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Fourth International/16th World Congress

Gains and losses

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In welcoming our guests and comrades to the 16th World Congress of the Fourth International I would like to recall briefly what we have done since our last World Congress.

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Addressing the congress

Photo: Julien

Our last congress took place in February 2003, on the eve of the broadest world wide mobilisation on a single theme that we have known, against the imperialist war in Iraq.

We noted then that this was a significant sign of the emergence of the worldwide global justice movement that since 2000 had put back on the agenda the idea that another world is possible - as a result of the initiative taken in Porto Alegre by forces including those of the Fourth International.

Since then this movement has developed in an uneven way through regional, sectoral and world social forums, and recently it has known a new upsurge with the mobilisation for the Copenhagen climate summit in December 2009.

Recognising the importance of this movement, we, as the Fourth International, have been present and visible at world and regional social forums. We have participated in the organised discussions with other forces notably on the questions of strategy for achieving another world, and defended a consistent class struggle and internationalist perspective in our specially published multi-lingual newspapers and leaflets in the name of our publications.

However the emergence of this new hopeful movement, and developments in Latin America, have not changed the overall relationship of forces which continues to be unfavourable to the workers and oppressed.

The neoliberal agenda has not been derailed by valiant fightbacks from workers in different sectors and different continents, the traditional organisations of the labour movement have moved further along the road of collaboration under the pretext of softening the blows of the neoliberal attacks.

The imperialist war drive has not been stopped by the ongoing activity of unevenly powerful anti-war movements in the imperialist centres and the resistance of the populations under attack. The Palestinian people notably continues to suffer an extraordinary level of attack and repression.

The attacks on women's rights, notably the right to choose, continue despite resistance and the existence of an ongoing feminist international network in the World March of Women.

The Fourth International has been part of all these resistances, in particular we can mention in our presence in the recent march on Gaza.

The emergence of new forces from the workers' and oppresseds' movements capable of leading these fightbacks and offering them a new political perspective has been limited and partial.

We have taken the lead in proposing forums for these radical and anti-capitalist forces to come together and discuss their common positions and possible common action, in a series of anti-capitalist gatherings in Europe or in the

context of World Social Forums.

Strengthening our political presence

To strengthen our political contribution to the necessary political discussion we have taken a number of steps :

In 2005 we relaunched International Viewpoint as an online magazine in English to get our point of view and information out to a much broader audience than could be reached by a printed magazine. This in particular makes our profile more prominent in large parts of Asia where new political forces are developing and looking for political relations.

in 2007, we also launched a sister site in Castilian, Punto de Vista Internacional, to ensure that the Fourth International speaks also to the broad audience in Latin America, which is today the site of the most important radical mass movements in the world.

These online magazines are completed by the French Inprecor which continues to be printed monthly and has its own website.

Despite our severe organisational weakness which makes these far from perfect instruments, they offer the opportunity to get our point of view out world wide. The numbers of visits to the sites show that there is an audience looking for our points of view.

In 2007 we relaunched the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam as an open centre for educational sessions for our own comrades and other organisations with whom we have fraternal links, and as an organising centre for seminars on topics demanding further development by the radical Marxist movement. Seminars on the climate question, Palestine and the economic crisis as well as the question of women and LGBT have all produced material that among other things has enriched the preparation of this World Congress discussion.

In collaboration with our British comrades the IIRE maintains a publishing programme. which has enabled us to publish timely works on the strategic debates in the global justice movement and the climate question.

Conscious that the revolutionary movement must be consistently renewed and bring to the fore comrades leading the battles of today's world, with today's perspectives the Fourth International pays particular attention to work with young people. The youth camp organised every year in Europe brings together several hundred young comrades in a unique event where the young comrades organise a week of political discussion on the questions of the day, and the theory and history of the class struggle. An institution for over 25 years, it is appreciated every year by new generations and many of the comrades here are in some ways graduates of the camp.

These are significant achievements for a small organisation and we are proud of them and hope and intend in the coming period to build and extend on them.

Homage to fallen comrades

Gains and losses

However since our last World Congress we have also suffered some sad losses. I cannot unfortunately mention them all here.

Just after the 2003 Congress we heard of the death of **Wang Fanxi**, one of the last original Chinese Trotskyists, at the age of 95. After years in Chiang Kai Shek's prisons he was driven out of China by Communist repression and spent the rest of his life in Britain where until an advanced age he maintained a lively interest in and commentary on Chinese affairs.

Comrade **Livio Maitain**, for many years a central leader of the Italian section and the International, was our last link with the generation that maintained the Fourth International through the difficult period post Second World War. He died in 2004, active up to the end in the battle to build the International and the Italian section.

Roland Lew, former member of the Belgian section and continuing collaborator with our press, notably on the question of China, died in 2005.

Comrade **Redouane Nakaba** a student and teacher unionist activist, leader of struggles in the education sector since the 1980s in Algeria died suddenly in 2008.

The British section suffered an important loss in 2008 with the death of **Greg Tucker**, who was a well-known national trade-unionist leader among railworkers and political activist. He contributed to the International both in building international links in his sector and the launching of International Viewpoint of which he was the webmaster.

Peter Camejo was a mass leader in the US anti-war movement and joined the American SWP in which he rapidly became a central public figure. He broke with them in 1980 and continued in progressive politics, becoming a leader of the Greens in California. He died in 2008. We remember also **Caroline Lund** and **Ed Kovacs** formerly of the SP.

In 2009 a number of leading comrades and former members died :

Hoan Khoa Khoi, known as Robert, the oldest Vietnamese Trotskyist then living, long time leader of the Vietnamese Trotskyist group in exile in France and former member of the international leadership.

Nellys Palomo, of the founding generation of the Mexican PRT and a central figure notably in its feminist work and work in Chiapas.

André Fichaut, known as Max, a historic figure of the Brest workers movement and of the LCR since the time of its predecessor the PCI.

Leni Jungclas, a historic figure of the German Trotskyist current, active since the age of 14 in the progressive movement, continuing throughout the Nazi period and member until her death.

Peter Gowan a former leader of the British section in the 1970s, and continuing anti-imperialist writer and analyst.

Angel Fanjul, known as Heredia, and the feminist **Dora Coledsky**, both active leaders of the Trotskyist movement in Argentina, including on their return in 1984 after exile in France.

Gains and losses

At the end of December 2009 **four leaders of the Pakistan LPP** were killed in a road accident. This was a severe blow to the expansion of their work in Baluchistan province. Other LPP comrades had been killed in 2007 and 2008 in suicide bombings in Swat and Peshawar.

Hugo Gonzalez Moscoso, historic figure of Bolivian Trotskyism, participant in the Bolivian revolution of 1952, imprisoned, tortured and exiled several times for his political activity but a militant until the end, died in January 2010.

Also in January 2010 we suffered a loss that touched personally thousands of comrades all over the world. **Daniel Bensaïd**, one of the leaders of the French May 68, was an active central leader of the French section and of the International throughout the 1970s and 80s. From the 1990s, he concentrated his brilliance and formidable energy in writing and speaking. Despite his frail health he travelled all over the world including to Japan and in particular to Latin America. He was also right to the end an active member of the LCR and then the NPA, participating regularly - as I can testify as a member of the same branch - in local discussions and activities.

In the memory of all these comrades, the many others I have not been able to mention, and all those who have lost their lives in the fight against repression, oppression and exploitation, I ask you to stand for a moment's silence.