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World Politics

# The international situation and the tasks of revolutionaries

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**We reproduce here the report on the international situation which was presented by François Sabado at the conference of Enlace - one of the currents within the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) of Brazil, which includes, among others, members of the Fourth International - held in Sao Paulo on December 15 and 16 2007.**

[[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/PSOL\\_rally.jpg](https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/PSOL_rally.jpg)]

Some elements of the international situation...

The international situation confirms an extension and a deepening of capitalist globalization. It is marked by the continuation of the offensive of the ruling classes against the living conditions of hundreds of millions of human beings, of workers, by the systematization of the liberal counter-reforms, the increasingly larger place occupied by the "financialisation" of the world economy, by an ecological crisis which calls into question vital equilibriums of the planet.

1a) This globalization is designing a new configuration of the world market, where competition is sharpening between US imperialism, still dominant but weakened, the European powers, and the emergence of new powers like China and India, whose shares of the world's GDP are increasing regularly. If the United States and Europe are experiencing low growth rates, from 2 to 3 per cent, China and India are experiencing growth rates from 8 to 10 per cent, and other raw material producer countries (of oil in particular) such as Russia or Venezuela, between 6 and 8 per cent. These socio-economic changes prefigure new relationships of forces and new international tensions.

1b) This has consequences in the field of international politics, where the interests of a weakened North-American bourgeoisie and those of European powers which want to maintain their rank in this new world competition, make them converge in new systems of alliances, in particular with regard to China and Russia. That does not exclude, far from it, the aggressive search for new market shares for each bourgeoisie, but the bonds between the United States and the European Union are tending to be reinforced. The new relations between Sarkozy's France and Bush's United States are a good example of this inflection or change. Chirac was against the war in Iraq. Sarkozy is for. He is even in the front line in the confrontation with Iran. But more generally the envisaged return of France to NATO and the integration of the European military force within the Alliance shows clearly the type of reorganization that is underway.

1c) This accentuation of international competition, combined with an increasingly strong tendency to the constitution of a world market of the labour force, is leading governments and the employing class to create the political and socio-economic conditions for an increase in the rates of profit, the lengthening of working hours and the time of exploitation, the containment and even the further compression of the share of wages in the production of wealth.

1d) These policies have, in particular, a series of consequences in capitalist Europe, where the principal European bourgeoisies, to ensure their place in world competition, are frontally attacking the "European social model", attacking in fact, the systems of social security, the social rights of workers, public services. This policy is concentrated in the new "European treaty" which takes up again the broad outline of the project of a European Constitution that was rejected in 2005 by the people of France and the Netherlands. It is reinforced by the integration into Europe of the Eastern European countries. An integration which is leading to the dismantling of a series of social gains and which consequently, exert a downward pressure on all the living and working conditions of the popular classes of these countries.

1e) The United States is on the eve of new elections (at the end of 2008), which can lead to inflections or modifications of American policy. Nevertheless over the recent long period, US imperialism has confirmed its policy of strategic politico-military redeployment. It is a question for it, in a situation where the American economy is increasingly dependent on world credit, on shares, debentures and Treasury bonds held by powers like China or Japan, of compensating for a certain weakening by an aggressive military policy, of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, of confrontation with Iran, and to a lesser degree with Russia and China. This policy also comprises a policy of "recolonisation" of certain countries, with the aim of maintaining and even extending control over natural resources or strategic raw materials like oil

### **And some contradictions...**

The capitalist system largely dominates all the economic and social activity of the planet. The cost of this domination is constantly increasing, on both the social and ecological levels. It is permanently nourishes the internal and external contradictions of the system which is leading to class struggles social struggles in the broad sense, which express the refusal by the popular classes of the neo-liberal and capitalist order. There is a series of examples of these contradictions of the system:

2a) The crisis of the financial and banking system of the United States, of which the crisis of the "subprimes" (loans with variable interest rates which are ruining millions of Americans and making bankrupt a series of banks and financial organizations engaged in lending) confirms the fragility of the current economic expansion. That proves the "ultra-sensitivity" of North-American capitalism to the financialisation of the world economy. This crisis of the international financial system reinforces the structural weaknesses of present-day capitalist development, in particular the weakness of productive investments, by "making more expensive" and hardening the rates and conditions of loans. This crisis of investment has its repercussions on the rates of productivity, and in the final analysis on the growth rates in two of the bastions of the world economy: the United States and Europe. The present financial crisis is now having direct effects on the slowdown in economic activity in the USA and on the risk of transformation of this crisis into an economic recession. All these factors weigh on the room for manoeuvre that the ruling classes and the governments in these countries have to manage economic and social relations and can lead to systemic crises.

2b) Over the last few years the ecological crisis has taken on new dimensions. The consequences of global warming are beginning and are likely to cause, in the long term, new catastrophes - ecological, social, and human. Despite all the political and media efforts of governments to make compatible the functioning of the capitalist system, the ever more frenetic search for profit and ecology, a new consciousness is emerging that "lives are worth more than capitalist profits" and that the cost of the functioning of the system is increasingly calling into question the vital equilibriums of the planet. Revolutionaries must take up this question, decisive for the years to come, in order to denounce the destructive effects of capitalism on ecological problems, and to stress the importance of an economy durably controlled and planned according to social needs and not capitalist profit.

2c) These contradictions are expressed in an acute way in the failure which US imperialism has encountered in Iraq. The term "New Vietnam" is usually adopted by the American media to speak about the situation of the American army in the region. It is a true political stagnation and soldier whom knows The Bush administration is really bogged down there, from both a political and military point of view. All the propaganda about the objectives of stabilization or democratization of the region is in tatters. It is a traditional operation of aggression and re-colonisation of a country and a region. The rejection of the US occupation combined with the resistance of the Palestinian people against the Israeli policy of aggression and colonization constitutes one of the major factors of destabilization of the international imperialist system.

2d) the socio-economic consequences of capitalist globalization and its armed dimension cause new tensions and

social, political and military confrontations. Under the pressure of the demands of the financial markets, and the pressure of imperialism, in particular American imperialism, and in a situation of absence, retreat or even structural crisis of the traditional workers' movement and of bourgeois nationalism, social reactions can take the form of organizations, currents, clans or ethnic or religious groups or whose orientation is globally reactionary. This is what is developing around the situations in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. It is also the case with the tendencies towards the breaking up of a series of states in Africa.

2e) The fact that the USA is bogged down in the Middle East has international consequences, and in particular in Latin America. It is not a question of underestimating the pressure which "the empire" always exerts on a continent that it continues to regard as its back-yard. But it is necessary to underline the weakening of its capacities of intervention on the continent. On the military level, it is difficult for it to intervene in Iraq, Afghanistan and to prepare interventions in Latin America. The "Colombia Plan" is there. So are the military bases in Paraguay. Aid to the "golpist" (putschist) or "liberal-authoritarian" Right is always present.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA: in Spanish, ALCA) is a failure but bilateral treaties have been concluded between the United States and a series of countries of South America. In short, the United States does not ignore South America, but it is undeniable that there is a new relationship of forces between American imperialism and a series of countries of the Latin-American continent and not the least important ones, in particular two groups of countries. The first group consists of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Taking advantage of a phase economic development and of the ability of the governments in power - Lula in Brazil, Kirchner in Argentina, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay - to channel, to control, to integrate their mass movements or, more exactly, whole sections of the leaderships of these mass movements, in particular the leaderships of the Workers' Party (PT) and the United Workers' Confederation (CUT) in Brazil and of political and trade-union Peronism in Argentina (even if Lula is situated to the right of Kirchner), the ruling classes of these countries have conquered new margins of manoeuvre to negotiate and impose a series of economic objectives on American imperialism.

They are pursuing, on their own account and in their manner, neo-liberal policies, accompanying them with a dimension "social aid", and with their insertion in the world market, in particular by their agro-exporting policies and their specific relations with the international financial system. The second group of countries, which are today imposing a new experience of partial rupture with American imperialism, is led by Venezuela, followed by Bolivia and Ecuador, all of them supported by Cuba. These countries, each one with its specificity, are trying today to loosen the vice-like grip of the debt, to take back ownership and control over their natural resources, to ensure social programmes for food, health and education, to restore their national sovereignty against American and European (particularly Spanish) pressures.

### 3. Offensive and counter-offensive in Venezuela and in Bolivia

The victory of the "no" in the referendum of December 2, 2007 represents a turn in the political situation in Venezuela. Few people expected the victory of the "no". It is a defeat for Chávez, even though the Bolivarian process continues. And it is a defeat for the progressive forces in Venezuela and in Latin America. Let us make no mistake about it, it is not - as certain sectarian currents explain it - "a defeat for Chávez... but a victory for the popular forces"! The victory of the "no" directly serves the forces of the Right, "golpist" or moderate. It enables them to recover, to reorganize and prepare the coming battles under better conditions. The victory of the "no" weakens Chávez in his relationship with American imperialism and even with the governments in power in Argentina and Brazil. The pressure to "moderate" Chávez, to lead him to a policy of dangerous compromises will be stronger... That is why, without any reservations or hesitations, we came out for the "yes" in the referendum, over and above the appreciation we might have had of such and such an article of the Constitution.

But we have to go over the reasons which led to the victory of the "no". Globally, we share the explanations which the

comrades of "Marea clasista y socialista give" [1] How could Chávez lose more than 3 million voters – which is not nothing - compared to the last electoral consultation? There was certainly the outburst of the media against the government, the campaigns of lies, the calumnies, in short all the weapons of the Venezuelan Right, but the Chavez leadership bears its own responsibility. This failure comes from deeper causes than the simple episode of the Constitution. It is necessary today to have a great debate on the reasons for the "no", a debate which will help to define a policy for the coming weeks and months. We had pointed out that the modalities and certain articles of the Constitution would reinforce the "Bonapartist aspect" of the Chávez regime and that a new constitution would not lead to socialism without tackling the problems of redistribution of wealth and property... But in fact more substantial phenomena explain a certain distance of part of the Bolivarian people from their president. First of all, problems related to the vital needs of the population: food, purchasing power, jobs, working conditions... The problems of supply of basic foodstuffs weighed considerably in the balance.

More generally, if the problems of food, health and education have seen considerable progress, their financing being ensured by the oil revenues - which is all to the credit of the Bolivarian regime -, the economic and social structures of the country did not experience fundamental change. The inequalities remain. Financial revenues have increased by more than 40 per cent. The structures of property have not been modified. Improving the standard of living of the great majority of the population – workers the informal sector, peasants, civil servants - is the first task in order to deepen the process. And if that involves incursions by the state into economic life, into companies, into the circuits of supply and trade, into control of the banking system in the service of the workers, into property and land redistribution, there should be no hesitation, even if it implies a confrontation with the bourgeoisie and sectors of the state apparatus, even pro-governmental sectors.

The second fundamental reason for the distance taken by part of the people, is the reality – noted by a number of observers - of a process of bureaucratization of a governmental sector which uses power for its own ends instead of serving the government. So, here and there, phenomena of corruption were denounced. In the same way, we saw developing a policy of confrontation with social movements and trade unions, in particular on the part of the Ministry of Labour. All that alienated from the government a series of sectors, which have not however broken with the Bolivarian revolution. Today, it is necessary renew contact with these sectors, to remobilise them in order to deepen the process. So the second task is to deepen the mobilization and the democratization of the Bolivarian process.

More power to the people, more power to the organisms of the revolution, the popular assemblies in the neighbourhoods, the rank and-file trade-union representatives elected in the workplaces, the communes. It is necessary to broaden the process of co-management of enterprises, to ensure a unitary and democratic congress of the trade-union movement, of the UNT. The social and democratic content of the revolution is all the more important in that, although the process will always be confronted with a "putschist sector", it will also be attacked by more political manoeuvres. It will be necessary for it to not only answer "the whip of the counter-revolution which makes the revolution advance" – a famous sentence of Trotsky's that Chávez regularly quotes - but also with "advances" and "dishonest proposals" which will aim at devitalizing the revolutionary process, at marginalizing in order to finally destroy it... The situation is thus likely to become complicated.

Chávez is at a crossroads: either he yields to the pressures to moderate the process... and he will lose the support of important sectors of his social and political base, or he advances, joins again with the most combative sectors, satisfies the fundamental popular demands and the Bolivarian revolutionary process will deepen. And that will have repercussions in the whole of Latin America.

The crisis is also accelerating in Bolivia, where the vote adopting the new constitution defended by Evo Morales and the large majority of the population, workers, peasants, Indians, is not recognized by the Right and by the "rich white classes" concentrated in Santa Cruz and the provinces of the West, where four regions have just proclaimed their autonomy. The revolutionaries are with the MAS of Evo Morales for the application of this constitution and the satisfaction of the vital needs of the poorest populations in Bolivia.

But the key country is Venezuela. If there was a defeat of the Bolivarian process, that would have immediate repercussions in Bolivia and Ecuador, not to mention Cuba. A global deterioration of the relationship of forces would favour in Cuba the partisans of a "Chinese way" – a combination of the maintenance in power of the Cuban Communist Party and the development of capitalism. But we are still far from that, the decisive stage is the relaunching of the Bolivarian process combined with the deepening of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian experiences.

### 4. And Europe...

The European situation is at the centre of the acceleration of neo-liberal policies. One of the key objectives of the ruling classes on an international scale and in Europe - at the moment when the pressures of the world market are pushing more and more towards the unification of the labour market, towards dragging wages downwards, towards the gradual dismantling of systems of social security, towards liquidating public services - is to finish with the "European social model". The steamroller of neo-liberal policies advances regularly. But it also regularly provokes social resistance. The working class, and beyond that the majority of the population in Europe, is east deeply attached to a series of social rights. In France the ideologues of the Sarkozy government have openly declared it: it is necessary to destroy the programme of the National Council of the Resistance (CNR) of 1945 and all the social conquests which have been obtained since. Sarkozy declares that "he wants to reform more than Margaret Thatcher"... he has scored a series of points, in particular by applying his counter-reform of pensions and of the special pension systems (for railway workers, employees in the electricity and gas industries...) but he has not yet beaten the workers' movement did not beat yet. The feeling of workers, in particular after the rail strikes, is not one of defeat. There has not been a major defeat of the workers' movement in Europe like the one suffered by British miners in the 1980s, important struggles and major confrontations are still ahead of us... but three remarks are necessary

– The struggles are defensive. They do not manage to block, far less to reverse the course of the counter-reforms. They appear in the form of explosions or partial struggles. They can destabilize the regimes in place... but that does not stop the process of counter-reform.

– These struggles are unequal in Europe, depending on the country. The level of class struggle remains rather high in France - people speak about "the French exception" in Europe - and also in Italy, where at the end of 1990s and the beginning of the 2000 decade, there was a combination of one-day general strikes by the trade-union movement and a strong global justice and anti-war movement. Recently, there was an important strike of rail workers in Germany, even though it is a strike which did not receive solidarity from other trade unions and a large part of the trade-union left. In Spain and in Portugal the level of class struggle remains very low. In the countries of Northern Europe, in spite of quite strong attacks, the situation is under control of the governments and the leaderships of the trade-union movement; the level of struggle is rather low.

– In the countries, where there is a certain level of struggle, it is necessary to underline a contradictory situation: there is a real unevenness between the level of struggle and the level of consciousness. There can be partial struggles or explosions but there is no organic growth of a wave of class struggles – of the global level of struggle, an increase in trade-union membership, workers' parties, or class struggle or revolutionary political currents - as there was at the end of the 1960 and in the 1970s in Europe, particularly in Southern Europe. As a result, the struggles have difficulty in finding a political expression in class struggle terms.

### 5. Two choices on the left!

In the current international conjuncture, the left, the workers' movement, the social movements are confronted with two main orientations in the face of capitalist globalisation: an orientation of adaptation to liberal capitalism and a line - ours - of resistance, struggle, anti-capitalist combat. We have, in France, a formula to speak about this situation:

"There are two lefts", we say. Of course, there are in reality several varieties of "left", but we are really confronted with two fundamental choices: to accept or to refuse this capitalist globalization!

5.a) The great majority of the traditional leaderships of the workers' movement - social democracy, ex- or post-Stalinism, Greens - or in certain developing countries bourgeois nationalism, have chosen the road of adaptation. This is the result of a whole process of integration into the institutions of state and the capitalist system. But this process of integration, in the current period of capitalist globalisation, is leading to qualitative changes, to structural changes of all these political formations. The demands of capitalist globalization are such that the room for manoeuvre to build social compromises between ruling classes and reformist movements has been considerably reduced. The big economic groups, the financial markets, the higher echelons of the state are summoning the reformist leaderships to accept the framework dictated by the search for maximum profits, by an increased financialisation of the world economy.

As a result, social democracy is being transformed into social-liberalism. From a social democracy which, faced with the class struggle, exchanged its support for the capitalist order against social improvements, we have moved to socialist parties which became "reformist parties without reforms" and have now got to the point of being "parties of liberal counter-reforms". In Europe, the European Union provides the framework of collaboration between Christian democracy and social democracy, in order to deploy the counter-reforms on pensions and retirement and the liquidation of the systems of social security and the public services. That does not exclude a skilful combination of programmes of assistance to the poorest layers - a system of minimum incomes, the programme of the "Family Grant" in Brazil... - and counter-reforms which attack the hard core of working-class rights and social conquests.

But it is on the political level that these choices are most manifest: the evolution of European social democracy towards "a third way" between the Right and the Left, in the call - now in Italy and France - to transform the historical socialist parties into democratic parties on the American model... This is also what we saw in Brazil, where the Workers' Party (PT) followed in only about fifteen years the evolution over almost a century of historical social democracy: from a class party, the PT was transformed into a social-liberal party. Once again, this evolution does not exclude policies of social assistance, which provide a social base for these parties among certain sectors of the population. This is the case of Lula, in Brazil, who remains popular with his programme of the "Family Grant".

This social-liberal evolution represents a general tendency. In a series of country the process is not completed. The ruling classes need, moreover, in a political system of alternating governments, "to be able to choose between the Right and the Left". So these social-liberal formations are not bourgeois parties like the others. There remain differences between the Right and the Left, especially in the way they are perceived by popular sectors, but overall social democracy and its allies are everywhere going through this process of integration into capitalist globalization and of a movement "towards the right".

5.b) At the other pole of the left, there are the forces which refuse capitalist globalization, which resist and defend an anti-capitalist orientation. Then of course, there are forces which refuse ultra-liberalism, which reject its excessive or outrageous aspects, hoping for a capitalism with a human face. There is also, in Latin America, the return to "neo-developmental" projects - bourgeois nationalist projects which hope to loosen the grip of imperialist domination. But in general what is missing with these forces is the ability and the will to really break with the whole neo-liberal logic - a logic which is inextricable from that of the capitalist system - and especially the determination to take on the ruling classes in order to respond to popular aspirations. This generally leads political formations - such as the PT or Peronism, each in its own way - which in opposition can claim to be anti-liberal, to adapt to liberal capitalism once they come to power. And it is there that there lies, so far, the major difference between on the one hand Lula, Kirchner and Tabaré Vázquez and, on the other Chávez, Morales, and Corréa: The first have adopted the neo-liberal logic, accompanying it by "social programmes" for the poorest layers. They are loyal partners of the financial markets. The group of the last three, contrary to the first group, have not hesitated to clash with the ruling classes and American imperialism in order to apply their programme of reforms, even if these reforms remain partial.

But to break in a consistent way with liberalism, it is necessary to break with capitalism.

### 6. For new anti-capitalist parties...

This is the programme of the parties and the political formations which we want to build. An anti-capitalist action or transitional programme which defends immediate demands (wages, jobs, services, distribution of land, control over natural resources...), democratic demands (problems of popular and national sovereignty in countries dominated by imperialism) and transitional demands, which lead to the need for another kind of distribution of wealth and to putting in question the capitalist ownership of the economy.

The implementation of these programmes requires governments at the service of the working class, basing themselves on the mobilization and the self-activity of the popular classes.

This battle - and it is a central battle today - implies the rejection of any participation in or support for social-liberal governments which conduct the business of the state and the capitalist economy. You paid dearly for it in Brazil with the participation of Socialist Democracy [2] in the Lula government, but you should know that your painful experience was useful to us and that we learned all the lessons from the Brazilian experience in order to reject in France, in Italy, in Portugal, in Spain any support for or participation in social-liberal governments.

So the question of participation or not in this type of government had again become a cardinal question of the strategy of power in Europe and in the principal countries of Latin America.

These are the references which constitute the basis of the anti-capitalist parties which are being built – like the Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) in Portugal, which you have known for several years - or which will be built in the coming months and years in Europe, more precisely to France and Italy, each with its specificity. In a certain fashion, they are the equivalents of your PSOL.

In France, you know that the LCR obtained good results in the last presidential election, with nearly 1.5 million votes. But the LCR has above all a spokesperson, Olivier Besancenot, who is a young postal worker, and who regularly takes the side of workers who are involved in a struggle or a strike, particularly in the most recent rail strike. That has brought him, for several months now, great popularity. The political space occupied by Olivier, the wave of sympathy which he arouses, largely exceeds even that of the LCR.

That comes after a series from events over the last twelve years, where there took place social resistance, political experience against the liberal counter-reforms, of the debates on the type of political alternative, which have created the conditions for building a new party.

This party will be an anti-capitalist party, feminist, ecologist and internationalist party. It will situate its combat in the revolutionary traditions of the workers' movement. At the centre of the project, there are key political references: the class struggle, unity of action of the workers and their organizations, independence with respect to the central institutions of the capitalist state, socialist democracy. So, although this new party has anti-capitalist programmatic and strategic delimitations in a perspective of the conquest of power by the workers, it will leave open a whole series of questions about the type of revolution of the 21st century, its forms and its content.

But anchored in the class struggle, it will subordinate its electoral and institutional positions to the development of social mobilizations and the self-activity of the mass movement. The objective of this new party is to bring together militants and currents coming from various origins - Communists, Socialists, trade unionists, libertarians,



revolutionaries - on the basis of a programme which is the "common understanding of events and tasks" and not on the basis of general ideological or historical references. Nor is our objective to bring together only revolutionaries, it is to try to build a new political representation of workers and youth, even if it is only partial and only represents a first step in an overall reorganization of the workers' movement. So, while we will maintain the links of the LCR with the Fourth International, this new party will not be a "Trotskyist" party. It will try to amalgamate, as we said above, the best of all the revolutionary traditions.

In Italy, starting from different histories and experiences, a whole sector of Communist Refoundation has just broken with this party in order to launch the construction of a new anti-capitalist party. After a whole political period where the leadership of Communist Refoundation had applied a policy of rejection of neo-liberalism and of engaging in and driving forward the global justice movement – an orientation that we supported -, this party today supports and takes part in the government of Prodi (former president of the very liberal European Union).

By taking part in the Prodi government, Communist Refoundation has supported all the programmes of neo-liberal austerity, a reform of pensions, and especially the sending of Italian troops alongside US troops in Afghanistan. Under these conditions, the comrades of the Fourth International, but also of other currents, left trade unionists, organizers of the social centres and the anti-war movement, decided to engage a process of constitution of a new anti-capitalist party... So it is on the basis of a fight against the Right and the Italian employers, but also in breaking with the social-liberalism which has taken over Communist Refoundation in Italy of Italy, that we are taking part in the construction of a new party, represented today by the Sinistra Critica (Critical Left.) movement.

To conclude: we began the discussion on new anti-capitalist parties at the beginning of the 1990s, taking into account the end of a whole historical period - the short century which started with the war of 1914-1918 and ended in the collapse of the USSR in 1991 - and the beginning of a new historical period marked by capitalist globalization, the social-liberal evolution of the workers' movement, the final decline of Stalinism, and by new waves of social resistances.

Today, on the basis of social resistance and political experiences, in particular of social-liberal governments in power, the contours of new anti-capitalist formations are starting to be confirmed.

The PSOL, the Bloco de Esquerda, Sinistra Critica, the new anti-capitalist party in France, that is the horizon for the coming months and years. It is a major challenge for revolutionaries.

We will need a lot of audacity and tactical flexibility to build broad anti-capitalist parties, based on the combativeness of workers and youth, on the political lessons drawn from recent experiences where various orientations – going from social-liberalism to anti-capitalism – have been confronted. But it is also necessary to know the limits within which we will build these parties. Because there is great unevenness between the political space that we occupy and the politico-organisational reality of our forces. Whether it is in France (between the popularity of Olivier Besancenot and the reality of the LCR) or in Brazil (between the popularity of Heloisa Helena and the reality of the PSOL), there are real differences between the popularity of our spokespersons and our organizations.

Of course Heloisa and Olivier base themselves on real phenomena - of combativeness and consciousness - in society, but if they occupy such a political space it is as much, if not more, the result of the "movement towards the right" of the traditional Left (PS or PT) which leaves broad spaces on the left, than the expression of a movement of organic growth of a rise in the class struggle. They occupy a space left vacant by the "movement to the right" of the reformist apparatuses.

Furthermore, this space is not automatically occupied by anti-capitalist forces. Thus in Germany, it is a left reformist

party - Die Linke – the product of the fusion of the ex-Stalinists of the PDS and a left wing of social democracy with Oscar Lafontaine, which occupies this space and which plans to take part in a social-liberal governmental coalition with the SPD and the Greens. Because we are not confronted with a high level of struggle, an increase trade-union membership, an increase in the membership of the left parties of left or the emergence of trade-union or political "class struggle" currents.

We want to build anti-capitalist parties, but hundreds of sympathisers and militants are only coming towards us because we are the left that fights, that does not let anything go, that is really on the left. They are not coming towards us on positions that are anti-capitalist, and even less revolutionary. It is a new situation and it is necessary, of course, to take this phenomenon as something positive. But in a context where the level of activity of the masses is not at its highest, the electoral pressures, the pressure from the media, and in certain situations, the institutional pressures can be very strong. That must encourage us to stress what must be the centre of gravity of the parties that we want to build, that is the class struggle and their anti-capitalist and revolutionary character: by involvement in the ongoing struggles of the workers, by links with the social movements, by striking a balance between our electoral work and the decisive place of our social intervention, by the control of our elected representatives, by the political education of our members.

Once again, it is an enormous challenge for revolutionaries but it is the best way of answering the new historical period than we are living in...

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[1] Marea Clasista y Socialista is a regroupment of militants of the revolutionary left, including trade-union leaders of the UNT and militants who, having begun building the Revolution and Socialism Party, decided to join the Unified Socialist Party launched on the initiative of Chávez. For their point of view, see "Lack of organization of honest and consistent sectors which underlie revolutionary process", by Marea Clasista y Socialista, International Viewpoint 395, December 2007.

[2] Socialist Democracy (DS), a tendency forming part of the Workers' Party in Brazil, regrouping the militants who identified with the Fourth International, took the decision to support the participation of one of its leaders, Miguel Rosseto, in the Lula government in the capacity of minister in charge of land reform. The policy followed by the Lula government quickly led to tensions within the left of the PT and in particular in the DS, one of whose leaders, Senator Heloisa Helena, was expelled from the PT by the leadership for having opposed the counter-reforms of this government. Heloisa Helena, along with the members of Parliament expelled from the PT and important sectors of the PT left (including a minority of the DS) then decided to build a new party, Socialism and Freedom Party. The "Enlace" current regroups within the PSOL, among others, the militants of the Fourth International who have broken with the DS, which remains pro-governmental. For the debate between the leadership of the Fourth International and the DS, see International Viewpoint 389, May 2007.