

Internationalism and the Fourth International - Penny Duggan

1. World Congress Fourth International “Role and tasks of the Fourth International”, 2010
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“Role and Tasks of the Fourth International”

Resolution of the 16th World Congress

1. We are in a context marked by an unprecedented combination of a global economic crisis and a worldwide ecological crisis, a multidimensional crisis without precedent, that puts capitalist and patriarchal civilization into crisis. This is a major turning point. This dual crisis shows the failure of the capitalist system and puts on the agenda the reorganization and reconstruction of an anti-capitalist workers' movement.

The social and economic attacks and neoliberal counter reforms against the popular classes are going to increase. These attacks will particularly affect women, given that their situation is worse to start with (much higher rates of poverty, unemployment and casualization than men) and they will have to compensate for the cuts in public services and social allowances increasing their unpaid work within the family. There will be more wars and conflicts.

Religious fundamentalism will be increasingly used as the ideological underpinning both for attacks on the popular classes, targeting notably women's control of their own bodies, and wars and conflicts between nations and ethnic groups. A non-Eurocentric approach to sexual oppression and emancipation is important to opposing both Islamic fundamentalism in particular and the Islamophobic ideology of “clash of civilizations” that helps fuel it. Ecological catastrophes will hit millions of people particularly in the poorer regions, making the situation of women who are heads of family disproportionately worse.

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

In conclusion, the crisis makes obvious the failure of neoliberal ideology although the relationship of forces remains favourable to capital. As an ideology, it shows itself incapable of offering a solution, which is why the G20 proposals are a return to the past that blew up with the crisis, wrote an end to the Washington Consensus, but placed the IMF in the decision-making centre with its clearly neoliberal priorities. All the contradictions inherent to this social system are going to come under stress, without social democracy and the centre left being able to offer an adequate response. Even neo-Keynesian measures, which have not been adopted anyway, would not be enough to resolve the crisis. In this way the gap between the

discourse, the pretensions of the ruling class and the reality of the suffering and catastrophes which are inflicted on the peoples and workers, the building up of pressure on them, create the conditions for exacerbated social tensions and political crisis.

The crisis has a particularly harsh impact on women and on sexual minorities that are excluded from the family (or choose not to live in it) and are thus cut off from its resources. The crisis is driving many of the most marginalized people, such as transgenders, into even deeper poverty. This is true especially in dependent countries where a welfare state is weak or non-existent.

2. Social fightbacks are continuing to rise on a world scale but in a very unequal fashion and remain on the defensive. The global justice movement has lost the dynamism that it had had up to 2004. The Belem WSF shows, nevertheless, the need and the possibility for international convergences, but in a framework where struggles are more fragmented and dispersed. In Europe the success of the mobilizations against the G20 and NATO give an indication of a renewal of the global justice movement. The Istanbul ESF could be another important occasion. The World March of Women proposes a new occasion of common initiatives in 2010, which could become a step in rebuilding and strengthening this international feminist movement.

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

In the Middle East, peoples are continuing to resist Western and Israeli occupation and aggression, in Palestine, in Iraq and in Lebanon. The murderous aggression waged by the Zionist government in Gaza, two years after that in Lebanon, has not been able to defeat the resistance. Although Hamas and Hezbollah are now the main political references in this resistance, outside these organizations there are left currents that act not only with a perspective for national liberation but also for social liberation, which reject human exploitation and which reject categorically the segregation of women. This is the position that we want to strengthen.

Latin America continues to be the centre of resistance to neoliberalism and the continent with the most explosive situations, even though these are uneven from one country to another. Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador are experiencing the most radical processes, with partial breaks from imperialism that have meant some important advances at the levels of government and/or social movements. There are others where the prognosis is unclear, like Paraguay, and all these find in Cuba a point of reference. Some others maintain versions of neoliberal policies, with neodevelopmentalism in Argentina, or social liberalism in Uruguay and Brazil. The latter, in spite of its sharp contradictions with the US, especially over defence policy, its membership of UNASUR and its agreements with Venezuela, nonetheless collaborates with fundamental policies of Washington and aims to achieve regional leadership. For their part, Colombia, Peru, Chile and Mexico remain clearly neo-liberal.

Nonetheless, a new political situation is emerging, with the renewed imperialist threat in the region, with the presence of the Fourth US Fleet, the coup in Honduras, seven new US military bases in Colombia, the direct intervention of the US embassy in the most important trade union conflict in Argentina for years, the political and military interference in Haiti. All these aim to roll back the political advances and develop an international response.

This means that the class struggle will intensify in Latin America in the coming period. The governments of Venezuela and Ecuador are moving back from their most radical proposals, showing two aspects in particular that cause concern: the orientation towards the extraction of natural resources and the limited democratic participation of social sectors. In Bolivia, there is a radicalization of the processes of change, which rests directly on the social movements.

Although these processes are in dispute, with advances and retreats, they run the risk, in the course of their evolution, of not advancing to anti-capitalist positions, unless there is a strengthening of the self-activity of wage earners, indigenous peoples and other oppressed social sectors, and greater pressure from these sectors on the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

At the same time, the radicalization of social movements, especially the struggle of indigenous and peasant movements, is putting pressure on these governments and at the same time posing a clear anti-capitalist perspective, in defence of natural resources – land, water, biodiversity, etc. – and a change in the development model, as was expressed in the Declaration of the Assembly of Social Movements at the Belem WSF, and the recent assembly of Alba TCP, which in its final statement denounced capitalism and called for its overthrow. The national, regional and international meetings of the social movements demonstrate the radical potential contained in the southern part of Latin America.

One urgent political task for the organizations is to stimulate the self-activity of the masses, generalising workers' control and the creation of bodies of popular power; otherwise, in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, there is a risk of a definitive reverse and a consolidation of capitalism in these countries, where it is currently challenged.

The activity of the sections and groups of the Fourth International in Latin America needs to take into account these tendencies – the national question in the region and the connections between anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism – and define a tactic for intervention in a process characterized by the inter-relation between the states that make up the ALBA and social movements with strong histories of self-organization and self-management. These two forces sometimes converge and sometimes enter into contradiction. This implies promoting demands for unitary struggles in defence of the rights of indigenous peoples, against the criminalization of protest, privatizations, extractivism of natural resources, machismo and the economic and ecological crisis, thereby stimulating the strategic political debate about power and hegemony in our societies.

In a series of what are usually called emerging capitalist countries or those resulting from capitalist restoration, – China, Russia or the former eastern bloc – the whirlwind of globalization is tending to proletarianize hundreds of millions of human beings. But this new social power, which can play a key role in the coming years, has not yet formed mass independent

organizations – trade unions, associations, and political organizations capable of facing the challenge of this global reorganization.

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

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

In Asia, the ongoing fast development of capitalism in China and in India and in most of South-Asian countries raises crucial political questions. Around half of the global working class lives in Asia and the necessity to create or strengthen revolutionary parties in this part of the world is critical. The situation is very different from one country to another:

- China is of the utmost importance. Decades of repression explain why the creation of a revolutionary party in China has to start from scratch. Bringing the experience and tradition of the international labour movement to China will be necessary to stimulate the creation of a revolutionary party as well as international solidarity. The Fourth International will have to pay special attention to the social and political developments that the present international crisis could bring about in the near future.

- In India, whose population will overtake China's by 2050, and where faster industrialization has increased the number of workers and the rural crisis is deepening, the political situation and our tasks are different. The labour movement is very well developed and organized but dominated by Stalinist or Maoist political parties. The construction of a revolutionary party defending our programme cannot just ignore them.

- In South-East Asia, the situation is very uneven. In some countries like Thailand and Burma, the labour movement is very weak. In these countries there is neither social democracy nor radical left parties. In these countries our task is to establish stronger links with the social movements that are active in the defence of farmers, women and workers when trade unions exist. Indonesia and Malaysia are in an intermediary situation. There are some small revolutionary parties with whom we can engage a constructive political debate and collaboration.

- In the Philippines and Pakistan, the Fourth International has strong organizations that can be a basis of our political activity throughout Asia.

In these countries we are confronted with Islamic fundamentalism. We oppose the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Muslims extremists in the Philippines like the Abou Sayaf because they are reactionary forces. We cannot make any agreement with them in the name of anti-imperialism. In other countries like Indonesia or Malaysia, we could also be confronted with Islamic fundamentalism, and the FI has to strengthen its analysis.

• In Sri Lanka, after several decades of war, the government has defeated the LTTE militarily but the root cause of the Tamil question has not yet been addressed. Besides, the Rajapaksa government uses open and brutal repression to silence its opponents and the media. The FI should be part of the international campaign of solidarity with the Tamil people.

Throughout Asia, the FI defends the rights of ethnic groups and indigenous peoples and supports their struggle for self-determination.

• In Japan, the process of fusion of the two organizations linked to the FI is underway. Since September 2009, they have been jointly publishing a common newspaper.

In South Korea too, where the labour movement is strong, there is also a convergence of different forces toward the creation of a new anti-capitalist party. Because this country has a strong tradition in the working class struggle, the Fourth International has to follow this event closely. Besides, the FI should organize solidarity campaigns to support the militants of revolutionary parties who are now repressed by the State.

3. The dynamic of capitalist globalization and the current crisis have also changed the framework of evolution and development of the traditional left. Reformist bureaucracies have seen their leeway considerably reduced. From reformism without reforms to reformism with counter-reforms, social democracy and equivalent forces in a series of dominated or developing countries are experiencing an evolution towards social-liberalism; that is these forces are directly underwriting neoliberal or neoconservative policies. All the forces politically or institutionally linked to social-liberalism or to the centre left – including the women’s movement, notably in the institutionalized forms of NGOs, women’s aid associations, etc. – are, to varying degrees, being dragged into these qualitative changes in the workers’ movement and are incapable of formulating a plan for getting out of the crisis. What is more, we are seeing policies – such as that of the Lula government in Brazil – which are making the ecological crisis worse. The clash with these parties is more difficult since they maintain their control, particularly electorally, of part of the workers movement, and it is therefore necessary to build a real, credible political alternative.

The traditional communist parties are continuing their long decline. They try to break this decline by grabbing onto the coat tails of the leading forces in the liberal left and the institutional apparatuses or falling back on their nostalgic and self-affirming positions. While there are sectors or currents who wish to build the social movements with anti-capitalist forces, such as Synaspismos in Greece, they are doomed to have contradictions and divisions because of their reformist nature. In effect, the decision to build anti-capitalist parties does not mean we are not aware of the existence of radical, anti-liberal, left reformist currents that play a role and have electoral credibility. Therefore, they continue to be competitors and/or political adversaries. Their position can be reinforced by occasional tactical shifts – generally electoralist – to the left, by social-liberalism, often to re-establish its consensus among the working class and popular sectors. This poses the challenge for us of implementing a united front offensive capable of responding to the needs of men and women wage-earners. At the same time, when on the basis of clear political conditions we decide to intervene inside anti-liberal, reformist left parties (such as in the case of Die Linke), we do so with no illusions about the nature of these parties, and we build anti-capitalist tendencies linked to social movements,

that fight electoralism, institutionalism, and any attempt to compromise with capitalism.

4. We want to get involved in this reorganization to create a new left that is capable of meeting the challenge of this century and rebuilding the workers’ movement, its structures, its class consciousness, its independence from the bourgeoisies at the political and cultural level.

• An anti-capitalist, internationalist, ecologist and feminist left;

• a left that is clearly alternative to social democracy and its governments;

• a left which fights for a socialism of the 21st century, self-managed and democratic, and which has a coherent programme for getting there;

• a left that is conscious that for this goal it has to break with capitalism and its logic and thus that it cannot govern with the political representation with which it wants to break;

• a pluralistic left rooted in the social movements and the workplaces which integrates the combativity of the workers, the struggles for women’s and LGBT liberation and emancipation and ecologist struggles;

• a non-institutional left that bases its strategy on the self-organization of the proletariat and the oppressed, on the principle that emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves;

• a left that promotes all forms of self-organization by workers and by the popular classes, that encourages thinking, deciding, and doing things for itself and on the basis of its own decisions;

• a left which integrates new social sectors, new themes such as those expressed by the World Social Forum in Belem, and above all the new generations because you cannot make new things with old material;

• an internationalist and anti-imperialist left which fights against domination and war and the self-determination of the people and which lays out the framework for a mass democratic International;

• a left able to link the precious heritage of critical and revolutionary Marxism with developments of feminism, ecosocialism and the indigenous movements of Latin America;

• an independent and class-struggle left which fights for the broadest united action against the crisis and for the rights, the gains and the aspirations of the workers and all the oppressed.

These are the criteria and the general content of our orientation for building new useful anti-capitalist instruments for fighting the current system.

5. This is the aspiration in which the problems of building the Fourth International and new anti-capitalist parties and new international currents are posed. We expressed it in our own way, from 1992 onwards, so in the last two world congresses, with the triptych “New period, new programme, new party”, developed in documents of the International. We confirm the essential of our choices at the last World Congress in 2003 concerning the building of broad anti-capitalist parties. The Fourth International is confronted, in an overall way, with a new phase. Revolutionary Marxist militants, nuclei, currents and organizations must pose the problem of the construction of anti-capitalist, revolutionary political formations, with the perspective of establishing a new independent political representation of the working class that takes into account the diversity of the working class – in gender, race, residence status, age, sexual orientation - in defending a

resolutely class-based programme.

Building broad anti-capitalist parties is the current response we offer to the crisis in the workers' and left movement and the need for its reconstruction. This project is based on mass struggles, bringing mass movements to the forefront and the emergence of a new generation. Of course, this does not eliminate our revolutionary Marxist, ecologist, feminist internationalist identity and our basic aim of defeating capitalism to create a new ruling order based on democracy and direct participation: that is, a real socialist democracy.

That is true at the level of each country and at an international level. On the basis of the experience of the class struggle, the development of the global justice movement, defensive struggles and anti-war mobilizations over the last ten years, and in particular the lessons drawn from the evolution of the Brazilian PT and of Communist Refoundation in Italy and from the debates of the French anti-liberal left, revolutionary Marxists have engaged in recent years in the building of the PSOL in Brazil, of Sinistra Critica in Italy, of the new anti-capitalist party in France, Respect in England. In this perspective we have continued to build the experiences of the Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal and the Red Green Alliance in Denmark.

The common goal, via different paths, is that of broad anti-capitalist parties. It is not a question of taking up the old formulas of regroupment of revolutionary currents alone. The ambition is to bring together forces beyond simply revolutionary ones. These latter can be a support in the process of bringing forces together as long as they are clearly for building anti-capitalist parties. Although there is no model, since each process of coming together takes account of national specificities and relationships of forces, our goal must thus be to seek to build broad anti-capitalist political forces, independent of social democracy and the centre left, formations which reject any policy of participation or support to class-collaborationist governments, today in government with social-democracy and the centre left, forces which understand that winning victories on women's rights, like in the abortion referendum in Portugal, strengthen the radical anti-capitalist forces.

It is on the basis of such a perspective that we must be oriented. What we know of the experiences of differentiation and reorganization in Africa and Asia point in the same direction. Nevertheless, in the countries of Latin America, the construction of broad anti-capitalist parties should integrate from its beginnings a clear stand for socialism. It is through this complex and diverse process that we can make new advances.

Where we are working inside such broad political forces, it is important to fight for the right of self-organization within these parties by women and LGBTs, and on this self-organization's being reflected in the parties' programmes and practice. This self-organization is a means of resisting pressures towards electoralism and institutionalization. In new radical political formations in several Latin American countries, the right to self-organization is important to fighting for a 21st-century socialism from below that rejects authoritarian tendencies and the temptation to repeat 20th-century errors. In general within such broad forces, we start from an understanding, as an indissoluble part of our socialism, of the necessity for a collective and resolute response to all manifestations of prejudice including sexism, racism, islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia and transphobia. We also fight for specific attention to organizing by youth; for the integration of black, immigrant, women's and LGBT issues into the party's public statements and daily

interventions; and for representation of specially oppressed comrades in the party leadership and among its spokespeople and candidates for office.

6. This is the framework in which we must approach the question of the relationship between the building of the Fourth International and a policy of anti-capitalist coming together at the national, continental and international levels. We must discuss how to strengthen and transform the Fourth International in order to make it an effective tool in the perspective of a new international grouping. We already have started, with limited results it has to be admitted, conferences of the anti-capitalist left and other international conferences. On the international level, we have initiated, on this political basis, many conferences and initiatives of international convergence and coming together: the constitution of the European Anti-capitalist Left (EACL), with the Portuguese Left Bloc, the Danish Red-Green Alliance and the Scottish Socialist Party. We worked with organizations like the English SWP. Other parties – even left reformists of who had at one time or another a political evolution “to the left”, like Communist Refoundation in Italy, tor Synaspismos – also took part in these conferences. We also held international conferences of revolutionary and anti-capitalist organizations, on the occasion of the World Social Forums at Mumbai in India and Porto Alegre in Brazil. On this level, we created bonds of solidarity with the Brazilian PSOL in its break with Lula's PT. We have supported the efforts of our Italian comrades to build an anti-capitalist alternative to the policies of Communist Refoundation in Italy. These few elements show the type of orientation that we want to implement. The different conferences this year [2010] such as those in Paris or Belem show the necessity and the possibility of joint action and discussion by a large number of organizations and currents of the anti-capitalist left in Europe. It is now necessary to continue a policy of open meetings and conferences on topics of strategic and programmatic thinking and joint action through campaigns and initiatives of international mobilization.

7. The Fourth International and its sections have played and still play a vital role in defending, promoting and implementing a programme of demands that are both immediate and transitional towards socialism; a united-front policy that aims for mass mobilization of workers and their organizations; a policy of working-class unity and independence against any type of strategic alliance with the national bourgeoisie; opposition to any participation in governments that merely manage the State and the capitalist economy having abandoned all internationalism or fight for an end to inequality and discrimination on gender, racial, ethnic, religious or sexual orientation grounds.

The Fourth International has played and still plays a functional role in keeping alive the history of the revolutionary Marxist current, “to understand the world”, to confront the analyses and the experiences of revolutionary militants, currents and organizations and to bring together organizations, currents and militants who share the same strategic vision and the same choice of broad convergences on revolutionary bases. The existence of an international framework that makes it possible “to think about politics” is an indispensable asset for the intervention of revolutionaries. Consistent internationalism must pose the question of an international framework. But for historical reasons that it has itself analysed, the Fourth International does not have the legitimacy to represent in and of itself the new mass International that we need. So when it is a question of taking a

step forward in the bringing together of anti-capitalist forces, these new organizations, in particular in Europe and Latin America, cannot relate to and join this or that current identified with the Fourth International, and this is true whatever the reference point – the various Morenoites, the Lambertists, the SWP or other variants of Trotskyism.

Let us note, nevertheless, that a major difference between the FI and all these tendencies, over and above political positions, which is to the credit of the International, is that it is based on a democratic coordination of sections and militants, whereas the other international tendencies are “international-factions” or coordinations based on “party-factions” which do not respect rules of democratic functioning, in particular the right of tendency. The historical limits of these international “Trotskyist” currents, like other ex-Maoist or ex-Communist currents, prevent us today from advancing in the crystallization of new international convergences. Chavez’s call to found a Fifth International poses other questions about its origins, its framework, that is to say, its viability. The Fourth International declares that it is willing to participate in the debates and preparatory meetings that may be organized. We will contribute our historic gains and our vision about what a new International and its programmatic foundations could be. A genuine new International can only be born if its members share a programme, an ability to intervene in society, a democratic, pluralist form of functioning, as well as clear independence from governments in order to break with capitalism.

In the present relationship of forces, the policy for advancing towards a mass International must rather take the road of open and periodic conferences on central political questions – activity, specific themes or discussions - which make possible the convergence and the emergence of anti-capitalist and revolutionary poles. In this sense, the Fourth International is in favour of the proposals from revolutionary Marxist currents and/or groups who share with us a common understanding of the international situation and our aspirations for building new international frameworks.

In the new anti-capitalist parties which may be formed in the years to come, and which express the current stage of combativeness, experience and consciousness of the sectors that are the most committed to the search for an anti-capitalist alternative, the question of a new International is and will be posed. We act and we will continue to act so that it is not posed in terms of ideological or historical choices, which are likely to lead to divisions and splits. It must be posed on a double level, on the one hand real political convergence on tasks of international intervention, on the other pluralism of the new formations, which must bring together currents of various origins: Trotskyists of different kinds, libertarians, revolutionary syndicalists, revolutionary nationalists, left reformists. So in general, when there have been concrete steps towards new parties, we have proposed that the new broad anti-capitalist party functions with the right of tendency or currents, and that the supporters of the Fourth International in these new parties organize themselves in ways to be decided, according to the specific situation of each party. Our Portuguese comrades in the Left Bloc, our Danish comrades in the Red-Green Alliance, our Brazilian comrades in the PSOL, are organized, in particular forms, as a Fourth International current or in class struggle currents with other political tendencies.

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

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

10. As a result, in order to strengthen ourselves and play this role all the bodies of the FI must be reinforced: regular Bureau meetings, International Committees, specific working commissions, travel, exchanges between the sections. It is necessary to reinforce the activity that the International has deployed over the last few years in regularizing and strengthening EPBs meetings and the efforts of coordination between the Latin American sections. The meetings of the International Committee (IC), which are held every year representing about 30 organizations, must ensure the organizational continuity of our international current.

Lack of resources as well as the decline in the presence of women, notably in our leading bodies, in the last period (a result of the decline in activity of a strong autonomous women’s movement which has had an impact on our national organizations and thus the International), have meant that we have not sustained an active women’s commission and a corresponding network of regional meetings and international schools. Three women’s seminars have been held since 2000 as well as meetings of the women comrades present at each IC. These have maintained a limited and fragile but nevertheless real feminist internationalist perspective. In the next period, given the centrality of our understanding of women’s oppression and the strategic nature of the fight against it and the struggle to build the autonomous women’s movement in an anti-capitalist perspective, we must find the necessary resources to ensure that this question is developed as a central element of the anti-capitalist perspective we propose. In this framework we must at the same time strengthen our internal commission and be on the offensive in proposing discussions to our partners, including participation in seminars and schools in our Institute. This process must also find

8. In this movement we are confronted with

a reflection at national level.

At the same time we must ensure that the women in our organizations – and in the new parties we are building – find their full place and that the simple adoption of parity or quotas for leadership bodies or electoral lists is not considered a sufficient answer to the obstacles to women's full participation in the political process. The range of measures constituting a positive action plan were presented in the 1991 World Congress resolution on positive action.

The youth camp, which is held every year with around 500 comrades, must have a central place for the youth work of our European sections, in the perspective of forming young internationalist cadres. As more and more of our organizations in Europe are within broader anti-capitalist formations we continue to encourage our comrades to invite youth from the broader organizations to the camp, and to participate in the preparatory seminar held in Amsterdam every Easter. The camp is also an important occasion for young comrades from Europe to meet comrades from other continents and the efforts made by organizations outside Europe to send comrades to participate in the camp is very important. As the only regular public initiative of the FI, the camp also plays a role as a place to which younger people from organizations with which we are building relations can be invited, as was the case with camp in Greece in 2009 with the presence of small delegations from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Croatia

The Amsterdam educational institute has taken on a fresh impetus. We now have to ensure that the schools and seminars are held and ensure the equilibrium of its management and its organization. The FI must also open up its meetings and its Institute. The Institute occupies a central place, not only to educate the cadres of the section but also to contribute to the exchanges between currents and to various international experiences. The seminar on climate change, open to a series of international experts, is a good example. Like other meetings, it indicates the necessity and the possibility that we are a crucible for programmatic elaboration of essential questions that anti-capitalist and revolutionary currents are tackling.

The existence of an international school in the Philippines is a tool of great importance to form new generations of revolutionary militants coming from all parts of Asia and to share their experiences. In the near future, there will be a new school in Islamabad in Pakistan, which will enlarge our capacity to form militants and organize political debates in South Asia. The FI has to give full support to the IIRE in Manila and in Islamabad.

Our schools have always been an occasion for inviting participation from organizations with which we are building relations. This role must be strengthened and broadened in the coming period throughout the IIRE network.

To sum up, in the coming period, and on an orientation aimed at building a new international force or a new International, the FI as an internal framework, represents an essential asset for revolutionary Marxists.

Motion on the Strategic Debate, Party Building and Socialism in the 21st Century

The IC is mandated to prepare with the IIRE a seminar, with its sections, about the construction of anti-capitalist parties and the sections of the FI: problems encountered, relationships with social movements, in particular the new generation, alliances, and relations with other currents.

The IC and the IIRE are also mandated to organize an

international seminar on twenty-first century socialism, open to external guests, to develop a document expressing the FI contribution to this debate.

“Role and Tasks” Resolution of the 15th World Congress, 2003 (extract)

The 4th International Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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 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.

The TYRANNY of STRUCTURELESSNESS

Joreen

During the years in which the women's liberation movement has been taking shape, a great emphasis has been placed on what are called leaderless, structureless groups as the main if not sole-organizational form of the movement. The source of this idea was a natural reaction against the over-structured society in which most of us found ourselves the inevitable control this gave others over our lives, and the continual elitism of the Left and similar groups among those who were supposedly fighting this overstructuredness.

The idea of structurelessness, however, has moved from a healthy counter to those tendencies to becoming a goddess in its own right. The idea is as little examined as the term is much used, but it has become an intrinsic and unquestioned part of women's liberation ideology. For the early development of the movement this did not much matter. It early defined its main goal, and its main method, as consciousness-raising, and the 'structureless' rap group was an excellent means to this end. The looseness and informality off it encouraged participation in discussion, and its often supportive atmosphere elicited personal insight. If nothing more concrete than personal insight ever resulted from these groups, that did not much matter, because their purpose did not really extend beyond this.

The basics problems didn't appear until individual rap groups exhausted the virtues of consciousness-raising and decided they wanted to do something more specific. At this point they usually foundered because most groups were unwilling to change their structure when they changed their tasks. Women had thoroughly accepted the idea of "structurelessness" without realizing the limitations of its uses. People would try to use the "structureless" group and the informal conference for purposes for which they were unsuitable out of a blind belief that no other means could possibly be anything but oppressive.

If the movement is to grow beyond these elementary stages of development, it will have to disabuse itself of some of its prejudices about organization and structure. There is nothing inherently bad about either of these. They can be and often are misused, but to reject them out of hand because they are misused is to deny ourselves the necessary tools to further development. We need to understand why "structurelessness" does not work.

Formal and Informal Structures

Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a structureless group. Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible; it may vary over time; it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities, or intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals, with different talents, predispositions, and backgrounds makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate structurelessness and that is not the nature of a human group.

This means that to strive for a structureless group is as useful, and as deceptive, as to aim at an "objective" news story, "value-free" social science, or a "free" economy. A "laissez faire" group is about as realistic as a "laissez faire" society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. This hegemony can be so easily established because the idea of "structurelessness" does not prevent the formation of informal structures, only formal ones. Similarly "laissez faire" philosophy did not prevent the economically powerful from establishing control over wages, prices, and distribution of goods; it only prevented the government from doing so. Thus structurelessness becomes a way of masking power, and within the women's movement is usually most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful (whether they are conscious of their power or not). As long as the structure of the group is informal, the rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few and awareness of power is limited to those who know the rules. Those who do not

know the rules and are not chosen for initiation must remain in confusion, or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware.

For everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate in its activities the structure must be explicit, not implicit. The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can happen only if they are formalized. This is not to say that formalization of a structure of a group will destroy the informal structure. It usually doesn't. But it does hinder the informal structure from having predominant control and make available some means of attacking it if the people involved are not at least responsible to the needs of the group at large. "Structurelessness" is organizationally impossible. We cannot decide whether to have a structured or structureless group, only whether or not to have a formally structured one. Therefore the word will not be used any longer except to refer to the idea it represents. Unstructured will refer to those groups which have not been deliberately structured in a particular manner. Structured will refer to those which have. A Structured group always has formal structure, and may also have an informal, or covert, structure. It is this informal structure, particularly in Unstructured groups, which forms the basis for elites.

The Nature of Elitism

"Elitist" is probably the most abused word in the women's liberation movement. It is used as frequently, and for the same reasons, as "pinko" was used in the fifties. It is rarely used correctly. Within the movement it commonly refers to individuals, though the personal characteristics and activities of those to whom it is directed may differ widely: An individual, as an individual can never be an elitist, because the only proper application of the term "elite" is to groups. Any individual, regardless of how well-known that person may be, can never be an elite.

Correctly, an elite refers to a small group of people who have power over a larger group of which they are part, usually without direct responsibility to that larger group, and often without their knowledge or consent. A person becomes an elitist by being part of, or advocating the rule by, such a small group, whether or not that individual is well known or not known at all. Notoriety is not a definition of an elitist. The most insidious elites are usually run by people not known to the larger public at all. Intelligent elitists are usually smart enough not to allow themselves to become well known; when they become known, they are watched, and the mask over their power is no longer firmly lodged.

Because elites are informal does not mean they are invisible. At any small group meeting anyone with a sharp eye and an acute ear can tell who is influencing whom. The members of a friendship group will relate more to each other than to other people. They listen more attentively, and interrupt less; they repeat each other's points and give in amiably; they tend to ignore or grapple with the "outs" whose approval is not necessary for making a decision. But it is necessary for the "outs" to stay on good terms with the "ins." Of course the lines are not as sharp as I have drawn them. They are nuances of interaction, not prewritten scripts. But they are discernible, and they do have their effect. Once one knows with whom it is important to check before a decision is made, and whose approval is the stamp of acceptance, one knows who is running things.

Elites are not conspiracies. Very seldom does a small group of people get together and deliberately try to take over a larger

group for its own ends. Elites are nothing more, and nothing less, than groups of friends who also happen to participate in the same political activities. They would probably maintain their friendship whether or not they were involved in political activities; they would probably be involved in political activities whether or not they maintained their friendships. It is the coincidence of these two phenomena which creates elites in any group and makes them so difficult to break.

These friendship groups function as networks of communication outside any regular channels for such communication that may have been set up by a group. If no channels are set up, they function as the only networks of communication. Because people are friends, because they usually share the same values and orientations, because they talk to each other socially and consult with each other when common decisions have to be made, the people involved in these networks have more power in the group than those who don't. And it is a rare group that does not establish some informal networks of communication through the friends that are made in it.

Some groups, depending on their size, may have more than one such informal communications network. Networks may even overlap. When only one such network exists, it is the elite of an otherwise Unstructured group, whether the participants in it want to be elitists or not. If it is the only such network in a Structured group it may or may not be an elite depending on its composition and the nature of the formal Structure. If there are two or more such networks of friends, they may compete for power within the group, thus forming factions, or one may deliberately opt out of the competition, leaving the other as the elite. In a Structured group, two or more such friendship networks usually compete with each other for formal power. This is often the healthiest situation, as the other members are in a position to arbitrate between the two competitors for power and thus to make demands on those to whom they give their temporary allegiance.

The inevitably elitist and exclusive nature of informal communication networks of friends is neither a new phenomenon characteristic of the women's movement nor a phenomenon new to women. Such informal relationships have excluded women for centuries from participating in integrated groups of which they were a part. In any profession or organization these networks have created the "locker room" mentality and the "old school" ties which have effectively prevented women as a group (as well as some men individually) from having equal access to the sources of power or social reward. Much of the energy of past women's movements has been directed to having the structures of decision-making and the selection processes formalized so that the exclusion of women could be confronted directly. As we well know, these efforts have not prevented the informal male-only networks from discriminating against women, but they have made it more difficult.

Since movement groups have made no concrete decisions about who shall exercise power within them, many different criteria are used around the country. Most criteria are along the lines of traditional female characteristics. For instance, in the early days of the movement, marriage was usually a prerequisite for participation in the informal elite. As women have been traditionally taught, married women relate primarily to each other, and look upon single women as too threatening to have as close friends. In many cities, this criterion was further refined to include only those women married to New Left men. This standard had more than tradition behind it, however, because New Left men often had access to resources needed by the

movement such as mailing lists, printing presses, contacts, and information--and women were used to getting what they needed through men rather than independently. As the movement has changed through time, marriage has become a less universal criterion for effective participation, but all informal elites establish standards by which only women who possess certain material or personal characteristics may join. They frequently include: middle-class background (despite all the rhetoric about relating to the working class); being married; not being married but living with someone; being or pretending to be a lesbian; being between the ages of twenty and thirty; being college educated or at least having some college background; being "hip"; not being too "hip"; holding a certain political line or identification as a "radical"; having children or at least liking them; not having children; having certain "feminine" personality characteristics such as being "nice"; dressing right (whether in the traditional style or the antitraditional style); etc. There are also some characteristics which will almost always tag one as a "deviant" who should not be related to. They include: being too old; working full time, particularly if one is actively committed to a "career"; not being "nice"; and being avowedly single (i.e., neither actively heterosexual nor homosexual).

Other criteria could be included, but they all have common themes. The characteristics prerequisite for participating in the informal elites of the movement, and thus for exercising power, concern one's background, personality, or allocation of time. They do not include one's competence, dedication to feminism, talents, or potential contribution to the movement. The former are the criteria one usually uses in determining one's friends. The latter are what any movement or organization has to use if it is going to be politically effective.

The criteria of participation may differ from group to group, but the means of becoming a member of the informal elite if one meets those criteria are pretty much the same. The only main difference depends on whether one is in a group from the beginning, or joins it after it has begun. If involved from the beginning it is important to have as many of one's personal friends as possible also join. If no one knows anyone else very well, then one must deliberately form friendships with a select number and establish the informal interaction patterns crucial to the creation of an informal structure. Once the informal patterns are formed they act to maintain themselves, and one of the most successful tactics of maintenance is to continuously recruit new people who "fit in." One joins such an elite much the same way one pledges a sorority. If perceived as a potential addition, one is "rushed" by the members of the informal structure and eventually either dropped or initiated. If the sorority is not politically aware enough to actively engage in this process itself it can be started by the outsider pretty much the same way one joins any private club. Find a sponsor, i.e., pick some member of the elite who appears to be well respected within it, and actively cultivate that person's friendship. Eventually, she will most likely bring you into the inner circle.

All of these procedures take time. So if one works full time or has a similar major commitment, it is usually impossible to join simply because there are not enough hours left to go to all the meetings and cultivate the personal relationship necessary to have a voice in the decision-making. That is why formal structures of decision making are a boon to the overworked person. Having an established process for decision-making ensures that everyone can participate in it to some extent.

Although this dissection of the process of elite formation

within small groups has been critical in perspective, it is not made in the belief that these informal structures are inevitably bad--merely inevitable. All groups create informal structures as a result of interaction patterns among the members of the group. Such informal structures can do very useful things. But only unstructured groups are totally governed by them. When informal elites are combined with a myth of "structurelessness," there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power. It becomes capricious.

This has two potentially negative consequences of which we should be aware. The first is that the informal structure of decision-making will be much like a sorority-- one in which people listen to others because they like them and not because they say significant things. As long as the movement does not do significant things this does not much matter. But if its development is not to be arrested at this preliminary stage, it will have to alter this trend. The second is that informal structures have no obligation to be responsible to the group at large. Their power was not given to them; it cannot be taken away. Their influence is not based on what they do for the group; therefore they cannot be directly influenced by the group. This does not necessarily make informal structures irresponsible. Those who are concerned with maintaining their influence will usually try to be responsible. The group simply cannot compel such responsibility; it is dependent on the interests of the elite.

The "Star" System

The idea of "structurelessness" has created the "star" system. We live in a society which expects political groups to make decisions and to select people to articulate those decisions to the public at large. The press and the public do not know how to listen seriously to individual women as women; they want to know how the group feels. Only three techniques have ever been developed for establishing mass group opinion: the vote or referendum, the public opinion survey questionnaire, and the selection of group spokespeople at an appropriate meeting. The women's liberation movement has used none of these to communicate with the public. Neither the movement as a whole nor most of the multitudinous groups within it have established a means of explaining their position on various issues. But the public is conditioned to look for spokespeople.

While it has consciously not chosen spokespeople, the movement has thrown up many women who have caught the public eye for varying reasons. These women represent no particular group or established opinion; they know this and usually say so. But because there are no official spokespeople nor any decision-making body that the press can query when it wants to know the movement's position on a subject, these women are perceived as the spokespeople. Thus, whether they want to or not, whether the movement likes it or not, women of public note are put in the role of spokespeople by default.

This is one main source of the ire that is often felt toward the women who are labeled "stars." Because they were not selected by the women in the movement to represent the movement's views, they are resented when the press presumes that they speak for the movement. But as long as the movement does not select its own spokeswomen, such women will be placed in that role by the press and the public, regardless of their own desires.

This has several negative consequences for both the movement and the women labeled "stars." First, because the movement didn't put them in the role of spokesperson, the movement cannot remove them. The press put them there and

only the press can choose not to listen. The press will continue to look to "stars" as spokeswomen as long as it has no official alternatives to go to for authoritative statements from the movement. The movement has no control in the selection of its representatives to the public as long as it believes that it should have no representatives at all. Second, women put in this position often find themselves viciously attacked by their sisters. This achieves nothing for the movement and is painfully destructive to the individuals involved. Such attacks only result in either the woman leaving the movement entirely--often bitterly alienated--or in her ceasing to feel responsible to her "sister." She may maintain some loyalty to the movement, vaguely defined, but she is no longer susceptible to pressures from other women in it. One cannot feel responsible to people who have been the source of such pain without being a masochist, and these women are usually too strong to bow to that kind of personal pressure. Thus the backlash to the "star" system in effect encourages the very kind of individualistic nonresponsibility that the movement condemns. By purging a sister as a "star," the movement loses whatever control it may have had over the person who then becomes free to commit all of the individualistic sins of which she has been accused.

Political Impotence

Unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren't very good for getting things done. It is when people get tired of "just talking" and want to do something more than the groups, unless they change the nature of their operation, flounder. Since the larger movement in most cities is as unstructured as individual rap groups, it is not too much more effective than the separate groups at specific tasks. The informal structure is rarely together enough or in touch enough with the people to be able to operate effectively. So the movement generates much motion and few results. Unfortunately, the consequences of all this motion are not as innocuous as the results' and their victim is the movement itself.

Some groups have fumed themselves into local action projects if they do not involve many people and work in a small scale. But this form restricts movement activity to the local level; it cannot be done on the regional or national. Also, to function well the groups must usually pare themselves down to that informal group of friends who were running things in the first place. This excludes many women from participating. As long as the only way women can participate in the movement is through membership in a small group, the nongregarious are at a distinct disadvantage. As long as friendship groups are the main means of organizational activity, elitism becomes institutionalized.

For those groups which cannot find a local project to which to devote themselves, the mere act of staying together becomes the reason for their staying together. When a group has no specific task (and consciousness raising is a task), the people in it turn their energies to controlling others in the group. This is not done so much out of a malicious desire to manipulate others (though sometimes it is) as out of a lack of anything better to do with their talents. Able people with time on their hands and a need to justify their coming together put their efforts into personal control, and spend their time criticizing the personalities of the other members in the group. Infighting and personal power games rule the day. When a group is involved in a task, people learn to get along with others as they are and to subsume personal dislikes for the sake of the larger goal. There are limits placed on the compulsion to remold every person in our image of what they

should be.

The end of consciousness-raising leaves people with no place to go, and the lack of structure leaves them with no way of getting there. The women the movement either turn in on themselves and their sisters or seek other alternatives of action. There are few that are available. Some women just "do their own thing." This can lead to a great deal of individual creativity, much of which is useful for the movement, but it is not a viable alternative for most women and certainly does not foster a spirit of cooperative group effort. Other women drift out of the movement entirely because they don't want to develop an individual project and they have found no way of discovering, joining, or starting group projects that interest them.

Many turn to other political organizations to give them the kind of structured, effective activity that they have not been able to find in the women's movement. Those political organizations which see women's liberation as only one of many issues to which women should devote their time thus find the movement a vast recruiting ground for new members. There is no need for such organizations to "infiltrate" (though this is not precluded). The desire for meaningful political activity generated in women by their becoming part of the women's liberation movement is sufficient to make them eager to join other organizations when the movement itself provides no outlets for their new ideas and energies.

Those women who join other political organizations while remaining within the women's liberation movement, or who join women's liberation while remaining in other political organizations, in turn become the framework for new informal structures. These friendship networks are based upon their common nonfeminist politics rather than the characteristics discussed earlier, but operate in much the same way. Because these women share common values, ideas, and political orientations, they too become informal, unplanned, unselected, irresponsible elites--whether they intend to be so or not.

These new informal elites are often perceived as threats by the old informal elites previously developed within different movement groups. This is a correct perception. Such politically oriented networks are rarely willing to be merely "sororities" as many of the old ones were, and want to proselytize their political as well as their feminist ideas. This is only natural, but its implications for women's liberation have never been adequately discussed. The old elites are rarely willing to bring such differences of opinion out into the open because it would involve exposing the nature of the informal structure of the group. Many of these informal elites have been hiding under the banner of "anti-elitism" and "structurelessness." To effectively counter the competition from another informal structure, they would have to become "public," and this possibility is fraught with many dangerous implications. Thus, to maintain its own power, it is easier to rationalize the exclusion of the members of the other informal structure by such means as "red-baiting," "reformist-baiting," "lesbian-baiting," or "straight-baiting." The only other alternative is to formally structure the group in such a way that the original power structure is institutionalized. This is not always possible. If the informal elites have been well structured and have exercised a fair amount of power in the past, such a task is feasible. These groups have a history of being somewhat politically effective in the past, as the tightness of the informal structure has proven an adequate substitute for a formal structure. Becoming Structured does not alter their operation much, though the institutionalization of the power structure does open it to

formal challenge. It is those groups which are in greatest need of structure that are often least capable of creating it. Their informal structures have not been too well formed and adherence to the ideology of "structurelessness" makes them reluctant to change tactics. The more Unstructured a group is, the more lacking it is in informal structures, and the more it adheres to an ideology of "structurelessness," the more vulnerable it is to being taken over by a group of political comrades.

Since the movement at large is just as Unstructured as most of its constituent groups, it is similarly susceptible to indirect influence. But the phenomenon manifests itself differently. On a local level most groups can operate autonomously; but the only groups that can organize a national activity are nationally organized groups. Thus, it is often the Structured feminist organizations that provide national direction for feminist activities, and this direction is determined by the priorities of those organizations. Such groups as NOW, WEAL, and some leftist women's caucuses are simply the only organizations capable of mounting a national campaign. The multitude of Unstructured women's liberation groups can choose to support or not support the national campaigns, but are incapable of mounting their own. Thus their members become the troops under the leadership of the Structured organizations. The avowedly Unstructured groups have no way of drawing upon the movement's vast resources to support its priorities. It doesn't even have a way of deciding what they are.

The more Unstructured a movement it, the less control it has over the directions in which it develops and the political actions in which it engages. This does not mean that its ideas do not spread. Given a certain amount of interest by the media and the appropriateness of social conditions, the ideas will still be diffused widely. But diffusion of ideas does not mean they are implemented; it only means they are talked about. Insofar as they can be applied individually they may be acted on; insofar as they require coordinated political power to be implemented, they will not be.

As long as the women's liberation movement stays dedicated to a form of organization which stresses small, inactive discussion groups among friends, the worst problems of Unstructuredness will not be felt. But this style of organization has its limits; it is politically inefficacious, exclusive, and discriminatory against those women who are not or cannot be tied into the friendship networks. Those who do not fit into what already exists because of class, race, occupation, education, parental or marital status, personality, etc., will inevitably be discouraged from trying to participate. Those who do fit in will develop vested interests in maintaining things as they are.

The informal groups' vested interests will be sustained by the informal structures which exist, and the movement will have no way of determining who shall exercise power within it. If the movement continues deliberately to not select who shall exercise power, it does not thereby abolish power. All it does is abdicate the right to demand that those who do exercise power and influence be responsible for it. If the movement continues to keep power as diffuse as possible because it knows it cannot demand responsibility from those who have it, it does prevent any group or person from totally dominating. But it simultaneously insures that the movement is as ineffective as possible. Some middle ground between domination and ineffectiveness can and must be found.

These problems are coming to a head at this time because the nature of the movement is necessarily changing. Consciousness-

raising as the main function of the women's liberation movement is becoming obsolete. Due to the intense press publicity of the last two years and the numerous overground books and articles now being circulated, women's liberation has become a household word. Its issues are discussed and informal rap groups are formed by people who have no explicit connection with any movement group. The movement must go on to other tasks. It now needs to establish its priorities, articulate its goals, and pursue its objectives in a coordinated fashion. To do this it must get organized-locally, regionally, and nationally.

Principles of Democratic Structuring

Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of "structurelessness," it is free to develop those forms of organization best suited to its healthy functioning. This does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and blindly imitate the traditional forms of organization. But neither should we blindly reject them all. Some of the traditional techniques will prove useful, albeit not perfect; some will give us insights into what we should and should not do to obtain certain ends with minimal costs to the individuals in the movement. Mostly, we will have to experiment with different kinds of structuring and develop a variety of techniques to use for different situations. The Lot System is one such idea which has emerged from the movement. It is not applicable to all situations, but is useful in some. Other ideas for structuring are needed. But before we can proceed to experiment intelligently, we must accept the idea that there is nothing inherently bad about structure itself only its excess use.

While engaging in this trial-and-error process, there are some principles we can keep in mind that are essential to democratic structuring and are also politically effective:

1. Delegation of specific authority to specific individuals for specific tasks by democratic procedures. Letting people assume jobs or tasks only by default means they are not dependably done. If people are selected to do a task, preferably after expressing an interest or willingness to do it, they have made a commitment which cannot so easily be ignored.

2. Requiring all those to whom authority has been delegated to be responsible to those who selected them. This is how the group has control over people in positions of authority. Individuals may exercise power, but it is the group that has ultimate say over how the power is exercised.

3. Distribution of authority among as many people as is reasonably possible. This prevents monopoly of power and requires those in positions of authority to consult with many others in the process of exercising it. It also gives many people the opportunity to have responsibility for specific tasks and thereby to learn different skills.

4. Rotation of tasks among individuals. Responsibilities which are held too long by one person, formally or informally, come to be seen as that person's "property" and are not easily relinquished or controlled by the group. Conversely, if tasks are rotated too frequently the individual does not have time to learn her job well and acquire the sense of satisfaction of doing a good job.

5. Allocation of tasks along rational criteria. Selecting someone for a position because they are liked by the group or giving them hard work because they are disliked serves neither the group nor the person in the long run. Ability, interest, and responsibility have got to be the major concerns in such selection.

People should be given an opportunity to learn skills they do not have, but this is best done through some sort of "apprenticeship" program rather than the "sink or swim" method. Having a responsibility one can't handle well is demoralizing. Conversely, being blacklisted from doing what one can do well does not encourage one to develop one's skills. Women have been punished for being competent throughout most of human history; the movement does not need to repeat this process.

6. Diffusion of information to everyone as frequently as possible. Information is power. Access to information enhances one's power. When an informal network spreads new ideas and information among themselves outside the group, they are already engaged in the process of forming an opinion-without the group participating. The more one knows about how things work and what is happening, the more politically effective one can be.

7. Equal access to resources needed by the group. This is not always perfectly possible, but should be striven for. A member who maintains a monopoly over a needed resource (like a printing press owned by a husband, or a darkroom) can unduly influence the use of that resource. Skills and information are also resources. Members' skills can be equitably available only when members are willing to teach what they know to others.

When these principles are applied, they insure that whatever structures are developed by different movement groups will be controlled by and responsible to the group. The group of people in positions of authority will be diffuse, flexible, open, and temporary. They will not be in such an easy position to institutionalize their power because ultimate decisions will be made by the group at large. The group will have the power to determine who shall exercise authority within it.

The party and the period

Daniel Bensaïd

The following interview with Daniel Bensaïd was conducted during the Ernest Mandel Symposium held in Brussels on November 19th, 2005 (see IVP n° 372, November 2005). Bensaïd outlines his views on the role of a revolutionary organisation in the present period and recalls his first encounters with Ernest Mandel. The interview appeared in the January 2006 issue of *La Gauche*, which is published by the POS (Belgian section of the Fourth International).

La Gauche: Some people are talking about a new kind of organization, a new kind of party. What do you think about it?

Daniel Bensaïd: Today, a party, in its organisation and in its internal life, has to take into account the diversity of social movements. It can benefit from technological advances: a telephone conference, exchanges on the Internet, which can facilitate horizontal exchanges... That is already very important because one of the powers of bureaucracies was the monopoly of information and of the transmission of information. We are far from the vertical and military conception of the party.

Delimitation in relation to social movements is a condition for respecting these movements and their autonomy. It is less manipulative than hiding inside them and it also respects

democratic life within the political organisations and parties themselves. If we have debates, congresses, if we make the effort to produce bulletins, to exchange contradictory positions, there has to be something at stake, otherwise it is democracy without an objective.

The objective concerns major questions. We are not going to fight to the death over questions of local tactics. We can have various kinds of agreements on electoral tactics, when a local branch wants to try out something that is not within the framework of the general orientation at national level.

The famous democratic centralism is often criticised, because we have an image of the way it was practised by bureaucratic organisations. But by approaching the question in this way we forget that centralism and democracy are not antinomies, but that each is the condition of the other. We conduct a democratic debate with the aim of taking decisions to which we are all committed.

I think - I don't know if we'll always avoid this - that what has particularly enabled the LCR to avoid up to now the crises that have destroyed other organisations, is that we didn't have the pretension of founding a theoretical orthodoxy. From the beginning, at the end of the 1960s, there were among us followers of Althusser and Sartre, there were Mandelites, and obviously there is no question of a congress voting on the law of value or on the Freudian unconscious. We agree on tasks, on the interpretation of events and common political tasks. There is a whole space for debate.

A revolutionary party can be the bearer of historic memory, but that does not prevent it from missing out on things, for example on ecology. How can we act today so as to not miss out on the movement of ethnic minorities or the revolt in the suburbs?

Every continuity can lead to a certain type of conservatism. There can also be a religion of memory. For me, political memory is necessary, and it is all the more important for the oppressed, who do not have the same institutions to perpetuate memory as the ruling classes do. For the ruling classes, memory is passed on by a whole series of state institutions, and there is a memory of struggles, of the oppressed, of the defeated, which is carried forward by revolutionary organisations.

We have to deal with what is new, but we do not deal with it starting from nothing. The real problem is to know whether we are capable of welcoming what is new without making it fit into the repetition of what we already know. That is the challenge. When we say "we were late, we missed the rendezvous", yes again. But precise rendezvous, even in love, are somewhat rare.

I make less use of the term vanguard, because the notion has a military connotation that can create confusion. It is rather a question of a metabolism, of an exchange between the social movements and the political struggle. It would be paradoxical to have a certain idea of the vanguard as being more "advanced" than the masses, and then reproaching it with not having invented feminism or ecology. It is after all quite normal that it should come in the first place from social processes on a mass scale, which are then expressed on the political level.

On the other hand today in France we can see very well the specific function of the party. That is why there is for me a "comeback" (of politics). We have had years of social resistance since the end of the 1980s. We almost had, given the bankruptcy of the policies of reform and of the revolutions of the 20th century, illusions in the self-sufficiency of social movements.

They are necessary, everything starts from there, but everything doesn't finish there. We can see the repeated waves of struggle in Argentina, in Bolivia. If that does not lead to a transformation at every level, including on the level of the structures of power, it becomes an endless, infernal repetition. You overthrow three governments in Bolivia, two in Argentina and afterwards you are still where you were before.

So we have to pose the problem in these terms. During the presidential campaign in France, we are going to ask the social movements for a position on feminism, we are going to ask the ecology movement for a position on energies of substitution. At a meeting in Brest, our candidate, Olivier Besancenot, is asked about his position on the size of fishing nets. He can say: "I don't know everything, I have no opinion about that".

We are a political organisation which seeks to offer an orientation to the country as a whole, but the political organisations and the different social movements are obliged to synthesise at least the answers to the big questions. Today, that is the difficulty that an organisation like ATTAC is experiencing. It is very good that ATTAC is a unitary organisation, an organisation for popular education, but we clearly saw, when we got to the European referendum, that it was the political organisations that were the moving force of the mobilisation.

I think that we are at a turning point, the moment of transition from one cycle to another. We saw it with the German elections. We will see it again with the Italian elections, we will see what happens politically afterwards. Because resistance is a precondition that is necessary but not sufficient. If we want to respect the autonomy of the mass movements, then paradoxically, political organisations are necessary. Obviously, we need to have created a culture of pluralism, of respect, but at the same time, we have to firmly defend political positions.

We are also emerging from a period where the key word is consensus. To defend your convictions is not necessarily authoritarian. If you do it correctly, it is rather an expression of respect for others. If you are convinced of what you think, you try to convince others of it, because they are not any more stupid than you, they can reach the same conclusions.

By discussing seriously with others, we also run the risk of being convinced by them. That is in fact the logic of a real debate. On that point, Ernest Mandel was not at all sectarian, but he was very convinced of and very firm about his own positions. That is better than defending sloppy ideas.

My first encounter with Ernest Mandel was here in Brussels: at a meeting during May '68. The meeting had been banned, but I had not been stopped at the border, because I arrived from the Ardennes. Cohn-Bendit had been turned back. It was already a pluralist meeting, because Cohn-Bendit was an anarchist; as for me, I can't say I was a Trotskyist, I was more a Guevarist.

The meeting was finally besieged by the police, who succeeded in getting hold of me and taking me back to the border. It was my first contact with Ernest, but it was ephemeral, because I was immediately kicked out of Belgium. Afterwards we did in fact meet on many occasions. I would like to say that the contact was quite affectionate and respectful. We never had the cult of the personality.

Perhaps we were arrogant and insufferable, because we were young cocks. At the age of 20 we thought we had started a revolution. We discussed on what was really quite an equal footing. Ernest did not entirely persuade us when he tried to convince us to join the Fourth International on the basis of a rather favourable presentation of what forces it had. Well, it

wasn't very convincing, because there weren't many forces.

We were more convinced by logical reasoning: the world was - less than today - globalised, an International was necessary, there is one, it isn't what we wanted, but it is very honourable, it hasn't betrayed, it fought Stalinism, so let's go, and it will change with us. We will contribute to its transformation.

At the end of the day, Ernest underestimated the strength of logical arguments. That was unusual for him. He had great confidence in the power of ideas, but he tried to convince me on the basis of the material force of the Fourth International, which was relatively modest. But it worked all the same.

Building broad anti-capitalist parties - a necessary step

François Sabado

The results of the European elections have re-opened a discussion on the building of the anti-capitalist left in Europe.

One of the first to take up this discussion was Alex Callinicos of the British Socialist Workers Party, the largest and most influential of the groups on the British far left. Murray Smith, although today living in France and active in the LCR, was for a number of years a leading member of the Scottish Socialist Party (a new anti-capitalist party which has made a significant breakthrough in Scotland), and Alan Thornett, leading member of the International Socialist Group (British section of the Fourth International) and member of the leadership of Respect - The Unity Coalition, have also contributed. These contributions can all be consulted elsewhere on the International Viewpoint website:

The European Radical Left Tested Electorally - Alex Callinicos

The European elections and the anti-capitalist left - Murray Smith

A reply to Alex Callinicos - Alan Thornett

Political situation, anti-capitalist party and revolutionary party in Europe

The articles by Alex Callinicos and Murray Smith open a necessary discussion on the problems of orientation and construction in Europe. Unlike Callinicos, we do not start from the existence of so-called models: electoral coalitions of the "Respect" type, broad parties like the Scottish Socialist Party or electoral alliances like LCR-LO. These forms of political intervention or organization are too much the specific product of the history of the class struggles and the revolutionary movement of each country. They are not generalizable. We choose rather to start from the broad features of the political situation in Europe and clarify certain important questions of orientation.

Political effects of bourgeois attacks

1 The situation in Europe is marked by the brutality of the new offensive around neoliberal counter-reforms: the reduction of unemployment benefit and demolition of social security in Germany; pensions and social security reform and new privatizations in France; attacks on pensions, the health system and social security in Holland. After the "Thatcherism" of the 1980s in Britain, a new wave of deconstruction of the social relationships established after 1945 is underway. This radicalism of the capitalist attacks results from a sharpening of inter-imperialist competition in the framework of the current phase of globalization, with the European bourgeoisies seeking to carve out new margins of manoeuvre in relation to the USA and the Asian powers.

2 The brutality of these attacks creates new social and political tensions. This provokes social resistance through strikes, struggles and demonstrations (demonstrations in Germany against the Hartz 4 plan, strikes and demonstrations in France against pensions reform and the privatization of EDF, demonstrations and strikes in Holland) as well as a rejection of the ultra neoliberal policy of the governments: rejection of the neoliberal right in France and Italy but also of Schröder's SPD-Green government or Blair's government.

3 The brutality of these attacks also generates elements of political crisis: a crisis of political representation with the confirmation of high abstention rates in most countries, and a weakening of all the political apparatuses on the right and the left - how can a governmental party establish a social basis while endorsing neoliberal restructuring? This weakening is accompanied by internal divisions, here again on both right and left. In France, the majority party is riven by a confrontation between the president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac and the future president of the party, Nicolas Sarkozy. On the left, although the general evolution of the majority sectors of the trade union movement and the institutional left in Europe is to the right, in a growing integration with social liberalism, fractures and divisions are emerging. In Germany a part of the union bureaucracy and the SPD, in the image of the posture of Oscar Lafontaine, opposes Schröder. In France, against all expectations, Laurent Fabius - one of those who incarnate social-liberalism - is calling for a "no" in the referendum on the European Constitution. The steamroller is such that it leads to fractures and sharp turns.

4 These evolutions repose the question of the analysis of social democracy and the left in general. Contrary to what is often presented by the British SWP, we do not think that the Socialist Parties have become bourgeois parties [rather than bourgeois workers' parties - tr note]. That has never been our analysis. In the same way, if we have underestimated the fact that the popular electorate can use the left to beat the right - but we

were not the only ones, the most surprised being the socialists themselves - we explained in the documents of our last congress that in the framework of alternation, the socialist parties could win an electoral majority. What we have explained and what we maintain is that under the pressures of neoliberal capitalist globalization, social democracy has undergone a process of "social-liberalization", with a rightwards shift in its politics and an advanced social interpenetration of its leadership with the highest levels of administration and the capitalist summits. We have noted that this process leads - in an uneven fashion - to the delinking of significant sectors of the popular classes from the organizations of the traditional left. In practice the improved electoral standing of the PS, or the stabilization of the PCF's electoral score, are not reflected in the growth of these parties, nor by a dynamic of reconstruction of the left. The electoral gains of the PS in 2003 are not reflected in a dynamic comparable to that of the 1970s with the Union of the Left or the developments of the Italian or Spanish CPs.

5 But all these struggles, all these confrontations, have until now ended in setbacks or social defeats. Neither the strength of the anti-war movement nor the dynamic of the movement for global justice has reversed the deep underlying tendencies of the situation. As a result, the capitalist offensive is deepening and, globally, the positions of the traditional workers' movement are pushed back. This has effects on the level of consciousness of broad sectors but it is not strong enough to outflank the trade union apparatuses, which accept the neoliberal framework. These defeats have effects on the morale of wage earners; and although, in certain historic circumstances, the experience and lessons of partial defeats have led to the development of workers' organizations, the social movements and the growth of class struggle currents, this is not the case today. The successive waves of struggles, but also setbacks, weigh on the radical currents. As Alex Callinicos puts it, "the relation of social and political struggles with the electoral process is extremely complex, combined and indirect" but it is this combination of factors that explains for example, the setback for the LCR-LO lists in France. As for the electoral results of the PRC in Italy, which have improved, we cannot consider them as those of a radical left organization "strictly speaking". In many aspects, it can be placed on the radical left but its implantation as well as its electoral influence smack above all of a segment of the traditional communist movement.

Anti-capitalist politics

6 In these conditions what are the key elements of an anti-capitalist political orientation? First, because revolutionaries "have no interests distinct from the working class", they must reaffirm a policy of unity and class independence. That requires a tactic of a united front of the workers and all their organizations - which we carry out through social mobilizations, of the anti-war movement or the movement for global justice, combined with the defence of an anti-capitalist programme. We would like to use this article to reject all the accusations that have been made against the LCR, claiming that we have been "external" to the movement of rejection of the right. Our stand against the government and the right - unity of action of all the social, trade union and political left - was first concretized in the struggles. This orientation was then translated into the electoral campaign, presenting our action as that of the real opposition against the government and the right. We did not, it is true, call for a vote for the left in the second round. This question is a question of

electoral tactics, linked to the French particularities of the majority ballot over two rounds, so this is not the last word of a united front policy. We unceasingly, throughout the whole electoral campaign, made proposals for common action to the whole left. Our arguments differentiated between right and left. We have never had so much influence on the internal debates on the left. That is why, for any observer of French political life, the accusation of "anti-politics" does not stand. Since the presidential campaign of 2002, with Olivier Besancenot, we have never done so much "politics". But we did not call for a vote for the left, judging that, during these elections, to call for such a vote was to give a blank cheque to the SP leaders. Moreover, even if the majority of our voters did vote in the second round for the left, few people have reproached us for our failure to call for a vote. For beyond the vote for the left, there is not the same type of relationship between the wage earners and the traditional left as existed in the 1930s or 1970s. A vote for the SP - or even for the French CP - is more a vote against the right than a vote of support for the policy of the SP. Once again, there are not, as in the 1930s or 1970s, interconnected relations between struggles, the organic growth of the reformist organizations and a political outcome to the struggles which would be a PS-PC government. The meaning of the call for a vote is not the same today as in the 1970s because the labour movement does not have the same relations with the reformist leaderships.

7 This tactic of the united front should be accompanied by the defence of an anticapitalist programme, what we have called in France an emergency social and democratic plan in the service of the workers. From this viewpoint, we would like to stipulate that our electoral campaigns, contrary to what Alex Callinicos has said, are not "openly revolutionary socialist", in the sense that our electoral programmes take up the totality of the revolutionary programme. No, we choose some key themes of the transitional programme - the struggle for a ban on collective layoffs, wage increases, the defence of public services and democratic rights - and we explain that these immediate and anti-capitalist demands can only be satisfied by social mobilization and a government which breaks with the bourgeoisie, a workers' government.

This government is defined by the tasks it must accomplish to satisfy the main popular demands and to begin to break with the capitalist institutions.

This formula remains "algebraic" - it can moreover go under a number of names: anti-capitalist government, a government as loyal to the workers as the right is to the bosses and so on. - but it allows us to make a distinction from all the governmental policies of management of the state and the capitalist economy. It is not a question of avoiding the question of power, as Holloway or others suggest we should do. The revolutionary left must face the question of power and of government but by giving its own responses, not by entering class collaborationist governments. Of course, the topicality of a discussion on this question depends on the political situation in each country, but it is decisive to define a general orientation on this question of power. Thus, there should be some flexibility in forming electoral alliances, but there where these alliances are confronted with the governmental question, we cannot skirt the question... under the threat of paralysis or break up of the coalitions that we set up. The building of an anti-capitalist party, as a medium and long-term project, should clarify its positions on the governmental questions. This debate is a debate on the entire international radical left: should we participate in or support governments dominated by social-liberalism? The response of the PT in Brazil with Lula, that of the

PRC in Italy, that of the CPs of the European left is positive. These parties lead or prepare to support or participate in this type of government. We think, as the whole of historical experience teaches us, that this is a grave error. This type of participation subordinates the workers' movement to the interests of the dominant classes. It holds back the dynamic of mass mobilization. It provokes disillusionment and demoralization. It is this that underpins our opposition to the politics of class conciliation.

Towards a new party - how?

8 The united front and the anti-capitalist programme are the two fundamental pillars of the construction of a new anti-capitalist force. But this perspective is, more fundamentally, a coordinate of the new historical period. From 1992 onwards, the LCR indicated that its activity took place in the following triptych: "new epoch, new programme, new party". The crisis of neoliberal policies, the social resistance and the evolution of social democracy and the decline of Stalinism freed up a space for a new political force, for a refoundation of the workers' movement. That means that the politics of revolutionary organizations should define, at each stage, initiatives to advance along this road. That presupposes firstly defining the content of a new party. It should include, to a good extent, the essential elements of the transitional programme, combining immediate demands, demands for an anti-capitalist transformation of society and a perspective of power linking the necessity of a workers' government and democratic socialism. It should be clear that an anti-capitalist party rejects support for or participation in governments of management of the established order. This party has, then, a "class struggle" strategic and programmatic delimitation but these latter are not completed in the sense that they do not precise a priori the modalities of revolutionary conquest of power, and leave a series of programmatic questions open. In fact many programmatic definitions will be made on the basis of experience, but the foundations of this new party should be solid. In the same way, although the choice between reform and revolution, or different conceptions of the revolution, is not a discriminant in building this party - we can work with partisans of a transformation of society by radical reforms - the basis of this party should clarify key questions: class struggle, democracy, refusal to participate in governments of capitalist management, internationalism.

How then, do we advance on the political-organizational level? As indicated by Alex Callinicos, in the current period, it is improbable that a new party will be born in similar conditions to those of the 1920s, resulting either from a fusion of the revolutionary wing and currents originating from social democracy and moving towards revolutionary positions, or from a fusion between the revolutionary Marxist nuclei and entire parts of the socialist or communist parties. New hypotheses should be retained. The axis of a new party will probably be exterior to the old traditional organizations. Its social and political base will rest on the new generations, experiences of struggle and social movements. It will take up the red thread of revolutionary history while expressing above all a revolutionary policy for the 21st century. But this new party will not be established by decree. It should result from a whole process of political experiences marked by events or the convergence of significant forces which create the conditions for a reorganization of the workers' movement and the construction of a new party. In Scotland, it is the specific combination of the social question and the national

question which has made possible the emergence of the SSP. In Portugal, it is the convergence of several currents originating in the CP, the UDP (ex-Maoist), the PSR (section of the Fourth International) and independent personalities which has given birth to the Left Bloc. It is decisive that the revolutionaries organize this process on "class struggle" bases, but they can only constitute this new party on the basis of a dynamic that largely goes beyond the current framework of the revolutionary organization. A new party cannot be a self-disguising of the revolutionary organization. The new anti-capitalist force must broadly transcend the revolutionary organization. Without this added value, the new force can only appear as a projection of the revolutionary organization or one of its fronts. In France, while the LCR has for some years taken initiatives for a new political force, it has not proclaimed a new party that would only have been an enlarged LCR, but without its history and without its programmatic bases.

9 This dialectic between revolutionary and new broad party is decisive. The importance of a new political force is indeed the building of a strategic mediation between the current revolutionary organization and the construction of a new mass revolutionary party indispensable to the revolutionary conquest of power by the workers. A mediation linked to an entire historic period where it is necessary to reorganize the workers' movement on a broader basis, and remake a series of experiences on an anti-capitalist basis. This is the practicality of a new political representation for the workers. But all this experience of a broad party should be undertaken without forgetting the objective - the socialist revolution - and thus the building of a party which capable of achieving its goals, which presupposes the preparation and education not only of militants but also of sectors of the mass movement. That also supposes preserving, cultivating and strengthening the animation of a revolutionary current inside this broad party. And this pursuit of the construction of a revolutionary leadership through a broad party in unfinished contours can only be done if the new party is much broader, much more extensive than the revolutionary organization. If the conditions of a real transcendence of the revolutionary organization do not exist, if the forms of a new force are less significant than those of the revolutionary organization, and we hurry the rhythms and modalities of construction of such a party, we lose in substance - programme, history, and revolutionary experience - without gaining in political and organizational breadth. Thus, inasmuch as the conditions for a broad party do not exist, the accumulation of forces for a revolutionary leadership in the broad sense is done essentially through the construction of the revolutionary organization and by initiatives favouring the conditions for this new party, rather than by the proclamation of a new force on the cheap.

To continue the discussion on broad parties Bureau of the FI

The purpose of this paper is to relaunch the debate after the day of discussion at the last IC on the Brazilian, Danish, Italian and Portuguese reports

The first debate is clearly identified with the Irish comrades and those of SA, who systematically reject any policy of building

broad parties, thinking that we should just stay on the line of building organizations on the programme of the Fourth International.

The second debate, which we have had since the 1990s (at the 1995, 2003 and 2010 Congresses) is between the comrades who participated in debates on the orientation of building broad parties.

The central question is "what do we want to build? ". The debate concerns the definition and boundaries to give to "broad parties"

This debate continued at the last congress of the FI around the resolution on role and tasks:

Is our orientation is to build broad parties bringing together all the currents located to the left of liberal social-democracy, including both "classist" classic reformist social-democrats from the Stalinist parties, "anti-liberal" currents and revolutionary movements?

This definition of broad parties is in general that of parties or groups such as Die Linke, Synaspismos/Syriza, ÖDP, Respect, and Rifondazione or the PT (in the years following its creation).

The orientation adopted at the last World Congress (2010) was different: that of the building of broad anti-capitalist parties, that is to say, parties placing themselves from the outset in the perspective of the overthrow of the capitalist system, with an acknowledged revolutionary horizon, even if they do not develop a completed revolutionary strategy and if within them they could bring together from political currents of different history and traditions. Such parties may also attract current and activists from radical social movements.

Parties like the PSOL, the NPA, the Bloco, the Danish RGA placed themselves from their creation in such a perspective. This is also the project implemented by Sinistra Critica and Izquierda Anticapitalista.

Everyone understands that there is no impermeable boundary between the two projects, and previous congresses of the FI (1995, 2003) included both perspectives. The starting point of these projects is in all cases the fall of the Berlin Wall and the adoption by the SD parties of an openly neoliberal economic policy in the 1980s and 1990s. This new context disorganised the cohesion of the Stalinist parties and encouraged centrifugal dynamics (on the right and left) in currents emerging from these parties, opening new spaces to the left of social democracy, and made the divisions between earlier revolutionary currents, which were often determined by the attitude to the USSR, clearly no longer pertinent. The 1980s also showed the limits of building of self-identified revolutionary organizations, created and maintained precisely most often in opposition to Stalinism or classical social democracy.

During the recent discussions, the British comrades explained their disagreement with the prospect of "broad anti-capitalist parties" by the irrelevance of such projects in many countries, starting with England.

In the 1990s new experiences for revolutionaries emerged in several continents:

1. Building broad parties as a milieu bringing together currents to the left of social democracy including reformists and anti-capitalist activists, with as the sole basis rejection of social-liberal management of capitalism by social democracy. We can think that Die Linke, during the 2000s represented this type of party, with the explicit coexistence of socialist anti-capitalist currents, rooted in social movements, trade unions and the global justice movement and currents based on "strong reformism"

seeking to establish management alliances with social democracy on a non-neoliberal basis.

The experience of Rifondazione and the Brazilian PT stood roughly in the same area but with different dynamics, our Italian and Brazilian comrades having the hope in the 1990s that the process of building these would give them a socialist strategy, of revolutionary rupture with the capitalist system. In both cases, the question of the relationship to institutions and the state led either to the crisis of the parties or its full integration in the management of the capitalist system. This clearly shows that even without a complete revolutionary strategy, the question of the relationship to the state and the need to place its daily political activity in a perspective of overthrow and not management of the system is essential to stabilize new parties.

This why the orientation developed in our recent World Congresses and explicitly stated at the last congress, taking stock of the Brazilian and Italian experiences in particular, was not only the building of broad parties, but anticapitalist parties seeking to consolidate all currents rejecting the political logic of management of the capitalist system and acting explicitly for a socialist break, a revolutionary rupture based on the activity of social movements.

Three intertwined questions arise concerning the broad parties:

A. How to build political tools: a party-instrument at the time of the crisis of Stalinism and of social democracy, different from small propagandist groups, parties capable of organizing the class struggle and integrating the change of period of the 1990s: parties that are actors and not critical currents of SD and Stalinism, useful parties for the exploited. Parties that organize. This immediately raises the question of the type of activity, organization and implementation of these parties, their social base, not just the electoral base but the question of what social strata that party is able to organize.

B. The question of programme of these parties: an anticapitalist programme aimed at changing society, the overthrow the system. But the question of the programme is obviously directly related to its reality, not just a reference to congress texts: what relationship between this programme and slogans, the campaigns of the party, the political education of its members/ activists, the reality of its political orientation, all the more so that when we talk about broad parties, incorporating new generations of activists coming to politics from social mobilizations on a given issue. Scottish and English examples have also recently shown how the weak integration in reality of the issues of feminism can have lamentable consequences. But other issues can quickly take on an explosive character, such as anti-imperialism, Islamophobia, racism, ecology, especially since they also provoke of tensions that must be collectively controlled in a democratic debate on the orientations of these parties.

C. The question of the relationship to institutions. First of course the fact that these regroupments take place in contradistinction to social democracy already implies a distinct identity. Does this distinct identity translate as practical independence, independence and lack of collaboration with the Social Democrats in the management of bourgeois political institutions?

This question is obviously related to the programme, but more concretely in the relationship with the state and the party's understanding of its role in society and how political action can translate.

The traditional parties of the labour movement (social

democrats, or former Stalinists) are essentially reformist political parties, but also parliamentary parties, for whom the function, the essence of a political party is its parliamentary presence, Institutional activity being the centre of gravity of the party. But this definition is precisely in today's society that of a political party, because by nature, the democratic parliamentary system considers the role of political parties is to represent voters in the management structures of the system, not to organize the exploited and the oppressed to overthrow it! This question of relationship to institutions has determined numerous debates in parties like Rifondazione or the PT, with at particular moments a crossing of the Rubicon leading explicitly to institutional management at the highest level of the state or explicit support to social liberal governments.

But these debates were also present in recent years in broad parties taking a more prominent place in institutions, such as Portugal or Denmark, or recently in France in the NPA.

D. Relationship to social movements and new forms of radicalization:

The last years of the crisis of capitalism have put into question the usefulness of political parties for the oppressed. Alternating management of the system and attacks against workers by conservative parties and the Social Democrats has considerably increased the discredit of the institutions and the functioning of bourgeois democracy and a deep scepticism about the emancipatory political projects proposed by political parties. This discredit also has rebounded on the parties of the radical left.

The experience of the Indignant in recent years in several countries, after much debate in the global justice movement has also highlighted this contradiction: New layers, new generations rise up, rebel against the system, but assimilate to the system all party political forms, so they appear actually built into the system they claim to fight. At the same time, these new political spaces are sources of rapid anti-capitalist politicization or radicalization.

But at the same time, the capitalist crisis, on the basis of the rejection and disgust generated by the system within the youth and the working class, also opens the way to ultra-reactionary, fascist currents.

Broad parties are thus faced with this bundle of contradictions:

- Being parties at odds with social-democratic policy and developing an anticapitalist programme;
- Organizing layers of worker and young people radicalizing faced, with the crisis;
- Having political activity useful to the oppressed by participating in the organization of social struggles while refusing any institutional collaboration with social liberal managers.
- Having an internal political, democratic and educational life to make real parties, not just electoral political fronts, while consolidating all these parties faced with the pressures of "realism and political seriousness" which grow as much as these parties take an important place in their national political life.

These discussions have brought out several things:

First, of course, is it credible want to build such broad parties in a stabilized fashion?

The question of the reality of this perspective and its forms obviously depend on national circumstances: the situation of the radical left and our own capacity to take initiatives. Not only is there no model, but there may even be situations where the only lasting achievement is fronts of political organization or electoral fronts.

This was the case, for example, in England with Respect. But

even in this case, at one point, the issue was clearly raised in Respect of overcoming this framework to move towards a new party, going beyond the political components of the starting point. This would not necessarily have been reflected in an evolution towards revolutionary positions, but would have qualitatively changed the situation. At the time, the SWP has explicitly rejected this development and this was the first step in a crisis of Respect and of the SWP.

But above all, the most important question in recent years has been that of the usefulness of anti-capitalist parties or broad parties faced with the crisis.

There was in Europe, in particular, a dynamic wave in the 1990s and 2000s, driven by the global justice movement and benefiting the radical left.

The strength of the capitalist crisis since 2008 has focused more sharply the demand for anti-capitalist responses but has not brought greater visibility and effectiveness for the European anti-capitalist left, quite the contrary. After the crises of the 2000s (Rifondazione, Respect and SSP) came those of Die Linke and the NPA.

In each case, there are specific causes, but the result is that the parties that appeared to be the driving force of the European radical left came into crisis.

These last years have put at the centre of popular concerns the question of the fight against the structural adjustment plans related to the sovereign debts, in Europe in particular. On the one hand the crisis clarifies workings of a savage capitalist system, on the other it makes even stronger the demand for immediate solutions to the social damage provoked by neoliberal policies.

The key place taken by Syriza at the time of the recent ups and downs of the Greek crisis and by the Front de Gauche in France this last year are explained by this situation.

In the absence of social mobilizations able to confront the root of the capitalist evils and to provoke a social confrontation with the system, the victims of the crisis seek immediate answers to their sufferings produced by the crisis and austerity policies.

We must learn the lessons from this context and have as a priority concern the building of political tools able to fight and propose concrete answers to the social attacks conducted by governments and the capitalists within the framework of the current crisis. The building of anti-austerity fronts or coalitions bringing together the political and social forces opposed to these plans, within the framework of a policy of the united front, must be our essential concern. Proposing united action to the political forces situating themselves in this terrain must be the lever of our action. That means that we must put to the fore of our emergency programmes against austerity containing the essential demands faced with this crisis and able to be used the basis of such fronts.

At the same time, the experiences of the last ten years make it necessary to maintain the problematic of the last Congress of building broad anti-capitalist parties.

1. The continuation of the economic, ecological and capitalist crises and their likely worsening in the coming years always more indispensable the determined political action of revolutionaries and anti-capitalists to fight in a frontal and global way this system, the exploitation and oppressions that it generates and maintains.

2. We maintain the perspective of building political parties going beyond the framework of our sections to organize the social struggles of the exploited and oppressed, seeking to bring together militant currents acting socially and politically on the terrain of anti-capitalism and seeking to give coherence and

political effectiveness to their action.

3. The possibilities and forms largely depend on national circumstances and the reality of our sections. In all cases, the profile that we need is that of openness to other anti-capitalist organizations, but also and especially to the new generations of activists appearing in the social movements.

The experiences of recent years strengthen the need to stabilize such parties by basing them on the forces of the social movements and not on parliamentary positions. This goes alongside the concern of sharing within these parties our analysis of the state and bourgeois institutions

4. We must also maintain our concern for the international relationships and action of anti-capitalist organizations. Although recent years have marked blocks and setbacks in this area, the preoccupation must be maintained especially given that the international developments of the crisis make such action increasingly necessary. While the last World Congress showed the capabilities of our International to bring organisations together, the efforts to have regional meetings and joint actions are clearly standing still.

"Sanction policies in a feminist party" Resolution of the 6th National Congress of the PRT (Mexican Section of the 4th International), 1989

The following criteria of internal sanctions in the party, in regard to oppression of women, were approved at the VI National Congress, held from the 1st to the 5th of November in Mexico

The present document is a contribution from the PRT Women's Commission to the thinking about a sanctions policy in relation to women's oppression. We thought it was especially important to start the thinking in writing now, since we decided at our last congress to initiate new efforts to make this a feminist party. We believe that, since our last congress, women militants have been feeling more confident about denouncing cases of aggression against them, which motivates us to make the following observations with an eye to continuing to deepening the discussion begun two years ago.

A party like ours, whose revolutionary principles include a feminist perspective, finds itself up against challenges and contradictions when trying to set norms and rules about internal functioning. When we join a revolutionary party, we usually assume a certain world view, implicit in our principles, and that becomes an accepted common identity, establishing therefore in practice a social form of control between the members of the revolutionary party. This social control is found in our party norms and bylaws, and is enforced fundamentally by the control commission, and by all other party bodies. This is where sanctions come in to the picture. And this is why they are accepted by the militants as a necessity.

There are certain values which have historically been accepted by Marxists regarding a revolutionary activist's behavior. Nevertheless, when confronted with feminist questioning, we have fewer common values, due to several

reasons, including for instance, the youthfulness of the mass feminist movement (with respect to the revolutionary movement). The changes in behavior and in values that feminism proposes are not accepted by society as a whole, nor by all revolutionaries, because they are part of what has historically been considered as private. For that reason, creating norms for party life using feminist criteria is no easy task.

We know that it is not a matter of giving recipes or models for life. The search for new

men and women is just that: a search. We know that the total liberation of both men and women is not possible in the capitalist system, but precisely that is one of the contributions of our internationalist current, to recognize the necessity of struggling for change, starting today. We do not assume the cynical attitude that says "we can't change this today; it will change under socialism." Our revolutionary commitment is to fight for change starting today, however painful this process might be, and with all of its contradictions. After all, the lives of revolutionary men and women are not characterized by their comfort.

In our new revolutionary Marxist current, we have a conception of feminism as a movement that seeks profound change, the subversion of the established order. We do not limit ourselves to assuring women access to careers, professions, posts, rank, encouragement,

resources, etc. Our feminist struggle is not simply for formal equality, but to revolutionize gender relations, as a whole, between men and women. It is for this reason that our feminist conception includes also the private sphere. Our purpose is to feminize both the public and the "private."

Women's oppression is expressed in a fundamental way in the private sphere. To us, the private sphere is not only the home and intra-family relationships, but fundamentally the whole aspect of male and female identity which the relationship gender domination are felt more deeply and painfully. Centuries of training for both men and women are concentrated in the formation of the differing male and female identities. To change this is no easy task, but let us hope it does not take us yet again as many centuries.

We considered it necessary to start with these observations in order to put the complexity of women's oppression in that framework, and to call attention to the need to deepen our understanding without using clichés about women's oppression and liberation. Also we think it's important to explain why we say that the party is not an island, neither men nor women militants can really liberate themselves individually or in groups. We live with the contradiction of fighting every day for a new world, against the current of the rest of society, as well as in relation to ourselves.

The greatest problem is that, regardless of the difficulties implied in our reality, we have to establish certain social, internal control in regards to gender relations. In this field we have taken several important steps forward, if we take into account the adverse context. Affirmative action, and minimum quotas in the leadership are two important measures towards building a feminist revolutionary party.

Nevertheless, there are other aspects of party building where it is more difficult to apply feminist criteria. Social control to protect women militants against aggression by male comrades is not commonly accepted. In other words, feminizing the public sphere (access for women to the leadership, delegates, etc.) is less problematic than feminizing the private sphere. The biggest problem is that that is where we find the the worst of women's

oppression.

We think that we, as militants of both sexes, have to make serious efforts to change our behavior and our ideas, but this is obviously a long and sinuous process. In no way do we think it is a matter of finding the answers in a cook book or department manuals, and therefore neither do we believe that the establishing of sanctions would be a solution in itself to the problems of oppression. We don't like to reduce the issue to "crime and punishment" or exemplary punishments, nor do we think that people learn by fear. But then, what do we do?

First of all we recognize the need for sanctions. The sanctions are necessary to preserve the party, and this includes the women. Minimum norms of respect are required among militants, minimal norms of interacting, which give women a place to act politically in our country, with certain confidence. We believe that these minimal norms can be listed in three categories: Violence (threats and blows), sexual violence (harassment and rape) and sexist verbal aggression (sexist remarks against comrades). Of course all of these categories can be broken down a bit more, and they require different levels and kinds of sanctions, but we consider them to be the minimum aspects around which each man and women in the PRT should establish rules for working together. If we fail to regulate this three aspects, women would be left completely unprotected in our life in the party. The sanctions are a defensive action so that we, as women can remain in the party with at least minimum conditions guaranteed.

Since we don't see this issue as a matter of crime and punishment, we know that, in order to minimize the aggressions against women within the party, it is necessary to do other things other than just to sanction. It is fundamentally a matter of ideological struggle, we are consciously trying to combat patriarchal ideology, its value system, its customs, etc. For this purpose, we need to seriously discuss in an organized way, the different aspects of gender oppression in relation to what is called private life: sexuality, subjectivity, maternity-paternity, etc.

The party can in no way regulate our militants' intimacy; we are not a police force to regulate the thinking and sentiments of our cadre. That is a practice of Stalinism and Nazism,

which does not belong in our revolutionary Marxist conceptions. But it is obvious that, in order for us to really undertake the gender question, the party must discuss personal and subjective questions, trying to establish equilibrium among three aspects: the objective conditions in the society, the respect for individuality each person's individual process, and the questioning of the private sphere, showing up its political and social nature. We also need to take into account the

different levels of consciousness among militants in the party, so we can situate our measures in the contradictory reality within the PRT.

This means that we need to integrate the discussion of these issues into the party life and into cadre education. We have to create materials and methods for the education appropriate for different levels, but most importantly, the leadership must make together with the women's commission must make a commitment to organize the discussion.

It is fundamental for the whole leadership to be involved, because the issue in question is to eradicate the notion that women's oppression a women's problem. The responsibility of feminizing the party belongs to us all. What is clear is that we as women require certain balance of forces so that the gender question can be present at all times. Obviously, for this to

happen, we need to have an active women's movement in our country, but we also need to create discussion space for women where there is none, and where there is, we must strengthen it.

We don't want there to be just a few specialized feminists, but for all the women in the PRT to find a gender identity, and for that to happen, we need to discuss among us. The experience of Central Committee women is an important step forward, but we need to go deeper in our search for a better balance of forces.

We think that we will better our balance of forces and our self-confidence when we begin discussing our oppression as women in our base committees. Sometimes this is more effective than a sanction.

We need to go much deeper in our discussion regarding the different levels of consciousness inside and outside the party. It is important to discuss about how militants should act in the mass movement, and try to explain what we understand as militant feminist conduct in the mass movement, without being violently confrontational.

We have confidence in the PRT, just as we also trust that it is possible for the men and women within it to initiate a profound change. We want this VI Congress to mark one more step on the road we started to build at our last congress.

PRT Women's commission
bandera socialista No. 402, December 1989