other ex-Maoist or ex-Communist currents, prevent us today from advancing in the crystallization of new international convergences. As for the calls of Chavez or others for new Internationals, they are not situated on the same terrain. They obviously pose fundamental political problems, but also those of relations between states and organizations.

In the present relationship of forces, the policy for advancing towards a mass International must rather take the road of open and periodic conferences on central political questions – activity, specific themes or discussions - which make possible the convergence and the emergence of anti-capitalist and revolutionary poles. 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. We act and we will continue to act so that it is not posed in terms of ideological or historical choices, which are likely to lead to divisions and splits. It must be posed on a double level, on the one hand real political convergence on tasks of international intervention, on the other pluralism of the new formations, which must bring together currents of various origins: Trotskyists of different kinds, libertarians, revolutionary syndicalists, revolutionary nationalists, left reformists. So in general, when there have been concrete steps towards new parties, we have proposed that the new broad anti-capitalist party functions with the right of tendency or currents, and that the supporters of the Fourth International in these new parties organize themselves in ways to be decided, according to the specific situation of each party. Our Portuguese comrades in the Left Bloc, our Danish comrades in the Red-Green Alliance, our Brazilian comrades in the PSOL, are organized, in particular forms, as a Fourth International current or in class struggle currents with other political tendencies.

8. In this movement we are confronted with desynchronizations between the building of parties on a national level and the construction of new international groupings. There can be, in the present situation or in the next years, new anti-capitalist parties in a series of countries, but the emergence of a new international force, and all the more so, of a new International, is not, at this stage, foreseeable. A new International will only be the result of a prolonged period of joint action and common understanding of events and tasks for overthrowing capitalism. While we affirm a policy of international convergence, this confirms the particular responsibilities of the FI, and thus the need for its reinforcement. We can and we seek to represent an organizational framework that is attractive and, democratic, for revolutionary organizations which share the same political projects as ours. It is in this dynamic that the Filipino comrades are situated, the Pakistani comrades and the Russian comrades are situated, and that can be the case tomorrow of, for example, the Polish or Malian comrades.

9. We have, in fact, a particular role that is recognized by a series of political currents. We may be the only ones who can make political forces of various origins converge. This is for example, what in Latin America the Venezuelans comrades of left currents of the Bolivarian process say to us. It is also the case in Europe, in the framework of the relations of the EACL and of other currents. So, the next world congress must be an important step for the meeting of all these forces. This Congress will be a congress of the FI and there will be no organisational growing over at this stage. But we want the FI to play the role of a “facilitator” of convergences in the perspective of new international groupings.

10. As a result, in order to strengthen ourselves and play this role all the bodies of the IV must be reinforced: regular meetings, international committees, travel, exchanges between the sections. It is necessary to reinforce the activity that the International has deployed over the last few years: the regular functioning of the leading bodies of the FI – the Bureau, the meetings of the European BPs. The meetings of the International committee (IC), which have been held every year, representing about 30 organizations, must ensure the organizational continuity of our international current.

The Youth Camp, which has been held every year with around 500 comrades, must have a central place for the youth work of our European sections.

The educational institute has taken on a fresh impetus. We now have to ensure that the schools and seminars are held, and ensure the equilibrium of its management and its organization. The FI must also open up its meetings and its institute. The Institute occupies a central place, not only to educate the cadres of the sections, but also to contribute to the exchanges between currents and to various international experiences. The seminar on climate

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change open to a series of international experts is a good example. Like other meetings it indicates the necessity and the possibility that we are a crucible for programmatic elaboration on essential questions that antic-capitalist and revolutionary currents are tackling. The meetings of women, youth and trade-unionists must also be open to others, and transformed in this perspective. To sum up, in the coming period, and on an orientation aimed at building a new international force or a new International, the FI, as an international framework, represents an essential asset for revolutionary Marxists.