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Brazil

Towards the 3rd World Social Forum

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The World Social Forum in Porto Alegre is a political space under construction - a space for developing alternatives and resistance to neo-liberal globalization and imperialism. It's a process of convergence, linking up social movements, NGOs, critical intellectuals, new political vanguards and radical activists.

Its basic programmatic document is the Charter of Principles and its method is participatory democracy and respect for diversity. After the extraordinary success of the first two editions of the WSF, its priorities are now to internationalize the process through continental, regional and thematic forums, and to develop the discussion on strategies and alternatives.

The main conferences at the 1st and 2nd Forums were organized around four axes: the production of wealth, access to wealth, civil society and political power. The 3rd Forum must try, collectively, to develop some strategic thinking, as well as continuing the discussions about the architecture of world power, militarization versus peace, rights and the fight against intolerance, culture, information and counter-hegemony, and the global movements' attitude to international institutions, economic interests and the question of power.

One of the fundamental questions here is the willingness of the different forces in the movement to develop such a strategy. The movements against imperialist globalization have not lacked enthusiasm and militancy. But we have to have a realistic grasp of the present world situation, in which the only superpower, the United States, thinks and acts more and more like an empire, abandoning the concerns with multilateralism and human rights, and even the rhetoric of democracy, which it expressed in previous decades. We're talking about an empire with 800 military bases in more than 100 countries around the world, and with unparalleled economic and technological power.

Faced with a world situation dominated by neo-liberal globalization and the North American superpower, what can we do to democratize international relations and international institutions? How can we achieve and maintain peace, eradicate hunger and the epidemics that decimate the peoples of the third world, as well as the foreign debt that oppresses us? And how can we save the planet from the insane destruction caused by the capitalist system?

The World Social Forum represents radical opposition to imperialism's "total counter-revolution". It therefore has a revolutionary profile and dynamic. As Vittorio Agnoletto puts it, "we are a global movement against war and neo-liberalism, we are something new and radical, we are the only viable and democratic alternative to terrorism".

Stalinism is over, social democracy has turned into social liberalism and is going through an acute crisis, and the third way is simply not an alternative to capitalism. An anti-capitalist, internationalist left, inspired by the spirit of Porto Alegre and generating a new political culture, has been growing in society and at the polls, both in Europe and in Latin America. We want the 2003 WSF to reach a new threshold in building this movement, and to begin overcoming its strategic deficit. For we badly need "strategies for reaching the world we want". We need answers to two absolutely fundamental questions: what does this other world look like, and how do we build it? We already have the kernel of a new strategic conception to guide us on the way to building this world of greater justice, equality and solidarity. It's a conception that is emerging from the "combined and unequal" development of the growing alliance between democratized political power (at local and regional levels of government) and the social movements (always maintaining their autonomy and combativity), both of them with a shared aim of "changing the world". This is the synthesis of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

For Ernest Bloch, utopia was really a "utopian horizon" - something we walk towards but never reach. This journey

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has meaning and direction, but never arrives at its destination. This is fundamental, precisely because it creates the movement, builds the road and, in the end, never gives up the struggle.