

A NEW INTERNATIONAL FOR A NEW WORLD
(Renewing the Socialist International: the New Project)

"Now as at no other time in the past, a multitude of possibilities (both good and bad) are open to us. Nothing happens on its own - and few things last forever. So remember your strength and that all times call for their own answers".

(Willy Brandt, Message to the Berlin Congress of the Socialist International, September 1992)

In September 1996 the XX Congress of our International was held in New York. The previous one took place four years ago in the Reichstag in Berlin. It was September 1992 and we found ourselves at the dawn of a new era.

In Berlin, the SI welcomed 24 new parties. In New York 33 more parties were admitted and there are many parties applying for membership in the hope of joining us. Our International constitutes by far the most powerful world forum of democratic parties: 139 socialist, social democratic, labour, and progressive organisations from all continents.

Nevertheless, as Willy Brandt recalled in his message to the SI Congress in Berlin, *"the number of members we have and the number of those wishing to become members are not values in themselves. They are an obligation"*.

It is now up to us to confront this enormous responsibility in a world that is undergoing rapid and profound change.

Our challenge is to prepare the Socialist International for the XXI century, and its new platform of ideas and policies for a new era with new challenges, new problems and unprecedented possibilities.

This implies giving new responses in the field of ideas, proposals and political actions, to the increasingly strong demands for a better future from the peoples of the entire world.

To this end, the New York Congress agreed, as proposed by the President of the International, Pierre Mauroy, to form a Special Commission on the future orientation of the Socialist International.

This document is a first working paper to outline the functioning of this Commission. We propose:

1. Firstly, a definition of the objectives of the Commission.
2. Secondly, some reflections on the general approach and an outline of themes to be covered.

3. And finally, a first description of the methods and initiatives that this Commission might develop.

1. The objectives of the Commission

1.1 The first objective of the Commission must be to encourage the debate and elaboration of a new platform of ideas and proposals with which the SI should make its entry into the XXI century.

The Commission must propose the key political objectives of the SI in the light of changing world circumstances, and suggest proposals for political activity in the coming years.

Based on the Stockholm Declaration of Principles, but taking into account also the extraordinary changes that have taken place and are now taking place in the world, the Commission must formulate new political priorities for the SI.

1.2 The second objective of the Commission will be to define what kind of organisation we wish to be as we enter the XXI century.

The SI today, in a positive sense, is in a total crisis of growth and must reflect on its own political and organisational reality in order to:

- achieve the very best efficiency in its own functioning

In this respect, the Commission will examine the structure, composition and working methods of the statutory bodies of the SI and will put forward proposals for adapting and optimising them. It will also examine, with the same purpose, the organisational and financial resources of the SI.

- flexibly organise its relations with those around it

The Commission will examine relations between the SI, the political forces of the left and centre-left and the international forces and fora in order to broaden and develop its relations and influence at regional and world level.

- break the communications barrier

The Commission will study the public image of the SI, its presence in the communications media, its publications, and the use of the latest information and communication technologies in order to improve the political and media image of our organisation, its activities and proposals.

Finally, the Commission will present its recommendations and proposals to the competent bodies of the SI for their debate and eventual approval.

2. The new responses of the SI: general approach and outline of the themes to be debated

2.1 The general approach

The world, the economy and our societies are changing dramatically: the left must change and put forward new proposals. Globalisation and the technological revolution require new responses to maintain our ability to govern and transform the present and to foresee and invent the future.

The only ones who are not perplexed by the current changing situation are the sectarians of the right or left, who always have recipe-like formulas to be applied to every situation. We must avoid debating false certainties or the mere declaration of general principles. Such an attitude would be tantamount to fleeing our responsibilities.

Nor can we take refuge in the comfort of debating questions. Not because we do not ask them, but because we must go further: we are obliged to give replies, which means making commitments.

We must rigourously and coherently reaffirm and apply our principles and values in order to reply to the new questions of today's world, and to globalisation in particular, given that it is the priority concept on a world scale in today's reality.

Inventing the future and governing the present

Ideologies as closed and all-encompassing systems have disappeared. But if by ideology we mean a set of ideas that define a more progressive position or a more conservative position, that fortunately is still alive and will remain so.

Ideas and values are our foundation, but they are not enough. At the same time, we must take our position in the field of reality and the culture of government. An ever-present temptation for the left - which we must not succumb to - is that of inventing the future while leaving the right to govern the present.

To invent the future, to imagine the XXI century, is an unavoidable obligation, but this does not imply renouncing the vocation to govern the present, and seriously and realistically trying to transform it.

Democratic socialism still has the capacity to offer a message of social justice to the majority of citizens. Ultimately we are in politics in order that people may live a bit better, have equality of opportunity and a sense of justice. That is the only way that we will be able to attract the support of the social majorities that we are aiming for.

There are some who do not have a majority vocation because representing a social majority means assuming the contradictions found within all majorities.

We must aspire to represent the will of the majority in our countries.

Replying to neo-liberal fundamentalism

A new neo-liberal fundamentalism is trying to monopolise the world of ideas. This dominant neo-liberal ideology is imposing a communication barrier that we must break. To do this we must start from the conviction that, despite the persistence of these neo-liberal messages, the defence of the welfare society, of a cohesive unsplintered society, is today not only a just, necessary and achievable objective, but one that public opinion will increasingly demand in view of the balance that is starting to emerge from this period of neo-liberal world hegemony.

This is linked to the growing need for democracy to be affirmed and dignified. The current worship of the market produces a certain anxiety, since it leads us to wonder which will give way - the market or democracy - if ever a contradiction arises between market forces supported by neo-liberal fundamentalism and the democratic institutional model. In this sense it is well to remember that even though democracy has never existed without a market economy, there are market economies without democracy.

Globalisation as a new frontier of development

We have entered a new era based on the globalisation of the world economy. This is a reality that we cannot deny. There are opinions within the left that reject globalisation. Globalisation is a new and irreversible fact, and the approach of the left to this phenomenon cannot be to reject it.

What we have to do is to analyse it, see what its effects are, maximising its potential advantages from a progressive viewpoint, and minimising its disadvantages.

Globalisation gives us the possibility of a new frontier of development before which the old dogmas are useless. What we call globalisation has been best understood and implemented by the transnational companies and the financial capital that circulates in markets all over the world.

This phenomenon brings into question the very principle of territoriality upon which states are founded and it drastically reduces the operation of national economic policies.

A great programmatic and political effort is needed to open new ways leading us to consolidated democracies, efficient and open economies, and just and cohesive societies.

The basic questions to be confronted are the following:

- faced with the omnipotence of the markets, what can and must the states do, and what can we expect from the coordination of economic policies;
- what should the role of the multilateral institutions be in the regulation of the world economy;
- how should the processes of regional integration - a necessary step towards global regulation - be conducted without splitting the world into antagonistic blocs, and favouring instead a closing of the gap between developing and developed countries;

- and, how to make it possible to integrate the peripheral zones of the world economy that are stuck in the margin of development.

Employment and technological revolution

The first responsibility towards our peoples is to join in the development arena, and not miss the opportunity of the technological revolution.

The development or underdevelopment of each country will depend on its ability or otherwise to join in this arena of the information revolution.

The countries that are left out of this technological revolution will be those suffering from a "poverty of skills": those who did not know how or did not want to resolve either the educational problems, the problems of human resources or the inclusion of women in this social transformation.

The technological revolution, on the other hand, demands a permanent reform of the structures and raises questions of how to compete and create employment, which is still the basic problem. It is the responsibility of governments to put this technological revolution at the service of men and women, not men and women at the service of the technological revolution. In adopting this view we have to refer to the rights of citizens.

In the 1960s and 70s we spoke of a post-industrial society, when what to do with leisure hours was seen as a problem for human self-realisation. In fact leisure hours resulting from increased productivity have not come from a distribution of working hours, which would have been more reasonable, but from an increase in unemployment. *deSate??*

The main obstacle today for self-realisation is unemployment, even when it may be socially covered. Therefore, the first obligation is to create employment and put an end to the anguish of the millions of unemployed people who feel excluded from the labour market, the most acute expression of social exclusion.

To find a solution to the employment problem there must be a reflexion in many countries about how to distribute the available working hours. This distribution must preserve the ability to compete, because if the productive fabric of society is destroyed and the capacity to compete is lost, not only will there be no distribution of labour but employment will be destroyed. *15*

Over and above a healthy and stable economic growth, active labour policies will be needed.

Sound macro-economic policies

The only legitimacy for a successful economic policy, from the social point of view, is that society becomes more fair in the way that we advocate, a society that advances in equality of opportunities.

There are fundamental elements accepted by everyone. There is an area of general consensus that includes, for example, the need to develop sound macro-economic policies, and the conviction that the fight against inflation does not belong to the right or the left, because this is the worst

tax for people on low incomes. Let us not argue with our political adversaries about something that can be an area of consensus. Let us do things better than them.

At the same time, we know that the concern for the health of the population, for education and social redistribution, for putting the technological revolution at the service of citizens, these concerns, from a progressive point of view, must be assumed by the political power.

The role of the state

The specifically progressive proposals start when we have to decide on the role of the state. The new fundamentalists based themselves on the affirmation that the less state the better. We risk moving from an overgrown and bureaucratic state to a stunted state that leaves everything in the hands of the market or to the influence of powerful pressure groups.

We must define and defend the role of what is public within the new dynamics being created.

The legitimisation of political power is connected to the role of the state in relation to the welfare of citizens, opportunities in education, in health, in pensions and in access to the other social rights and public services.

The market cannot be everything. To accept and defend the market does not mean trusting it with the solution of problems such as health or education. The market needs regulatory elements and only a public power can do that. Regardless of whether a public service is in the hands of the state or of a private concern, the public service represents citizens' rights and these have to be guaranteed by the state.

We do not want overgrown nationalistic or populist states; bureaucratic centralisation even less. But we no longer want to suffer attacks from the sectors which, under the banner of neo-liberalism, want feeble public powers and states whose capacity for democratic decisions depends on those great concentrations of power brought about by the very dynamic of unregulated markets and globalisation.

Freedom of capital movement

Another crucial question that we must answer in this area of relations between the market and democratic public powers, is the one raised by the movement of international capital and financial crises. The left should propose a regulating framework for the freedom of capital movement, but avoiding a situation like the current one which is absolutely unruly and potentially damaging to many countries. It should propose at the same time some mechanisms to guarantee the prevention of or rapid response to financial crises which are becoming more frequent and more severe.

While affirming the role of politics, we must formulate new proposals to improve public services and investments in physical capital so that our poorer regions come closer to the richer ones within and beyond our borders. We must propose new projects to improve investment in human resources, and for better educational, health and pension systems. And

to guarantee, in these and other fields, that that half of the population that consists of women, becomes fully included in all rights and responsibilities, be they labour, political or of any other nature.

2.2 Outline of the debate

The Declaration on the World Economy adopted by the New York Congress proposed a list of the main issues which should be faced by the SI in the coming years:

"For the SI, ten main tasks lie ahead in the second half of the 90s:

- *consolidation of democracy*
- *promotion of employment and better living standards*
- *coordination of national policies*
- *promotion of free and fair trade (the case for a WTO social clause)*
- *strengthening of financial assistance*
- *reviewing the functioning of Bretton Woods institutions*
- *regional and global cooperation*
- *reinforcement of social rights*
- *achieving equality and enhancing women's rights*
- *sustainable development and protection of the environment".*

On the other hand, in his closing speech at the New York Congress, the SI President, Pierre Mauroy, also proposed a list of objectives:

"Politically speaking our organisation must be more aggressive. We must lay down what we consider to be most urgent, and the priorities and slogans representing our coming commitments:

- *The fight against all dictatorships and the consolidation of democracies by giving them the means to develop*
- *Overhaul of the international monetary system to enable it to fight speculation and reduce interest rates*
- *Expansion of the G7, the group of the seven richest countries of the five continents, to create a space for real economic debate promoting balanced and sustainable development*
- *Inclusion of a social clause in commercial treaties to guarantee universal respect for a certain number of principles such as trades union freedom and banning the exploitation of children*
- *Reform of the United Nations and in particular the membership and powers of the Security Council as suggested in the Carlsson report*
- *Creation of a permanent international criminal tribunal so that war criminals know that whatever their rank or their nationality they will have to account for their actions to the international community*
- *Definitive ban on nuclear tests and a struggle against nuclear proliferation*
- *Strengthening the battle against money laundering, the mafias and organised crime" (Pierre Mauroy's speech, SI Congress, New York, September 1996).*

On this basis, we propose the following outline for the Commission's consideration:

A new response to the new challenges

1.1 Globalisation as an irreversible phenomenon of our era:

- Maximising the advantages
- Minimising the costs

1.2 The technological revolution:

- New frontier of development
- Permanent structural reforms
- Employment and competitiveness

1.3 Sound macro-economic policies:

- Inflation
- Deficit
- Conditions for growth

1.4 Reforms and the role of the state:

- The social legitimacy of power
- Which state?
 - Neo-liberalism
 - Populist nationalisms
 - Communism

1.5 Policies for social cohesion:

- Physical capital - infrastructures, communications
- Human resources:
 - Education
 - Health
 - Pensions
 - Public services and the market

1.6 Freedom of capital movement:

- Regulatory framework
- Prevention and quick response to crises

1.7 World governance:

- Crisis and reform of the United Nations
- From bi-polarity to a new international order
- The processes of open regionalism
- The fight against organised crime

1.8 Major questions of our time:

- The inclusion of women
- Environment
- Poverty of skills

3. The Work of the Commission: methods and initiatives

3.1 Name

From the start, the Commission must be visible and identifiable. It must create expectations and have an increasingly strong presence in the media during its period of activity.

It must be given a name which is brief and attractive.

A strong and programmed initial effort is needed to coin its own new terms and concepts which will put the content and messages of the Commission into a clear context.

A symbol and a logo must be used from the beginning.

All the Commission's documents, publications and icons, and the setting-up of its seminars and public events will maintain a strict formal unity.

3.2 Communication

As a stimulus we could say that, given the circumstances, the policies of communication that may be articulated around the tasks and initiatives of the Commission are as important as the contents, conclusions and proposals that will derive from its work.

In this sense, we must plan a communication and publicity policy:

- Articles, reports and interviews in the international daily press
- Articles, reports and interviews in weeklies and magazines
- Articles in the general press
- The use of *Socialist Affairs*: a special issue to mark the launching of the Commission, and a permanent section within it
- Open pages on the internet
- The creation of forums (open and closed) on the internet
- Complete edition of the documents from the Commission's seminars and specific and regional meetings
- Brochures, posters and merchandising in connection with the symbol and logo of the Commission in order to create its own forward-looking, young and attractive aesthetics for a "New SI", in collaboration with professionals in the media, plastic arts, etc.
- Books: encouraging the publication of books by political leaders, thinkers, experts, authors, journalists, etc. dealing directly with the contents and works of the Commission, or indirectly with its themes and approaches
- A final book on the positions, proposals and projects
- A small summarising book for massive distribution

3.3 A "Senate"

The constitution of a "Consultative Council" of the Commission is proposed, as a type of "World Senate" made up of suitable personalities - owing to their history, acknowledged ability, prestige or popularity - who can contribute ideas and suggestions for the Commission and critiques of its work, and can participate as much as possible in its tasks and

generously give an added value to the work of the SI and its Special Commission.

This "Senate" could write an initial text of support, with the widest possible distribution worldwide, as a contribution to making the constitution and setting-in-motion of the Commission more visible internationally.

3.4 Regional and thematic seminars

The Commission will undertake to organise working meetings, together with broader seminars focusing on specific themes in different parts of the world within the framework of the working programme of the Commission.

A list of themes will be established within the framework of the working programme of the Commission and a geographical area will be allocated to each of the themes.

The method of organisation and development of these regional and thematic seminars could follow, in general terms, a similar format:

- Host(s) institution(s)
- A director in charge
- An organising body
- A panel of politicians, experts, social leaders, etc.
- A broad participation with a regional character
- A specific programme of communication
- Resulting publications

In connection with the outline of suggested themes to be debated we might propose the following seminars:

- "Economy, the market and the state"
- "Globalisation and identity"
- "Welfare innovation"
- "Education, education, education"
- "Technological change, employment and global progress"
- "Globalisation and economic and financial governance"
- "Global governance"
- "Women in the new millenium"
- "A young socialism for a global world"
- "Our history"
- "A new International for a new century"

3.5 Establishing working sub-committees

In order to accomplish its task, the Commission may establish working sub-committees to examine and elaborate specific aspects of its working programme. At the same time, it should count on the necessary technical support.

3.6 Establishing and/or articulating think-tanks

In a less formal way, it might be convenient to establish, encourage or to put into contact some think-tanks that could contribute, from pluralist

points of view, to the objective of renewing socialist ideals without involving the positions of the Commission.

This task could be given added thrust by the parties and foundations in the social democratic field.

With its activities the Commission will be able to help, through the development of its calendar of meetings and seminars, the progressive establishment of a network of think-tanks that could lead to the formation and/or putting into contact of ad-hoc groups.
