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Role and tasks of the Fourth International

- IV Online magazine - 2003 - IV351-2 - Summer 2003 -

Publication date: Sunday 10 August 2003

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THE NEW POLITICAL CYCLE AND STRATEGIC TASKS FOR THIS PERIOD

1 The new political cycle in the activity, programmatic and political orientation and organization of the workers', social and popular movements puts resistance on the agenda, for a whole stage, against the ruling classes' brutal offensive. It poses the strategic task of defeating the 'social neo-liberalism' that still has the support of a majority in the workers' and popular movement, and of (re)building the movement on an anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist basis. This battle turns around two questions, opposition to war and opposition to neo-liberalism, in the perspective of the struggle for socialism.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/34ssp.jpg>]

2 This opportunity exists because, since the start of this new cycle:

– The neo-liberal discourse has gone into crisis. Neo-liberal policies are revealing their socially regressive nature. Above all, the 'Third Way' of 'neo-liberal' social democracy (in its different organizational and regional variants) is revealing its vacuity. In terms of concrete politics, the choice will be more and more between neo-liberal policies in the service of capitalist globalization and an anti-capitalist orientation devoted to meeting the needs of the exploited and oppressed masses.

– The threat of war, which is spawning a new rise of racist and fascist currents, has wakened a new generation of young people ready to mobilize and organize.

– The historical crisis of the dominant currents (social democrats, Stalinists, populist nationalists) and the decline of the traditional workers' movement are opening up a broad space for a political and organizational alternative.

– The movement against capitalist globalization is a strong lever in the renewal of the workers' and social movements, and the development of a new emancipatory perspective. From the start of the new cycle, militant, radical forces (political, social, trade-union, civic and intellectual) outside the control of the traditional workers' movement bureaucracies have been playing an integral role and even taken the initiative.

– A fusion has become possible between a new, young generation, bearing a re-politicization and a new radicalism, and activists who are still active from the experienced generations of the 1968 and 1985-95 cycles.

– The socio-political and economic conjuncture, with the continued neo-liberal offensive facing strengthened resistance, is fostering class polarization and encouraging political discussion within society and social movements.

– A new internationalism has taken the stage in a spectacular way in mobilizations unprecedented since the 1960s, carried by a new spirit of internationalism and a spontaneous anti-capitalism.

– The women's movement has revitalised and relaunched activity on a national, regional and international level specifically against neo-liberal policies and violence against women.

3 The historical mutation of the workers and social movements has only reached an initial phase. We face a long period of rebuilding.

The turn in the world situation has broken a prevailing sense of political powerlessness and fatalism in activist circles. Failing a historical, emblematic event resulting in a spectacular upheaval in the international situation, the reorganization of the anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist social movement will take the form of a series of social and political experiences. Such experiences can reunify the exploited and oppressed layers, today fragmented and divided, around social choices and choices of demands; reconstitute the militant teams and cadre in the social movements; and develop a 'transitional' anti-capitalist programme with global implications on the basis of capitalism's current contradictions and the activity of the exploited and oppressed classes.

We find ourselves in a new, very particular situation. The working class is still in a position of weakness, on the defensive, but the radical left is recovering and regaining the political initiative on a grand scale. Its goal is to affirm a bold, anti-capitalist, social and political left that aims at influencing and orienting struggles and mobilizations.

The road that lies before us will be long and difficult between the present moment, when the reorganization of the social movement is beginning, and the later stage when a turnaround in the class relationship of forces will relaunch offensive battles on an international scale, creating a favourable ideological and political climate for a socialist perspective.

SUPPORT STRUGGLES, BUILD THE MASS MOVEMENT

1 One of our primary tasks is and remains being on the front lines of the struggles, mobilizations, campaigns and organizations of the wage-earning class, youth, women and immigrants on the national and international levels. We take part in building the existing mass movements; we take on tasks and responsibilities within it; we identify with its goals; we are in the forefront of the fight for unity and joint work with other activists and currents. This long-term work aims to strengthen trade union, women's, youth, anti-war, ecological, anti-fascist and anti-racist movements. At the same time it is aimed at developing consciousness of the strategic stakes, including notably the formulation of transitional demands. We support all reforms which are likely to so improve the living conditions and the rights of the workers, all advances which stimulate the self-organisation and the confidence in collective struggles, all demands which make it possible to become conscious through experience of the limits of capitalism to make effective and stabilise gains. We do this work in the conviction that activists will emerge from a flourishing mass movement to build a new revolutionary socialist mass party rooted in the proletariat.

2 We continue to support and build the 'movement against neo-liberal globalization' around imperialist summits, so as to denounce neo-liberal international policies, delegitimize the 'new institutions' of global capitalism and build an anti-capitalist/ anti-imperialist, internationalist pole. The international meetings in Porto Alegre (World Social Forum), the decentralization towards different continents and its fusion with the 'real movement' in different societies have changed and will again change the conditions for moving towards a radical renewal of the workers and social movements.

3 We continue to support and strengthen campaigns now under way or to be (re-)launched and to build the movements behind these, in particular:

– for cancellation of the Third World debt;

- for levying a Tobin tax as a means of questioning capitalism;
- more generally, the battle to delegitimize the most visible para-state institutions: the WTO, IMF/ World Bank;
- against the new slavery, in particular child labour and super-exploitation of women;
- for women's right to control reproduction, education for young women, access to drinkable water and health care;
- against genetically modified organisms (see the 15th World Congress resolution on ecology).

4 We will contribute to the relaunch the feminist movement in our countries and on a world scale, on the basis, among other things, of the success of the World March of Women. It aims at guaranteeing the pluralist and anti-neo-liberal character of the movement, mobilizing against violence against women, and playing an essential role in the renewal of feminist struggles. It constitutes a powerful means to allow interaction of the women's movement and the movement against capitalist globalization.

Our participation will also aim to preserve the autonomy of the movement, with a perspective of self-emancipation, which implies rejecting any subordination of the movement to any party or state institution.

5 Using the struggle against the illegal trade in foreigners or 'against terrorism' as pretexts, governments, of both the imperialist and dominated countries, are preparing new attacks on the freedom of movement and residence. The casualised labour, flexibility, and re-regulation of social conquests that are first imposed on immigrant workers will be eventually imposed on everyone.

The regionalization of migration policies within the European Union and elsewhere is expressed in a repressive 'law-and-order'-oriented harmonization, leading to a series of restrictive measures in different countries: militarized surveillance of borders, the spread of digital fingerprint files, etc.

In Europe, there have been signs of resistance on the part of a layer of immigrant workers since 1996 in France, with the organization of the *sans papiers* (undocumented people). Broad solidarity has grown up through a movement in support of their struggles, in the Spanish state, Portugal, Italy, etc.

In various dominated countries repressive measures have been taken against immigrants (for example, controls on South Asian immigrants in the Gulf countries and brutal attacks against Bangladeshi immigrants in India, for religious reasons).

The task of the workers' movement is to increase the level of resistance to these policies, in the name of equal rights. For example the Berlusconi government's law on immigration in June 2002 was met by strikes by Italian and foreign workers in northern Italian workplaces.

In this context, the FI proposes to take up systematically the democratic dimension of struggles for equal rights for immigrants and for the freedom of movement and residence as an inalienable human right. The two struggles are linked: there can be no equality without open borders.

The FI proposes that its sections carry out a broad, unitary, international campaign for equal rights, open borders, and freedom of movement and residence for all individuals.

6 The world offensive of US imperialism 'against global terrorism' announces a series of wars and military interventions for a long period. This will inevitably lead to a massive growth of military spending of both small and large countries, an increase of centres of tension and a sharpening of conflicts. Democratic freedoms will be increasingly under threat. This will also imply systematic attacks on the social conditions of the proletariat. An ongoing anti-war ('peace') movement must be (re)built which analyses, denounces and fights against all aspects of this new militarism (space conquest, weapons of mass destruction, massive state subsidies to military research, state guarantees for arms sales etc).

At the same time there must be an immediate reaction, at an international level and with the broadest possible unity, as soon a military intervention is launched. We will fight for the dissolution of NATO. In the current conditions our first priority in practice is to strongly oppose US imperialism. But we will denounce from the outset the remilitarisation of European imperialism, which is both an ally and a rival of US imperialism. The European Union is only more peaceful because it lags far behind the US in military strength. We are also opposed to the role of our governments which encourage or support 'local wars' for the sake of 'our' multi-national enterprises which exploit the raw materials of the 'periphery' (sub-Saharan Africa).

7 The FI will pay greater attention in the coming period to its activity in the world of labour. Concretely, this will take the form of more systematic intervention, co-ordination and publicity in social struggles. Globally, on the world level, the trade-union movement is lagging dramatically behind the centralization of Capital and its pre-state auxiliaries. Our goal is to build an active, internationalist and feminist trade-union movement.

a) This means first of all strengthening solidarity, unity and organization between workers in the imperialist countries and those in the periphery. The fragmentation of the world proletariat is increasing at the same time as its numbers are growing. This will include a particular focus on the most exploited workers: the marginalized, precariously employed, the new slavery, including that of immigrant workers within the imperialist world, young workers without rights in the 'New Economy', and the impoverished masses living in subhuman conditions. This implies a particular concern for working women and starting from this for the integration of women's demands into trade-union negotiations, particularly on the questions of equal pay, job security and advantages in the case of part-time or temporary work.

The hierarchical structure of world capitalism is imposing a parallel, structural inequality within the world proletariat, between the working class in the central core and the countries of the periphery, but also within each of the working classes. This leads to an increase and intensification of competition among working classes and their various fractions. The trade union movement increasingly encounters a familiar but growing problem in this respect (US-Canada + Latin America; Japan + Northeast Asia). Within the European Union the world of labour is directly facing a supranational proto-state, a powerful tool for fostering competition among national working classes, which will be exacerbated by the EU's imminent expansion into Eastern Europe.

b) We will also struggle against and within the multinational corporations that make up the central core of globalized capitalism: through 'corporate campaigns' against certain, specifically targeted multinationals; through international solidarity with the workers of a multinational where a struggle is ongoing; through active participation in campaigns carried out by the International Professional Secretariats linked to the ICFTU and through multinationals' works councils.

8 Within the European Union, brutal neo-liberal policies derive from a supranational, proto-state apparatus that directly affects every aspect of everyday life and therefore the lives of wage earners. Up against this, the official European trade-union movement has a disastrous record. Existing structures must be activated; direct initiatives must be taken. This includes: solidarity with specific struggles waged in one country but meaningful for all of Europe; co-ordination of sectoral strikes; development of campaigns and mobilizations around partial demands; and

establishment of a comprehensive social programme. But above all, these trade-union problems immediately raise the necessity of a political strategy for the workers' and social movement, and an alternative to the existing society and state institutions (see the resolutions of the last World Congress).

We will continue our strategic task of contributing to an active trade-union movement in Europe, through activity in the major trade-union federations in the European Trade Union Confederation, in the radical unions and all movements and networks linked to the proletariat (for example the Euromarches movement). Practical links must also be made between union activists (shop stewards, etc.) to build genuine international solidarity within giant corporations and their subsidiaries.

DEFEAT NEOLIBERALISM, TAKE THE ANTICAPITALIST PATH

1 The fight to defeat 'neo-liberalism' is at the heart of our political struggle. The ongoing employer and imperialist offensive constitutes a genuine threat to the lives of millions of people, to the planet, to democracy and to the workers' and social movement itself. The growing strength, organization and politicization of resistance movements have not halted the attacks, which can take very brutal and harsh forms.

2 The more victories the resistance movements win, the more social democracy discredits itself, the more a broad 'anti-neo-liberal' and 'anti-globalization' milieu will develop and become more differentiated. Within the traditional workers' movement, the 'new' social movements and the international anti-globalization movement, different political, strategic and organizational options will emerge.

3 This calls for a political battle for clarification and over orientation, on two different levels where the issues are different.

First, in opposition to anti-neo-liberal, but reformist, currents. These either support or join in the international institutions in the name of generous internationalism against narrow, hateful nationalism, or back their national bourgeois state in the name of its democratic superiority.

Second, within the radical current, up against an enormous diversity of analyses, opinions, methods of struggle, ideologies and hybrid forms of organization, we must take part in debates about the transition from spontaneous anti-capitalism/ anti-imperialism to an anti-capitalist/socialist programme; from political radicalism to a strategy aiming at a break by a majority of the population with capitalism and its state. Such a strategy is based on the self-activity and self-organization of the proletariat and oppressed layers; and from an activist involvement in the movement towards building a revolutionary socialist party and International which understand the basic strategic requirements that can lead to the working class taking power. This is the whole meaning at this stage of our programmatic, ideological and practical intervention. from the beginning.

FOR WORKING CLASS UNITY AND CLASS-STRUGGLE TRADE UNIONISM

1 In the past twenty years the trade-union movement has grown considerably weaker in terms of its membership, capacity for mobilization and militancy, and political and programmatic autonomy. This has been reflected in the worsening relationship of forces. It is also the outcome of labour's own loss of cohesion in the wake of this

large-scale retreat. There is also a political responsibility: social democracy's active support for neo-liberal policies in general and its deepened subordination to national and international state institutions. The rebuilding of the trade-union movement is a crucial task.

2 This is not just a question of constituting and federating left trade unions and trade union currents. A true, mass 'reunionization' is on the agenda, involving three dimensions:

– sustained creativity in developing social demands responding to the restructuring of exploited labour in general, but also demands coming out of major changes in social life and consciousness, which particularly affect women and young people. Such changes are a powerful source of politicization.

– the new configuration of the proletariat in which, to different degrees on different continents, women, immigrants and above all young people will be on the front lines in class fights, though they have little say in the overwhelming majority of unions. The growing mass of women and men workers in the margins of the relatively stable core of the proletariat, are excluded, precariously employed or live in dire poverty. That demands particular attention to unionization in new industrial developments in dependant capitalist countries established within free-trade zones where there is neither social legislation nor the least protection.

– the new forms of action, mobilization and organization that the new social upsurge will create, as has been the case throughout the history of the workers' movement. Their internationalist dimension will be a factor in reconstituting the unions

3 This reunionization will necessarily be very uneven on different continents and in different countries. Its starting points will be very varied.

In major federations with long histories in countries with high unionization rates and a major trade-union tradition, remobilization will certainly go through these organizations. Reunionization will certainly find points of support inside them. Nevertheless, the dialectic between the working-class base, shop stewards in firms and different layers of the union bureaucracy is bound to take a more complex course.

In countries where mass trade unionism was born a century later (COSATU in South Africa, the CUT in Brazil, etc), it will remain more permeable to rank-and-file sentiment. In any event, left trade-union currents will certainly be one of the points of support to relaunch unionism. Furthermore, in a whole series of countries, the failings of the major confederations have opened up room for the emergence of new unions.

In general, these new unions make up a small minority of the working class as a whole. However, they have strong, even hegemonic positions in particular unions, companies,

The future will settle which path mass reunionization will take. This 'reunionization' is all the more complex inasmuch as the world of labour has undergone a tremendous change in its structures, routines, consciousness, etc. This is true particularly of young workers who have just entered the labour market recently in precarious conditions, do not identify with the 'historical workers' movement' and are not ready to join it. This is also the case for women in the public sector, who are the first to suffer the effects of budget cuts in social programmes and of privatization of public services.

4 To the extent that revolutionary Marxists play a practical, visible role, they bear a great responsibility in their organizations for the achievement of the social movement's goals. Unity remains a compelling issue, all the more so

because the upturn in social movements is still defensive and fragile, the traditional workers' movement (trade union and political) continues to grow weaker, and radical, alternative forces are still scattered and very much in a minority.

In the current stage, this unity takes two different forms, corresponding to different objectives: regions or cities.

– the fight for a classical united front, that is, unity of the greatest possible organized forces of the proletariat to take practical action to win definite goals. Though well aware of the negligence of organizations under social-democratic leadership in terms of defending elementary demands, we still do not give up on the possibility of involving them in mass action. But our political and tactical position has to take full account from now of the popular masses', and especially young people's, deep disaffection.

– unity of action and convergence within and among social movements, trade-union currents, long-term campaigns, intellectual milieus and so on who are struggling against neo-liberalism. This kind of unity often combines 'united front'- type activity with intense political activity of a proto-party type. This makes it fertile ground for social recomposition and political dynamics. Our approach is to join in organizing while launching a political discussion. In doing so we must keep in mind the specific characteristics of each milieu, its sensibilities, methods of work, 'common sense', etc.

THE NEW YOUTH RADICALISATION

A new militant generation has arisen in the fight against the globalization of neo-liberal capitalism. A new radicality has been born which will follow its own paths. This is a generation which is from the outset international, internationalist in the broadest sense of the term, more radical and more involved in organizing. It has its own symbols and its own methods of action (civil disobedience) and organisation, breaking with the dominant political culture in the movements.

Youth, mainly high school and university students, is the biggest component of this movement. They share the social conditions (notably job casualisation) of the young workers who are entering life at work. Winning this new generation to socialism, to the revolution, is a fundamental task.

For this we must address ourselves specifically to this young generation, with the goal of strengthening the process of radicalisation in an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist sense. This autonomous intervention of young comrades, closely linked to the political project of the section, is indispensable for the renewal of our revolutionary forces, the only guarantee of our ability to respond to the evolution of the workers' and social movement and to the aspirations of the exploited and oppressed.

Young activists of the Fourth International participating in mass movements must ensure that these movements adopt an inclusive attitude toward different areas of struggle (anti-racism, feminism, ecology, trade union, lesbian/gay liberation...). The usefulness of the Fourth International is proved in particular through our capacity to link struggles in all these areas internationally.

The Youth Camp must continue to be a central element of our work. It is a tool to develop internationalist, feminist and ecologist connections and consciousness, preparing new generations of revolutionaries.

BUILDING BROAD ANTI-CAPITALIST PROLETARIAN PARTIES

1 Our goal is to form proletarian parties that:

- are anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist;
- are broad, pluralistic and representative;
- are deeply attached to the social question and steadfastly put forth the immediate demands and social aspirations of the world of labour;
- express workers' militancy, women's desire for emancipation, the youth revolt and international solidarity, and take up the fight against all forms of injustice;
- base their strategy on the extra-parliamentary struggle and the self-activity and self-organization of the proletariat and the oppressed; and
- take a clear stand for expropriation of capital and (democratic, self-managed) socialism.

In the case of Latin America, our objective is to build broad, pluralistic anti-capitalist parties and/or regroupments with a real presence in the proletariat and the social movements, that express a resistance to neo-liberalism in the framework of the struggle against capitalist globalisation. As a revolutionary Marxist current, we are in favour of building a "hard core" of the left. This perspective cannot be successful if it takes the place of strategic thinking, radical action, and bold initiatives, through a sectarian attitude of "self-affirmation" striving to maintain "our own identity".

2 The struggle for such parties will go through a series of stages, tactics and organizational forms, specific to each country. Such an anti-capitalist recomposition must pursue a key objective from the outset: creating an effective, visible polarization between it and all the forces loyal to social neo-liberalism (social democracy, post- Stalinism, ecologists, populists) in order to accelerate their crisis and give it a positive outcome.

This requires:

- the presence of significant political forces, in which revolutionary marxist currents collaborate with important or emblematic currents or representatives who are breaking with reformist parties without necessarily arriving at revolutionary marxist positions;
- a respectful but close relationship with the social movement, where the recomposed organisation puts forward the movement's demands and actions;
- a formation recognized as representing something real in society, breaking the monopoly of parties loyal to social-neo-liberalism, thanks to the presence of elected representatives in assemblies on the local, regional national and (possibly) international (European) level elected by universal suffrage;

– a pluralist functioning that goes beyond simple internal democracy in a way that fosters both convergence and discussion, allowing for the functioning of a revolutionary Marxist current as an accepted part of a broader whole.

3 The experience of the last ten years shows that the non-sectarian, revolutionary left can play a key role in holding the line and keeping to a simultaneously radical and unitary orientation of this kind, combining extra-parliamentary action and electoral representation. In order to attain this goal, it has to follow a complex course made up of various stages and detours that enable it to accumulate forces, clarify the stakes step by step, re-activate militant milieus and patiently build links with the social movement.

Three major lessons of the past decade must be incorporated into our tactics from the beginning of this new political cycle:

– no broad left current in the established parties has organized itself and put itself forward as a vehicle for anti-capitalist recomposition:

– left-wing tendencies in social democracy are timid, not very reliable, and not very coherent;

– the large 'surviving' Communist parties are approaching their end, their stands against neo-liberalism have not led to an anti-capitalist political project and a democratic, pluralist mode of functioning (with the exception of Rifondazione), and no left-wing, non-Stalinist, nationally structured tendency has emerged;

– the major Green parties have not succeeded in playing the part of a real political and social alternative. Some of them (such as the German Greens) have definitively gone over to the side of the bourgeois state, and internal oppositions in these parties are not leading to the organization of a true, left-wing, social-ecologist opposition.

4 This does not mean that there is no interest or potential for anti-capitalist recomposition in these parties and the social movement. The recomposition takes diverse forms. Our conclusion should not be to turn away from these parties and their activists. On the contrary, a broader recomposition in their direction through a systematic policy of common work and convergence is indispensable to creating a very broad pole of attraction to defeat social-neo-liberalism. But the crucial conclusion that flows from our experience is that, more than ever before, recomposition will depend on the growth of a strong, independent pole of attraction and an external relationship of forces that can attract and organize such sympathies.

Only the revolutionary left is currently in a position to take the initiative for anti-capitalist recomposition and keep it on course with a radical, pluralist, socially rooted project with a mass character. But this implies a deep, well-thought-out rejection of sectarianism in practice. It also means that rapprochements inside the revolutionary left can only be envisaged in the framework and through the common experience of this anti-capitalist recomposition.

5 Nevertheless, the issue of the regroupment of the revolutionary forces is put firmly on the agenda by these processes, since the revolutionary left cannot be a catalyst for broad regroupments unless it addresses its own divisions.

6 As the FI contributes to a vast reorganization of the workers, social and popular movements on a world scale, with the perspective of forming a new internationalist, pluralist, revolutionary, activist force with a mass impact, we must simultaneously strengthen our organization. This is not in order to compete with and defeat other international revolutionary currents, but in order to contribute as much as possible to building a new force while clarifying the essential theoretical lessons to be drawn from the experience of 20th century revolutions.

REFOUNDING THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

1 The new historical period of capitalism and revolutionary socialist struggle will call for a genuine programmatic refoundation, which will take the full measure of the structural, social and cultural upheavals both within capitalism and among the exploited classes and oppressed layers. This refounded programme will include a critical balance sheet of the first 150 years of the workers' movement and of the experience of the first victorious socialist revolutions and their degeneration. It will take account of the current state of consciousness among the popular masses and link up with their demands and modes of action and organization. We will contribute as much as possible to this programme, while keeping in mind that a transitional programme like this for the 21st century will not be the prerogative of one group or specific current. It will not be the result of a hurried, academic exercise. As was the case with the successive transitional programmes since Marx's day, a vast, free discussion, collective elaboration, 'globalized' common work, critical and self-critical debate, and openness to ongoing and future social experiences will all be necessary. This is a real challenge, inasmuch as political struggles among currents and organizations are not about to come to a halt, and every activist organization needs to respond immediately to the demands of its militant work.

2 In the programmatic and strategic discussion, taking in all the problems raised by the struggle for socialism, we will foster debate on:

i) The need to formulate a universal programme of social needs and human rights, starting from the world ecological crisis, the generalized social regression, the dire poverty of the majority of human beings, and the social inequalities within the world of labour.

ii) The necessity of an eco-socialist programme, fully integrated into the anti-capitalist struggle, as the only radical alternative to the ecological catastrophes resulting from the destructive logic of the capitalist system (against the greenhouse effect and the 'market in pollution rights', for an end to nuclear power and a moratorium on GMOs).

iii) The existence of private ownership of wealth and the means of production and exchange, which forms the base of a dominant, owning class, as an obstacle to the achievement of this social programme. This class's expropriation for the benefit of humanity is thus an unavoidable necessity.

iv) In the face of a superficial, moralistic analysis based on a vision of 'the poor against the rich' and 'the excluded' we put at the heart of our analysis the exploitation of women and men as blue and white-collar workers, salaried managers, unemployed, marginalized and excluded, that is to say the wage-earning class which is obliged to sell its labour power to an employer.

v) The decisive role for anti-capitalist and socialist strategy of the globalized waged class, which we need to deploy a renewed, broad concrete analysis of in order to highlight its unity against capitalist exploitation and oppression. The analysis must include the multiplicity of the working class's concrete situations, its methods of struggle, its immediate demands and forms of organization.

vi) The decisive role of the right to self-organization of women and lesbians and gay men.

vii) The necessity of democracy, transparency and popular control as principles and practices, understood as active intervention by society - and particularly by its exploited and oppressed parts, as a critical element of the Stalinist experience, and as a radical questioning of bourgeois democracy; and

viii) A conception of the Party that takes account of historical experience and of the new social and cultural conditions in societies and among the exploited classes.

ix) The necessity of the struggle for power, who will engage in that struggle and what are its most fundamental features.

3 In Latin America in particular, this 'transitional programme' involves questions such as:

- the nature of economic recolonisation and the question of national sovereignty (concrete anti-imperialism);
- reformulating regional integration processes as alternatives to the FTAA (proposals for a real development);
- the non-payment of the debt;
- peasant movements' fight for land and radical agrarian reform, indigenous communities' struggle for their rights or for autonomy, and finally, the role of peasants' and indigenous people's movements in creating new anti-capitalist political forces in Mexico, Bolivia, in Ecuador and elsewhere;
- the struggle against privatisations;
- the question of political democracy, getting back rights that had been taken away, and of the nature, scope and limits of a participatory democracy outlook on the local or municipal level (the Latin- American left governs capitals and huge cities as well as small villages in Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia);
- the relation between urban and rural struggles;
- the relation between social resistance and political organisation;
- the new forms taken on by the 'subjects' that are emerging from the fragmentation of the working class (piqueteros, neighbourhood assemblies, land occupations and housing co-operatives);
- self-defence experiences, neighbourhoods struggling for public services, youth spaces, women organising self-subsistence, different barter economics experiences);
- the experience of social and political alliance policies.

TOWARDS A NEW MASS REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONAL

1 The construction of the Internationals that have existed in history has been linked each time to new tasks linked to large-scale social and political developments. This new political cycle of reorganization poses from the beginning the problem of a new mass revolutionary anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist International. This 'new internationalism' has been appearing in force since Seattle. A series of events had prepared this since the turning point of 1989-91: the

emergence of neo-Zapatismo, the Bastille Appeal that launched the long campaign for cancellation of Third World debt, the Euromarches, the 'chain' of counter-summits opposed to the institutions of capitalist globalization (IMF and World Bank), the long series of meetings in which 'civil society' (often meaning NGOs) confronted the official summits (Rio, Beijing, the Copenhagen Social Summit and so on. After the two meetings of the WSF in Porto Alegre and the perspective of a third meeting in Brazil, coming after the regional Social Forums, a process of organizational and programmatic consolidation is underway. At the same time a process of clarification and differentiation has appeared under the impact of major world political events.

2 Unlike the 'internationalist' period in the 1960s and 1970s, this is not primarily a solidarity movement or political support to a social or democratic revolutionary process. Its motive force comes from a resistance movement, necessarily international by its very nature, against a new stage of internationalization of capitalism, its policies and its institutions. At this stage it appears as a 'new', very legitimate social movement, borne by social and political forces outside the control of the traditional bureaucracies in the workers' and popular movements. It also sets itself apart from international revolutionary organizations and generally refuses to include political parties. At the same time this movement is deeply political. It has imposed a spectacular polarization against the ruling classes; relaunched an anti-capitalist perspective and a hope of emancipation; and created a public space that is both centralized and decentralized, in which analytical thinking is combined with political confrontation and activist commitment, a terrain where political currents exist de facto.

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 and informal. Due to the absence of a major social upsurge it is difficult for them to escape historical inertia and their totally ineffective 'political culture' in order to tackle the new stage of class struggle. (The left wing of social democracy is weak; the various currents that have emerged from CPs are in a programmatic impasse and still tend towards Stalinist practices; and most revolutionary organizations are congenitally sectarian.) What initial progress has been made is mainly at the level of particular regions or continents: the Sao Paulo Forum in Latin America, whose initial dynamic has died down; the continued importance of the Brazilian PT; the modest Conferences of the Anti-Capitalist Left in Europe; and some gatherings in Asia. Faced with the European Union, the perspective of an 'anti-capitalist' European party is on the agenda.

Only direct clashes between the ruling class and the proletariat, only the masses' struggle to defend their living and working conditions, 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.

The current movement against globalization has created hope, a reference point and a major focal point, but as it is now it will not constitute the initiating force of a new International. The political and strategic discussions reflecting existing political differentiations will become more and more present in this movement and make the new phase a lot more complex.

4 Third, there has been a major development within and among some of the currents that originated or identify with 'Trotskyism'. All these organizations, including the FI, have had to make a big effort to respond adequately to the new world situation, at the level of analysis, orientation and activity. The capacity to respond to this, in time and in good conditions, has had an impact on the continuity of all these currents. Today there is a very great diversity of groups originating or identifying with 'Trotskyism'. Some have maintained relatively coherent international organizations,

while others have broken up into national or federated groups. This is even truer of ex-'Maoist' organizations. Unification of 'Trotskyists' or ex-Maoists, in the name of a programme or politics turned towards a past epoch of the revolutionary workers' movement and based on defending an organization's record, cannot be useful in any way to a regroupment or even a fusion. 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 exist alongside each other: the 'real movement' against globalization 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.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/43lcr.jpg>]

1 The FI was born resisting the greatest defeats of the proletariat and workers' movement: fascism, Stalinism and world war. Our sections were tiny minorities in the international workers' movement and repressed by all the counter-revolutionary forces (social democrats, Stalinists and fascist or democratic bourgeois states). They did not succeed in transforming themselves into real (revolutionary) parties. Despite fighting in the front lines of many revolutionary and daily struggles, they were reduced to commenting on events and defending the gains of revolutionary Marxism from bureaucratic falsification. In the 1970s, revolutionary upsurges around the world made it possible to think that the time had come to advance towards a mass international. The FI was fighting at the time with other international Trotskyist groupings (Lambertists, Morenistas, the Militant current, the British SWP/"state capitalist" current) over which was the legitimate "Trotskyist" current (and the same fight took place inside the FI between the US SWP and the international majority). Even if the FI never succumbed to the kind of sectarian delirium that other groupings did, it nonetheless considered itself the legitimate political vanguard, the kernel around which the recomposition of a revolutionary international would take place.

2 The change of period that became evident in the 1980s, the FI's crisis and the fall of the Wall led to a swing of the pendulum in the other direction, which even risked threatening the FI's existence. Our militant response to the enormous reactionary offensive of the 1980s and 1990s didn't lead us into the kind of sectarian hardening that takes refuge in incantations of socialist propaganda, parasites on mass movements and self-centred self-proclamation. Organizations that fell into this did not avoid serious internal crises. The FI too has paid the organizational price for the general retreat of the international workers' movement, but it managed to get through the reactionary period while maintaining its organizational unity and political unity, by:

- developing a critical, up-to-date Marxism;
- a no-holds-barred discussion on the 'balance sheet of the century';
- internal practices encouraging continuity in discussion and a confrontation among different analyses in response to the major formative events of the new world situation;
- keeping itself rooted and on the front lines of the workers' and social movement (nationally and internationally);

- systematic unitary work in the movements; and
- a unitary and radical approach, in particular in the struggle for pluralist, anti-capitalist recomposition.

3 Today the situation of the FI, as an organisation, can be defined as:

- an international organisation of revolutionaries based on the method of the Transitional Programme and the strategy and tactics flowing from it;
- an unrivalled body of programmatic references, collective and individual political experiences with a capacity for elaboration and reflection particularly on issues such women's oppression, gay and lesbian oppression, issues which have been little developed by other revolutionary currents, with sections in several countries based on the needs of the working class of the region;
- an organisation which respects the autonomy of the mass movements and their democracy and which genuinely allows tendencies to function within it;
- and thus a living tool, but a very unstable one given the weakness of its parts and the difficulty of rebuilding a coordination and leadership structure corresponding to its activist reality. The fact that we have preserved this structure and that it is undoubtedly the only international grouping of its kind is a precious asset in the new political period as new activist generations emerge.

4 Our main task as the FI is to contribute to a vast reorganization of the workers', social and popular movement on a world scale, with the perspective of forming a new internationalist, pluralist, revolutionary, activist force with a mass impact. This perspective will inevitably mean going through a long process of political experiences and clarifications.

This does not imply in any way a weakening or dissolution of our organization. On the contrary, we want to strengthen it, not in order to defeat other international revolutionary currents, but in order to contribute as much as possible to this goal: building a new force while clarifying the fundamental theoretical lessons to draw from the experience of the revolutions of the 20th century.

5 Throughout this whole transitional period, we will contribute a response on 3 levels:

- First, in the movement against globalization as well as in the trade-union movement and other social movements, we are fighting for a 'united front' in struggles and mobilizations and to create and solidify movements, while at the same time we participate in programmatic and political debates. We favour the creation of internationalist, anti-capitalist mass movements around their respective objectives.
- Second, on the party level, depending on the concrete situation in each region or continent, we will push actively for joint work by anti-capitalist political forces, which could take various forms.
- Third, on the revolutionary left we will engage in a more systematic and more general dialogue through bilateral meetings and by taking part in internal and public meetings of other currents with whom we share an understanding of the current world situation and of our major orientations and tasks.

6 We observe two things. First, there is a significant gap between our underlying influence within movements and the

political and organizational strengthening of our organizations. The diffuse or personal ideological influence we have is reflected very little or not at all in a strengthening of the party. The quality of our analyses, our activists' commitment and promotion of a socialist outlook are clearly not enough. Second, the process of repoliticization now under way does not lead people spontaneously to join parties (revolutionary or not). This obstacle is particularly major among young people.

The conclusion is that a revolutionary Marxist organization must be capable of demonstrating that it has a specific political function to fulfil in day-to-day activity, mass work and the movements. This requires in particular more regular, sustained propaganda for our ideas, more consistent agitation, a commitment to political and strategic debate, and a reinforced organizational system to back all this up. In short, this requires a political autonomy that distinguishes us and identifies us clearly in society, in the movements and by contrast to other ideological or political currents in the social movements.

7 This autonomy is not meant to inaugurate a sectarian round of denunciations, polemics or 'entryist' operations aimed at short-term gains. It starts out from the traditional understanding, specific to our revolutionary Marxist current, of the relationship between mass movement and Party: (i) respect for the movements' autonomy and internal democracy, which includes an understanding of their specific sensibilities and mechanisms of functioning, and (ii) a rejection of the conception of an enlightened, arrogant vanguard that parasites on or subjugates the movement.

Between simply going along with the movement or becoming a self-proclaiming, ideologically sectarian parasite on it there is another path which differentiates us from sectarian radical currents that latch onto young people seeking strong revolutionary answers and a militant involvement. Our response cannot be the same as theirs.

8 But our main problem is not in general sectarianism, but a kind of political and organizational behaviour that undervalues or dilutes revolutionary Marxist organization. We need to rectify this on three, combined levels:

- an orientation, profile and political behaviour independent from the movements;
- a more visible and coherent intervention;
- this will require better internal coordination.

9 We need a strengthened international leadership structure that aims to fulfil the tasks described below.

The reform of the Statutes, based on our experience of recent years, provides a coherent basis, which will encourage both ongoing, open and critical debate in the central leadership body, the International Committee, and reinforce the role of the Executive Bureau, as an active centre for the co-ordination of work.

The IC (former IEC) must continue to play its role as the centre of gravity in an ongoing debate with counterposed positions. This debate is all the freer inasmuch as the statutes codify an autonomy of national sections that no longer imposes any obligation to carry out the positions adopted by the IC majority. It is even more open given the presence, at the IC, of outside organizations that take part in our discussions without any organizational commitment towards us.

The EB will have the key task (alongside leadership in terms of day-to-day administration, finances, the press, inside and outside contacts) of building stronger links with and among national organizations, and the cadre of organizations. This will take form in terms of elaboration, initiatives, coordination and public positions on issues. The

Role and tasks of the Fourth International

development of the press of the International (magazines, electronic bulletins, website) is a priority.

For the EB, this means first of all taking advantage of the improved health of several national sections in order to strengthen the Bureau with comrades integrated in leaderships of national organizations, (especially European, due to the geographical proximity). Then, the EB will have to build or strengthen the role of working structures, some at the European level, others more clearly international (workplace, anti-globalization, women, youth, grassroots movements). Following the development of the regional/continental dimension of globalized capitalism, we must contemplate working structures that correspond to concrete conditions (Europe, Latin America, Asia). Given the development of the EU as a state-type structure, a specifically European task is to establish a true European leadership able to respond to the multiple necessities imposed by the EU framework, by increasing the weight and rhythm of existing bodies (the European PBs and Secretariat).

All these structures should play simultaneously a coordinating role, an initiating role, and the role of collective political elaboration on the many global issues of the day. They must also allow for the development and construction of national organizations and strengthening of links among section leaderships.

The Women's Commission will in particular ensure:

- feminist coverage and the publication of articles by women in our international press;
- feminist education at the international school;
- support to sections trying to introduce positive action policies, and
- work to integrate a feminist perspective in our anti-globalization and antiracism/ immigration work through close collaboration with the corresponding structures.

VOTE: 93 - 1 - 2 - 0 CARRIED