
TOWARDS A NEW INTERNATIONAL ?

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The First International, founded in 1864 in London, had Karl Marx as the author of its inaugural Manifesto, which concludes with the famous formula : “The emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves”.

The partisans of Marx and Proudhon participated in the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA) — even though the former had much more influence, writing some of the main documents of the International, and relations between the two men were always poor. At the Brussels Congress (1868) the alliance between Marxist and Left Proudhonians like Eugène Varlin, future hero of the Commune of Paris, allowed the adoption of a collectivist programme that proposed collective ownership of the means of production. Relations with Bakunin and his supporters were more complex, which led to splits and to the dissolution of the IWMA after its ill-fated transfer to the United States in 1872 (one of Marx’s less brilliant ideas).

The IWMA survives only in the form of those anarchist dissidents who consider themselves the heirs of what was founded in London in 1864. Its existence today is rather symbolic, but in 2001, the more dynamic and open currents of libertarian socialism established a network called Libertarian International Solidarity (LIS). It includes important organisations like the Confederación General de Trabajadores (Spain), l’Alternative Liberaire (France), the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation and so on. In addition, in recent years, there has been a significant development of anarchist currents inside the anti-neoliberal movement, some affiliated with the IWMA, others to the LIS, but many without international affiliation.

The Second International, founded by Friedrich Engels in 1889, was torn apart in 1914 with the support of its sections favouring the imperialist war. It was reconstituted in the twenties with a definitively reformist orientation, and reorganised itself once again, under a new name, that of the Socialist International (SI) after World War II.

The SI is currently a heterogeneous collection of parties and movements, mainly of European and Latin American origin, going from liberation fronts — like the Sandinistas or the Farabundo Marti Front — to pro-imperialist parties, like Tony Blair’s

New Labour. A social democracy of moderate tendency — that is, social-liberal — predominates, like the German SDP, the French Socialist Party, Spain's PSOE. Its objective is no longer, as at the time of Friedrich Engels, Wilhelm Liebknecht, and Jean Jaurés, the suppression of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society, but rather the 'social' *management* of neoliberal capitalism. The Socialist International does not effectively function as a political organisation, rather as a discussion club, an area of political-diplomatic negotiation.

The Third International was the most significant attempt to create an international association of proletarian parties with an anti-imperialist and revolutionary character. In spite of many authoritarian characteristics and discipline of the military type, it was, during its first years (1919–1924) a genuinely internationalist body, in which figures like Antonio Gramsci, Clara Zetkin, Andrés Nin, and Jose Carlos Mariátegui participated. After the death of Lenin, it became progressively transformed, under the leadership of the Stalinist bureaucracy, into an instrument of the Soviet policy of 'building socialism in one country'. Even so, authentic internationalist aspects survived among Communist militants, as shown by the significant participation in the International Brigades in Spain (1936–38).

In 1943, at the request of his allies, Churchill and Roosevelt, Stalin dissolved the Communist International without reducing the total political, ideological and organisational dependency of the Communist Parties of the world towards the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). With the disintegration of the misnamed 'actually existing socialism' from 1989 onwards, the heirs of the Third International entered a crisis that has taken them, with few exceptions, towards political marginalisation or conversion to social democracy. Some parties, like the Communist Refoundation in Italy, succeeded in genuinely re-orienting themselves, breaking with their Stalinist past and taking a new direction, radical and open to the contributions of the social movements.

The Fourth International, founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, emerged out of the International Left Opposition, an anti-bureaucratic tendency inside the Communist International. Weakened by the assassination of Trotsky and numerous other leaders — either at the hands of fascism or of Stalinism and by innumerable splits — it was never able to transform itself into a mass movement. However, its militants played an important role in the events of May 1968 in France, the movement against the war in the US, and the resistance to the dictatorships in several Latin American countries. The Fourth International sought to salvage the heritage of the October revolution from the Stalinist disaster and to renew, with the help of its militants and leaders (Ernest Mandel, Livio Maitan, Hugo Blanco, Raul Pont, Alain Krivine, and Daniel Bensaïd) the theory and practice of revolutionary Marxism.

The Fourth International — to which the current author belongs — has grown stronger in recent years but remains a weak organisation both in numbers and resources. With the exception of the Philippines and Sri Lanka, its forces are essentially concentrated in Europe and Latin America. Its militants have participated, as an organised current, in the foundation of broader re-groupings, like the PRC in Italy, the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales, the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Frente Amplio in Uruguay, and

the Workers' Party in Brazil. Unlike other groups or sects who identify with Trotskyism, the Fourth International does not consider itself as the sole revolutionary vanguard and its objective is to contribute to the formation of a new international, of a mass character, of which it would only be one component.

The question of internationalist resistance to capital has acquired a burning actuality today. Capital has never managed to exert such absolute and limitless power across the planet. Never before could it impose, as it does today, its rules, policies, dogmas and interests on all the nations of the world. Never before has there been such a dense network of international institutions — like the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO — destined to control, govern and administer the life of humanity according to the strict rules of the capitalist free market and free profit. Never before could the multinational companies and the financial markets exert in such a brutal way their global dictatorship. Finally, never before has the power of a sole imperialist state, the United States of America, been so extensive and so arrogant. Today we are witnessing, as sub-commander Marcos wrote in his message to the 'European Zapatistas' (August 28, 1995), "a true war of money and the forces of international financial capital against peoples, humanity, culture and history".

The offensive of capital and the neoliberal governments at its service — which began in 1980 with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher — reached its height after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the capitalist restoration in the countries of Eastern Europe. The "death of utopia" (or of the revolution, or of Marxism) and the "end of history" were proclaimed triumphantly in all the capitals of the West.

It was in a context of defeat and disorientation of the Left that there came, like a spark of light in the dark, the Zapatista uprising of 1994. And in 1996, the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism took place in the mountains of Chiapas. This event had a worldwide impact and brought together, for the first time in very many years, militants, activists and intellectuals of several tendencies, from the North and the South, from Latin America, the United States and Europe. From this meeting came the historic call to build the international of hope against "the international of terror represented by neoliberalism", as the Second Declaration of La Realidad puts it, and to take up the immense task of creating a collective network of all our struggles and specific resistances.

This was a call for an intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network for humanity. This intercontinental network will, recognising differences and similarities, seek to link up with other resistances worldwide and be the means through which different resistances learn from one another.

The meeting at Chiapas in 1996 can be considered as the first act of the great movement of anti-neoliberal struggle that manifests itself now in every corner of the planet. Although this initiative did not have any direct follow-up — the attempts to organise other encounters of this type, inspired by the Zapatista example, in Europe or Latin America were not successful — it was the point of departure, the moment of birth of a new internationalism, anti-neoliberal and anti-imperialist.

In 1999, when the great protest at Seattle took place, it became the main vector of this new internationalism, the Movement of Global Resistance — falsely characterised

by the rightist press, as the 'anti-globalisation' movement. This 'movement of movements' would trigger protests in Prague, Stockholm, Brussels, Bangkok, Washington, Barcelona, Genoa and, more recently, Florence. There would be participation in tens, hundreds, and a million — and also in the WSF held in Porto Alegre (2001, 2002 and 2003), the ESF (2002), and other local or continental meetings.

This movement for another world is broad and heterogeneous, emerging with a worldwide international and internationalist character. In spite of its diversity, there is agreement on some fundamental principles : 'the world is not for sale'; 'another world is possible'; 'no to war'. These are general principles, but if they are defended seriously, they have a deep subversive potential. There is unity on concrete demand: abolition of the debt of the countries of the South; the suppression of tax havens and the imposition of a tax on financial transactions; a moratorium on transgenic products, etc. There is a broad consensus on the identification of the enemy : neoliberalism, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the US empire. On the alternative to the dominant order, we see a broad range of answers, from the 'regulation' of the system to its revolutionary (socialist) transformation.

This diversity can be an obstacle, but it is also a source of strength. The Movement of Global Resistance involves trade unions, feminists, Marxists, anarchists, ecologists, Christians for liberation, socialists of several colours and shades, peasant and indigenous movements, non-government organisations (NGOs), intellectuals, and many young people, women and workers without other affiliations, who wish to protest, march, fight and discuss with others. It is a unique occasion for encounters, debate, mutual learning — a process of cultural interchange in which each actor, without abandoning their own ideas and convictions discovers those of others, and tries to integrate them in their thought or practice.

The mixture and fusion of all these ingredients is creating an explosive cocktail, the new internationalist culture of the Movement of Global Resistance. This process is still in its beginnings, still far from having a common direction, but there is a sense of the formation of a common spirit of the movement, radical, combative, and hostile to institutional attempts to co-opt the movement.

The Movement of Global Resistance, or at least its most organised expression, the WSF, has a certain degree of international organisation. There is an International Committee, and a Parliamentary Forum was set up in 2002 in Porto Alegre. But these bodies, like the Forum itself, are very heterogeneous, and they do not function as an international political force. Their objective is more limited — the organisation of the WSF and the continental Forums. More important is the network of social movements — Via Campesina, the Brazilian MST and CUT, ATTAC and so on — who constitute the main force in the WSF and who have published a document containing some elements of political analyses, anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal, and a call for common protest initiatives.

Does this amount to a 'Fifth International' ? No. One, we are talking about social movements and not political organisations or a project of global social transformation. Two, the Movement of Global Resistance and its bodies are very

heterogeneous — as they should be — including sectors who still believe in the possibility of a regulated, humanised, national and democratic capitalism. The same heterogeneity is found also inside the International Parliamentary Forum.

What is lacking is a network of political organisations — parties, fronts, movements — that can propose an alternative project inside the Movement, going beyond capitalism, and the perspective of a new society, with neither oppressor nor oppressed. Something similar exists in Europe — the Conference of the European Anti-Capitalist Left, which involves the PRC (Italy), the LCR (France), the Left Bloc (Portugal), the Socialist Alliance (England and Wales), the Red Green Alliance (Denmark), and several others. Despite differences, these currents share a similar rejection of capitalist globalisation, neoliberal policies and imperialist war. They also share the aspiration to have a ‘positive’ alternative, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, and ecological and internationalist ‘socialist and democratic society, without exploitation of labour and oppression of women, based on a sustainable development — a socialism from below, self-managed’.¹

If this experience were extended to other continents to constitute a network that included, in a broad manner, the most radical political positions in the great Movement of Global Resistance, we would have a ‘New International’. This would not necessarily be the ‘Fifth’ because not all involved would necessarily identify with the history of the workers’ and socialist Internationals of the past. It could be called the ‘International Conference of the Anti-capitalist Left’, or the ‘Tendency for the New International’ or any other name invented by the creative imagination of its participants.

This new international could selectively integrate the positive contribution of the four proletarian internationals. It would be the heir of Babeuf and Fourier, Marx and Bakunin, Blanqui and Engels, Rosa Luxembourg and Lenin, Emma Goldman and Buenaventura Durruti, Gramsci and Trotsky, Emiliano Zapata and Jose Carlos Mariátegui, Augusto Caesar Sandino and Farabundo Martí, of Ernesto Ché Guevara and Camilo Torres, of Ho Chi Minh and Nazim Hikmet, Mehdi Ben Barka and Malcolm X — and of many others. However, its main reference point would be the existing social movements and, in the first place, the Movement of Global Resistance to neoliberalism.

Of the internationals of the past, it would perhaps be the First that could serve as inspiration — although obviously in the political conditions of today which are totally different — as a multiple, diverse, democratic movement in which different political opinions could converge in thought and practice. This does not mean that the form in which the IWMA was constituted and functioned can be repeated today. It is impossible to anticipate what organisational forms this new internationalist force could have — decentralised federation, organised network, or simply a conference with periodic meetings — but it would necessarily have to be flexible, open and without formal bureaucratic structures. Ideally, it would include parties and fronts, but also Left magazines, research groups, organisations of social movements and intellectuals.

How could we de-limit the political-social field of this new international ? It seems evident to me that anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism — that is, the conviction that the suppression of capitalism as a worldwide system is a necessary condition, even if not a sufficient one, for the abolition of social injustice, exploitation and

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oppression — are essential criteria. The perspective of a new society — free, democratic, egalitarian, in solidarity, ecological, feminist (for me and my comrades, a socialist society — but that can be an open question — is another essential element). But it is in the process of formation of this network, or federation, that we would define the common bases and the political platform of the New International.

Where must we begin ? As our comrade Daniel Bensäid puts it, the departure point is the irreducible force of indignation, the unconditional rejection of injustice, an attitude of non-resignation : “Indignation is a beginning. A way to get up and to begin to walk. Once you are indignant and have rebelled you can find out later what happens”. If we can rally the forces which, across the planet, are motivated by indignation against the existing system, rebellion against the powerful and the hope that another world is possible, we will have the ingredients of a New International — with or without a number.

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¹Conference of the European Anti-capitalist Left, June 2002.