

The Question of International

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Workers from different countries need solidarity and joint actions in their fight against capitalism as in the past. Therefore it is very important to build a network of international struggle and solidarity through the trade-union and democratic mass organisations of the working class. But beyond that, revolutionary struggle against capitalist system requires international organisation of the working class. Because of the ambiguities created through years we have to make it clear in the very beginning that what we mean by the international organisation of the working class (workers' international) is the organisation of the socialist revolution that would bring an end to capitalism, that is, the party of the world revolution.

It has been vindicated many times by the history of revolutionary struggle of the working class that this struggle has an international character and requires efforts on an international level. It is clear that emancipation of the working masses from the curse of capitalism and class society necessitates an international perspective of struggle and organisation not confined to nationalistic mindset. This historical truth was set forth and tried to be implemented since Marx and Engels who analysed important laws of class struggle in capitalist society. The international dimension of revolutionary struggle and the effort to create an international organisation in accordance with that is multiply important under present conditions when capitalism is engulfed in a historical system crisis.

Lessons to be drawn from history

While 1848 was the harbinger of revolt in a proletarian way against the bourgeois order in Europe, it was also a turning point where first attempts of in-

ternational organisation in which Marx and Engels were involved were seen. The first two examples of these international organisations were the Communist League which was founded in 1847 and The International Workingmen's Association, also called the First International, which was established in 1864. Both organisations reflected the perspective of international struggle to which Marx and Engels attached utmost importance. Important truths such as that capitalism has created a world system and that under capitalism fundamental classes are essentially not national but international were revealed by scientific efforts and analyses of Marx and Engels. Thus Marxism made it clear that it was impossible for the working class to emancipate itself, that is, to put an end to capitalism, through an action confined to national barriers.

Both by their theoretical and political contributions and by their efforts to build the First International, founders of Marxism illuminated the road of struggle since the early periods when the workers' movement opened its eyes. The experience of the First International enriched by Marx and Engels revealed the necessary principles of proletarian struggle on an international level and formed a sound historical basis from programmatic, strategic and tactical aspects. The working class should never lose sight of international struggle even when it organises on the national level, it should never tolerate nationalism and prepare the conditions of emancipation by expanding its organisation over to international field.

The First International unfortunately began to decline and fall apart on the basis of inner quarrels and splits in the aftermath of the defeat of 1871 Paris Commune. At this point, Marx and Engels' attitude is instructive in that they put an end to this first experiment in order not to let it degenerate in the hands of those political tendencies that are harmful to revolutionary working-class struggle, with the purpose of creating more favourable conditions for a healthier international organisation. This is a very important historical lesson suggesting that the question of international organisation cannot be turned into a form or taboo independently of whether the revolutionary content is alive or not. In short, the First International became a pre-experience that started the historical struggle of the working class although it could not achieve sufficient maturity and massiveness organisationally.

The second experience of international organisation in the history of working-class struggle is the Second International established in 1889. Compari-

son of the two reveals an important historical lesson; they have no continuity between themselves. Although the Second International achieved a mass base by embracing social-democratic parties of various European countries of the time, it went away from the revolutionary essence of the experience of the first international. Adapting to the tendency of economic upsurge of capitalism the Second International parties drifted into the swamp of reformism. When hard times came with the first imperialist war of partition they voted for war credits in support of their own bourgeois governments.

This historical example means a lot. A mass base diluted with reformist political tendencies, erected in front of the revolutionary line, cannot bring success to the anti-capitalist struggle of the working class. While it is correct to work for the revolutionary struggle of the working class to embrace the masses it is equally wrong to compromise revolutionary politics in the name of achieving mass influence. What must be aimed at is to achieve a mass influence on the basis of revolutionary struggle of the working class both on a national and international level.

The Bolshevik conception of organisation and struggle shaped under Lenin's leadership embodies the needed historical example in this context. The revolutionary Bolshevik line that must still be claimed today throws light on how the struggle must be organised on national level and reveals in broad lines how a revolutionary workers' international must be. In this context the experience of the Third International (Comintern) which opened its eyes in 1919 is very important. The Third International is not a continuation of the Second International just like the second was not a continuation of the first. The Third International rested upon the critique of the second experience and the effort to break with it on various vital points.

When the revolutionary tasks of the period of first imperialist war are considered it would not be wrong to say that the work for building the Third International was a bit late. Yet it did not take long to build it because of the fervour of the October Revolution. The experience of the Third International reveals that it is possible to build an international having both the revolutionary content and mass base for the first time in the history of the working-class struggle. However one should not idealise this experience as if it was flawless. Unfortunately the Third International did not rise above sound national sections which had not taken shape as a product of patient and determined pre-

paratory work. As to the European countries the sections were formed a bit hastily and without reaching a sufficient political clarity. And the other sections in backward Asian countries including Turkey were based on a political line amalgamated with peasantry and national liberationism in a historical moment when capitalism and the working class did not develop.

Despite these weaknesses the fact that the Third International was built as a revolutionary workers' international in general was due to the rightful political authority of the October Revolution and internationalist assistance of the Bolshevik Party. But as Lenin underlined, this caused the constituents of the Third International be dependent extremely on the Russian example and the Bolshevik Party. Therefore its revolutionary essence could not be sufficiently assimilated by the constituent sections and their fate became directly dependent on the fate of the Russian Revolution. Thus the bureaucratic counterrevolution that brought the October Revolution to an end and overthrew the workers' rule in Russia also cut the vital revolutionary veins of the sections of the Third International.

With the added negative effect of Lenin's death, the year 1924 was an extremely adverse turning point in the history of national and international struggle of the working class. The bureaucracy that was in ascendance in the Bolshevik Party, Soviet state and Comintern gradually gained all strings of power. Elevating itself to the position of a ruling class, the bureaucracy rose to power in Russia under Stalin's leadership. Thus the Comintern, too, lost the quality of being the revolutionary international organisation of the working class. At this point, where the October Revolution is defeated in a sinister process, it was Trotsky and his comrade followers who claimed and tried to continue the Bolshevik line of Lenin's time.

Trotsky's continued revolutionary endeavour after Lenin's death must be historically owned. Trotsky and his comrades strove to build the International Left Opposition to defend the gains of the October Revolution against the rule of the bureaucracy. Unfortunately this struggle was waged under extremely unequal conditions compared with the political power and assets the ruling bureaucracy had and therefore could not reverse the bad course. But the struggle to keep alive the revolutionary line of Lenin's time against all difficulties, incredible persecution, suffering and political massacres by the ruling bureaucracy did not stop. Indeed, as a continuation of these efforts,

founding of the Fourth International was proclaimed by Trotsky in 1938.

As we did with the previous experiences of international organisation we have to make a historical comparison between the Third and Fourth International. The endeavour to build the Fourth International is not based on a denial of or break with the Third International. On the contrary, it reflects the struggle to defend and continue the revolutionary legacy shaped in the Comintern in Lenin's time against the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy that trampled it. However the struggle for the Fourth International –leaving aside the subjective shortcomings– was challenged by the objective obstacles created by the incredible repression and tyranny of the Stalinist rule in the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state. Therefore the experience of the Fourth International remained a historical endeavour on the preliminary level which amounted to defending the revolutionary legacy and did not move much further in the sense of organising.

Compared to Lenin, there are many weak points of Trotsky in the field of organisation. As a matter of fact, Trotsky could not completely free himself from the Menshevik conception of organisation from which he had greatly influenced. However the failure of the experience of the Fourth International was directly and mainly due to the adverse objective conditions created by the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. Historical facts have to be assessed, in the final analysis, in their own circumstances. It is clear that Trotsky's effort to defend the Bolshevik line of Lenin's time is an extremely important and valuable historical effort.

However it is hardly possible to say the same thing for those tendencies and groups that constitute the history of Trotskyism which started after Trotsky's death. Because, in general, the Trotskyist movement has failed to understand Trotsky deeply as well as to own and develop his theoretical-political legacy. On the contrary, in the name of following Trotsky, his important analyses were ossified and turned into dogmas, thus revolutionary vigour was put an end to. After his death the Fourth International has turned into a hollow outer form in which counterproductive and petty-bourgeois political rivalry prevailed amongst Trotskyist groups of varying size. Therefore the Fourth International which in the beginning had been tried to be build for the purpose of continuing the tradition of revolutionary internationals has lost its significance with Trotsky's death.

Many Trotskyist organisations and tendencies have claimed the legacy of the “Fourth International” after Trotsky’s death, and, time after time, they attempted, on the face of it, to rebuild it on the basis of counterproductive petty-bourgeois strives. We do not accept this history of the “Fourth International” after Trotsky’s death as part of our revolutionary tradition. We already set forth the ideological, political and organisational reasons of this approach of ours in all our written material and documents that lay the foundations of the tendency of Marxist Tatum. To put it briefly, there is an objective difference between Trotsky and Trotskyism that cannot be bridged by subjective speculations. It is necessary to draw a definite line of demarcation between Trotsky, who is one of the leaders of the October Revolution leaving a revolutionary historical legacy to future generations, and Trotskyist groupings that persisted on the basis of distinctive misconceptions and sectarian ambitions.

We are aware that many of the Trotskyist groups will not agree with the above appraisals. But we know that those who insist on not drawing lessons from history will have no chance to build a new future on revolutionary foundations. Moreover, let alone previous periods, the ongoing process since the fall of the bureaucratic structures especially like the Soviet Union reveals a historical reality in a striking way. There can be no political future for those who are not willing to draw revolutionary lessons from their past mistakes! Therefore it is clear that from a unity of those kinds of groups that are unwilling to settle accounts with their mistakes and live on being content with their situation will not emerge a new international to advance the struggle of the working class! In fact, such groups, let alone claims to build a new international, need a settling of accounts with their own mistakes in order to save themselves from political bankruptcy and demise. Only those who are able to scrap their erroneous sides and resurrect themselves on the basis of a correct and revolutionary approach can move forward in political struggle. And, again, only those can create the possibility to advance the revolutionary struggle of the working class, including a new international.

A new International is needed

The working class always and on every level needs organisation in its struggle against capitalism. But the working class’ need for a revolutionary organisation on a national and international level reaches unbearable levels in times

of deep crisis when capitalism is more prone to receive devastating blows. Periods of convulsing crises that permeate all spheres of capitalism, i.e. economic, political and ideological, are historical turning points testing which of the two fundamental classes dominate. Therefore when such periods come the course of events will be determined by whether the proletariat has a revolutionary organisation on a national and international level. When the historical record of the workers' movement is remembered, then it will be seen that revolutionary opportunities have been lost due to the fact that such an organisation was unfortunately absent at these moments.

And under today's conditions where capitalism is engulfed in a historical crisis the working class' need for revolutionary organisation is burning. While communists have to speed up their work in their countries they also have to wage a planned struggle to create an international organisation. With the crisis of capitalism the objective conditions of revolution has become more mature on a world scale. Also compared to previous decades there is generally a more favourable atmosphere to develop the subjective conditions of revolution, that is, the revolutionary consciousness and organisation of the working class.

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union big capital circles and bourgeois governments were successful in creating an unfavourable atmosphere for the workers' movement. And a resulting serious retreat of the workers' movement has been experienced across the world. The effects of this retreat are not yet totally wiped out. But the attacks of the crisis-stricken bourgeois order against established social rights of the working class have created anger against system on the part of the working masses. It is now a fact that in many countries there are explosive upsurges in mass movements that involve workers and toilers, and their young generations. The system crisis of capitalism brings about serious changes in class psychology both from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat throughout the world. It is obvious that this historical process drives the bourgeoisie towards a fully-fledged reaction for fear of new revolutions and that in many countries racist, fascist practices are becoming widespread. Bourgeois states all over the world have already set out to consolidate the instruments of repression over the working masses and the oppressed sections of society. One positive effect of this process on the working class side is that the need for struggle against capitalism and a revo-

lutionary organisation is becoming realised, though weak at the moment.

The positive factors have not fully matured yet, but present situation offers a more favourable medium for the working-class revolutionaries to carry out a preparatory work compared with recent years' conditions that instil hostility towards organisation in workers. Actually we are passing through an interesting period of transition where rights and wrongs, advantages and disadvantages are intermingled in a confusing way. For instance, although there are appeals for organisation coming from various circles, there is confusion when it comes to the question of what type of organisation and what kind of an organisational style is needed in order the working class to get rid of capitalism. Across the world, emphases on the need for mass actions and appeals for mass actions are getting more intense, but the number of those who point to the fact that the upsurge of disorganised masses is destined to fall down in a short period of time are far from being satisfactory.

The present period presents a similar picture in terms of the attitudes towards the need for an international organisation of the working class. For instance, the number of those who express in a general way the need for the working class to wage struggle and organise on an international level is increasing. But the number of those who deal with concrete questions like "what is to be done" and "how" in order to fulfil this need is very low as yet. But despite all these adversities that we try not to ignore, it is clear that there is a brewing change that can create the future on sound fundamentals and this is what is pleasing. However those who want to have sound fundamentals must be able to see the weak sides and succeed in waging a determined struggle to overcome them.

We have to state right at the beginning that those tendencies that glorify spontaneity relegating the organisation of the working class to fluctuations of mass actions should not be tolerated. Showing political weakness on this front is a finished recipe to darken the future of the working class. As the lessons drawn throughout the history of struggle at the cost of many defeats show, periods of capitalist crisis alone do not produce revolutionary gains in proletarian movement. Deepening of crisis of capitalism on various fronts such as economic, political, ideological fronts, can only serve to ripen the objective conditions of the revolutionary struggle of the working class. Surely this factor is very important, but alone it is not enough in attaining forward

leaps in the revolutionary struggle. Only when the subjective conditions of revolution are furthered in parallel with the ripening objective conditions of revolution can the struggle against capitalism be successful.

A progress in the subjective conditions of revolution cannot be a direct product of spontaneous upsurges in mass movement. Advancing the level of revolutionary consciousness and organisation of the working class can only be a product of a determined and planned organisational work within the class and on the basis of the vanguard of the class. We have to examine present conditions also from this angle in order to establish positive and negative factors. It is observed that there is an increase in quantity and sphere of influence of those currents and political structures with anti-capitalist claims. However reformist and liquidationist tendencies that reach out to the working class keep it away from a correct process of raising its consciousness and organisation. The fact that the Bolshevik Party was the vanguard of the October Revolution and that the October Revolution is the only example bringing the working class to power is denied. All denialist, liquidationist tendencies and groups that are willing to brush aside this side of the historical reality take refuge behind the critique of a fake Bolshevik Party castrated by the Stalinist bureaucracy. By doing this they swear at Lenin and the conception of revolutionary Bolshevik party. And the conception of Bolshevik party which is sine qua non for the workers' revolution to be successful is disowned on account of such sinister approaches and mostly the sins of Stalinism. Hence the void in the field of revolutionary organisation of the working class is still there today. Taking these factors into account, we have to say that those factors that make a significant breakthrough in the field of subjective conditions of revolution difficult are dominating at the moment.

Misconceptions should not be tolerated

Despite all adverse factors that have existed for a long time, now favourable conditions for an advance of the revolutionary struggle of the working class are taking shape. After decades when hostility towards organisation has been in fashion and embracing new generations, now the number of those, including the youth again, who speak of struggle and organising is increasing, depending on the changing socio-political environment across the world. If we leave aside those groups that are mired in nationalism, anyone who speaks

of revolutionary struggle in a way also admits the necessity of international struggle and organisation. However, ideas about and approaches towards how the needed international organisation is built are varying.

In fact questions about workers' international have been addressed by mainly Trotskyist tendencies for many years in many countries, European and Latin American countries being the foremost. This is no surprise because Stalinist left, as follower of a political line that once liquidated Comintern, has stood away from the question of re-establishing a workers' international. And Trotskyist currents as followers of Trotsky have been claiming to either continue and represent the Fourth International or build a new (fifth) international. So, today projects that are put forward to form a workers' international, and concrete initiatives, appeals etc. are in general coming from Trotskyist organisations and quarters.

So far it is possible to regard this situation as a positive aspect on account of Trotskyist movement. However, going a bit far, we arrive at a realm at the centre of which reside serious differences and problems about the approach towards the revolutionary struggle and organisation of the working class. To give an example from European countries, there are Trotskyist tendencies that speak of the need of the working class for a revolutionary organisation, but that in practice adapt themselves to social-democratic parties in the name of applying entryist tactics etc.. Trotskyist spectrum covers many tendencies and groups from those who accept on paper the Leninist conception of party to those who manifestly reject it. If we leave aside the few exceptional examples that developed more correct and healthier political attitudes, Trotskyist movement in general fail to follow a proletarian revolutionary line on organisational questions both on a national and international level. Trotskyism, in its widespread form in Europe, is too much intermingled with petty-bourgeois leftism and instead of creating an organisation capable of leading the working class it chooses to go for an amorphous massiveness. When we look at the examples of Trotskyism in Latin American countries we see a kind of leftism intermingled with Cuodillismo dominating. To give an actual example, a kind of left populism formed around, say, a state president like Chavez and a mass-tailism is defended and presented as revolutionism.

Another set of important problems about international organisation consists of correct and incorrect approaches towards the way this organisation is built.

We will not go into details of these differences but just concentrate on some important points. Building an international organisation capable of leading the revolutionary struggle of the working class can only rest upon initiatives and efforts of those communists who are actually waging an organised revolutionary struggle in different countries. But of course, such a work of building is something of a planned process. The rhythm and duration of it does not solely depend on the subjective intentions and wills of those who labour for it. Objective environment (state of capitalist system on a world scale and the general course of class struggle) plays a primary role in this, which can speed or slow, or, facilitate or make difficult the process. For instance, that the Third International was built in a short period of time is directly connected with the positive objective environment created by the October Revolution on a world scale.

As exemplified by the building of the Third International, there is no doubt that creating an organised entity and structure in the context of a communist workers' international depends closely on revolutionary experiences to be seen in this or that country, or countries. But one cannot wait for future events or depend on fortune telling to create a workers' international. What has to be done is to create an international nucleus by communists from various countries who have reached a clear idea, a unity of purpose and style.

There has to be a clear line drawn between meaningful efforts in this direction and those empty and useless approaches that can be raised in front of these efforts. Those appeals to create a mass workers' international in a reformist way, with no capability to lead the class in a revolutionary way are an example of this. Also the popular tendency to create virtual unities through social networks which substitute a real effort for organisation and in fact popularize non-organisation cannot be tolerated. Such mistaken approaches that are popularized in different forms create a field of social hobby in which non-organised people and some know-it-all intellectuals who lost, or openly reject, the perspective of organising within the class, mess about. The appeals for an international by these petty-bourgeois elements who mess about with social projects should not be heeded. From the standpoint of the working class, there has been, and will be, no use of such projects and appeals by these elements in any country.

Speaking of misconceptions in the international field, we can briefly touch

upon a very striking example, i.e. the appeal for a fifth international made by Venezuelan president Chavez. In the first World Meeting of Left Parties in 2009 in Venezuelan capital, Caracas, he said world left needed a new unity and called for the formation of the Fifth International. It is for sure that a new international is needed, but it is also clear that an international called for and started by bourgeois left statesmen like Chavez has nothing to do with the formation of an international defended by revolutionary Marxists. In fact Chavez's concern is to gather the support of the world left in his challenge against the USA through such projects having the label "international".

It is for sure that, regardless of Chavez being the president or not, left popular fronts to form in Venezuela can be given support against US imperialism's plots. But to take refuge behind such excuses and present the appeals for an "international" made by Chavez as a new project of international that can occupy the agenda of Marxists is an unforgivable opportunism and a political frivolousness. IMT's lamentable position under Alan Woods' leadership which is reduced to tail-ending Chavez is a concrete example of this. It is clear that the misleading appeals of those like Chavez in relation to forming a new international do not create a possibility from the standpoint of the revolutionary struggle of the working class. On the contrary, they create confusion that hinders right efforts.

For a unity of purpose and style

For the formation of the international organisation of the working class, unity of purpose and style of communists who are to move from a common point has to be achieved and those approaches to serve this has to be clarified. We have to emphasize that we need a stance which is firm in principles and flexible in tactics. Struggle to form the workers' international can move forward thanks to vanguard efforts of communists who are deeply committed to Marxism and conduct actual work with revolutionary fervour within the working class. Communists who set out on similar purpose and principles from around different countries must be able to turn their efforts into actual steps. Even an extremely modest beginning in this vein would be very valuable under present conditions.

The cement for the unity needed for forming a revolutionary workers' international can only be revolutionary willingness and resolution based on

Marxism and experience of struggle. Without that, no rules written on paper can be embodied. And in fact the need for revolutionary discipline imposed on communists by the revolutionary struggle itself can only be met with it. It is desired for those communists who are to move from such fundamental points to achieve a unity of purpose and style among themselves and to proceed towards adopting a common platform that would guide revolutionary international struggle of the working class. Of course this progress will never come true spontaneously and a process including political contact, discussion and joint struggle is needed for this. We can briefly enumerate some points to start from in order to make such a process work healthily.

1. International organisation is not an amorphous unity consisted of loose contacts between communists or worse a formation like networks which are in fashion in recent times. International organisation means the world party of the working class and this is really the one that has to be built.

2. Today there is no international organisation of the working class and those claims to represent the Fourth International or build the Fifth International do not have the power to change this fact. To give a positive example from history, we can remember the experience of Comintern formed in the moving fervour of the October Revolution in Lenin's time. This experience still shows the way in outlines in building a workers' international.

3. The revolutionary international organisation of the class can only be formed through unity of like-minded elements that make efforts to build it and carry on this effort in a determined way. What is important is not to shrink away from serious trials to shape the constituents of this unity. And political closeness or distantness must absolutely be weighed in the scale of revolutionary Marxism.

4. It is clear that the world party of the working class cannot be achieved at once. But, on the basis of agreement on fundamental ideological, political and organisational matters, it is possible and necessary to form an international tendency to move towards this goal and march together. Formation of an international revolutionary nucleus should be aimed at to create and organise such a tendency.

5. It is no use to dream of finding the twin brother/sister on the international field at the start, which causes loss of time. Life does not flow on the

basis of rigid and uniform ideas. Therefore, if there is a ground for unity on fundamental ideological-political and organisational matters, then differences on historical-theoretical matters like for instance the class nature of the USSR should not prevent marching together. But of course discussions and exchange of ideas on these matters must be continued in order to deepen Marxist understanding.

6. Unity must be principled, and at the very beginning a clear attitude must be assumed on differences. Differences should not be concealed. Hastiness and pushing should be avoided.

Revolutionary workers' struggle forbids falling into the trap of nationalism and requires that international interests of the working class must be given prior importance. But if communists do not make necessary efforts to build the revolutionary organisation of the working class in the countries they live, then the revolutionary international organisation of the proletariat will never be formed. Because international organisation is not a foreign bureau independent from the efforts of communists waging actual struggle in various countries. International organisation cannot spontaneously be formed by putting forward brilliant-looking political ideas on the international level. In fact in no field of life any significant achievement can be secured without putting actual effort in a correct way and defying wrongs. Without a correct organisation, ideas, however they might look revolutionary, right and satisfactory, cannot turn into material force on their own and change the world.

Under present conditions where the working class has no revolutionary international organisation, there is no other way of struggle than to labour and work out revolutionary Marxist solutions and try to carry them over to international platforms. Therefore it is inevitable to get involved in various experiments to solve the question of international organisation of the working class. It must be kept in mind that all great revolutionary advances could be successful thanks to revolutionary class attitude, which means plunging into actual work without being intimidated by difficulties and daring to experiment.