

On the Second Radical Parties International Meeting and Beyond

Thursday 24 July 2008, by [ROUSSET Pierre](#) (Date first published: 28 February 2005).

Some elements of reflection, looking back at the Porto Alegre, January 31, 2005 meeting and looking forward the coming year.

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Dear friends and comrades,

This is both to give information on the 2nd International Meeting of Radical Parties to the organisations which were unable to attend, and to present some elements of reflection about our perspectives.

A. Attendance and scope of the network

Around 30 organisations were represented at the Porto Alegre meeting (see the list below). As in Mumbai, it was a working meeting, not a public conference. As the network itself, it was opened with no formalities ruling the attendance.

As in Mumbai also, Europe was fairly well represented; but unlike in Mumbai, this was much less the case for Asia. African attendance would have been similar, if the RNDP from Niger had been informed in time of the meeting's place. Latin America was only slightly better represented, and North America less (Canada was already gone...).

There were nearly 50 organisations at the first Radical Parties International Meeting in Mumbai. The difference seems to be essentially due to practical factors, rather than political ones. Many Asian organisations could not come to Porto Alegre (mostly because of the high travel costs). The meeting took place after the end of the WSF, and some groups were already gone. The conditions of preparation proved exceptionally hectic, this time.

Nevertheless, beyond the practical problems, two figures seem to me significant. First, the high number of European participants: it expresses interest. Second, the fact that the Latin American participation remained very small (except for Brazil), while we were in Latin America!

Concerning the geographical and political scope of the Radical Parties network, the picture seems to me not to have changed much in a year.

There are two (potentially) stronger regions: Asia and Western Europe. The range of links is fairly broad and representative, it could probably be consolidated when more initiatives will be taken. The question here is less “with whom do we start?” but “what should we do and how?”.

There is a weak link, if one compares the strength of the movements to the scope of the network: Latin America. There are specific reasons for this, at the present juncture (Brazil was our “entry point” to the region, and Brazilian organisations have first to face the quickly evolving situation in Brazil itself). But there are probably other factors, more general. In some countries, the traditional radical Left can still be quite “sectarian” in outlook (unlike our network). In others, movements are much broader in scope and different in nature than it is usually the case in other regions; and national situations are often evolving quickly. I am no specialist in Latin American politics, but I feel that what our Radical Parties Network could become in Latin America is still unclear.

There is an “empty” region (East Europe) and regions with “entry points” but where a special effort should be made for the network to spread: Middle-East (Egypt as entry point) and Africa (Niger, South Africa...).

As soon as possible, I shall circulate the full list of organisations which linked to our network, which participated in the Mumbai and/or the London and Porto Alegre meetings

The main question we are faced to, nevertheless, is “consolidation” of the existing network rather than its “extension” (even if we should cease any opportunity to extend it).

B. Agenda and meeting location

As discussed in the London October 2004 meeting, we were hoping to organise in Porto Alegre a full-day meeting, Monday 31 January. But it proved impossible after an additional meeting of the Assembly of movements (followed by a demonstration) was announced for Monday morning. Collective preparation of our Radical Party meeting through the email list was minimum. And myself, I could not do as much as I should have, because of unexpected solidarity tasks (tsunami and the Philippines) and because it takes hell of a time to become an unemployed when one has to articulate European and French administrative systems!

Ambitions concerning what could be done at the Porto Alegre meeting had thus to be cut down, even compared to what was still proposed in my January 18, 2004 mail (no draft declaration on the tsunami could be prepared...). Three points were at the agenda of the Porto Alegre afternoon meeting: solidarity (Egypt and the Philippines), an exchange of view on the WSF and the state of the mobilisations, a discussion on our network’s perspectives. I’ll come back on each of these points while trying to evaluate what has been and could be done.

First question: Was it good to organise the meeting at the occasion of the WSF? We chose to do so for practical reasons: to cut short travel costs. We knew that some organisations would need to be helped, but we hoped it would be done through the WSF mechanisms themselves (we underlined this possibility in our Mumbai meeting). We have been able to hold our Porto Alegre meeting without additional costs (thanks also to our Brazilian friends for booking the room), but still a number of concerned parties could not come because of lack of funds.

Mumbai WSF offered a very good occasion to hold the first Radical Parties International Meeting,

because many organisations were there and because what was at the agenda was the launching of the network. To hold our second meeting at the occasion of the Porto Alegre WSF proved more problematic. A smaller number of organisations were there and we needed to go beyond the initial impulse and discuss more thoroughly issues and tasks, which was very difficult because many of us had too many other tasks related to the WSF.

We had a similar experience in London at the time of the third European Social Forum. Big events like social forums do offer good occasions to hold small working meetings. But they do not leave us enough time to prepare and run more ambitious ones, while we need, especially at the present stage, to exchange at length.

C. Between needs and possibilities: A dynamics to initiate

One essential peculiarity of our network is that it links organisations with different political and ideological trajectories from various continents. It is why this network is useful and, by many aspects, it is new and unique. But it also means that many organisations do not know one another, or know little. They often know well only other parties from their own country, from their own region or from their own international political network. Some pluralist regional network has been built in the recent (or less recent) past, as in Latin America, Asia-Pacific and Western Europe. But the present attempt, at the international (world) level, is new. It means that we cannot base on a pre-existing dynamics. This explains many of the difficulties we are confronted to.

It does not mean that the task is impossible or that there are no favourable factors to back on. The need to build a new international framework of collaboration between radical parties is felt. It is no more simply a historical or “programmatic” goal. It is both an immediate need and an actual possibility. Capitalist/imperialist economic and military globalisation puts this task on our common agenda. In such a framework, it is a very damaging factor of weakness, not to be able to coordinate our struggles more efficiently and not to be able to learn better from one another experiences. It also weakens our capacities to fulfil our responsibilities toward the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements, or toward many of the workers and people’s concrete struggles. At the same time, the emergence, at the level of movements, of a new internationalism and of new international focus of convergences (as the social forums), creates a favourable framework for our organisations to build up relations. Why should the radical Left be the only sector unable to cooperate internationally?

Politically, it is sometimes easier to cooperate at the world level than at national or regional levels (there are less constraints, it may be easier to be opened and flexible...). But it is more difficult to initiate a dynamics. Mutual knowledge is slow to come, contacts are tiny or expensive (travels...), no one is already in charge of following up this field of relations, etc. Language is a problem too: organisations using English as a mean of communication can easily utilise our email list but others have to write especially for it.

I feel that this is the first obstacle we are confronted too. To build a Radical Parties international and pluralist framework of cooperation of a different type than in the past requires both consistency and pragmatism, but also to begin with a lot of voluntarism.

Things do not flow in a spontaneous way. The discussion at the Porto Alegre meeting on the evaluation of the WSF and on the state of the anti-globalization, antiwar movements was more self-restrained, hard to bloom than we could have expected. Maybe because we know that we approach these issues from different angles, depending on the type of engagement in the processes, and we don’t know how to be understood, how to argue with others while avoiding misunderstandings.

It means that debates, even on obvious issues like these, have to be prepared before hand. And to be given time. We are back to the question: should we and can we organise a specific conference, out of the time pressure of big events, to be able to focus our attention on it, to prepare it and to have enough time to exchange...

D. What has been and what could be done?

Some steps forwards were accomplished since Mumbai. They are slow, limited and need to be consolidated. But it shows what could be done.

1. Traditional solidarity

We all signed, at the Porto Alegre meeting, the petition asking for the release of the three Egyptian activists from the Centre for Socialist Studies (see below) (the three activists have been released, see Alex's mail sent February 14). This is what I call here traditional solidarity. Our network can contribute to initiate or widen such solidarity campaigns.

It can also help us when confronted to disasters like the December 26, 2004 tsunami. Because of the quality of the information which can be sent by our organisations via the email list, it proved useful in building "people to people", "movement to movement" links, and to offer a clearly progressive outlook to the wave of international solidarity (and to help concretely member organisations of our network hit by the tsunami). It can still be used now to back grassroots organisations and social movements in their fight for their communities to control the post-tsunami reconstruction against the Military (Aceh), corrupted politicians, economic lobbies and other powers that be.

2. Lessons from the Philippines

The Porto Alegre meeting also endorsed a statement of solidarity toward the Filipino revolutionary and progressive organisations and activists threatened by the CPP (see below). This type of problem (assassination within the Left) is not new. But, to my knowledge, the scope of reactions in Porto Alegre and beyond is very new, and quite impressive (see the "statement of concern" signed by a very representative list of activists in Porto Alegre, Via Campesina February 11 declaration, etc.).

The scope of the reaction is of course due to the actual gravity of the situation in the Philippines; and to the fact that the CPP happily and openly claims its right to judge as "criminals", to sentence to death and to kill cadres of other revolutionary and progressive Filipino organisations. Some other parties, in other countries, do kill Left people. But they usually do not make of it a proclaimed nation-scale policy, as if assassinations were a matter of principles.

But there is a deeper reason for the scope of the reactions. The political evolution of the CPP (and of some few other parties) runs against the new traditions of solidarity and cooperation, which are expressed in the present anti-globalisation and anti-war movements. In all the statements, the condemnation of the CPP assassination policy is based on matters of principles, the rejection of the use of violence to settle divergences within the progressive, labour and popular movements.

It was, for our network, an elementary duty of solidarity to condemn the CPP on this ground. Several Filipino organisations are participating in our network, and they are among the first targets of the CPP-NPA. It is also important that the CPP assassination policy be condemned in the name of the revolutionary project itself, in the name of what we mean by socialism. Here, our network has a specific role to play. As an experiment in pluralism within the radical and revolutionary Left, it precisely addresses the issues raised by the CPP types of policies and outlooks.

3. Information

We should not flood the radpart email list. But some organisations send regularly information through this list, and it is useful. Documents are also circulated, like the declarations of the European Anti-Capitalist Left Conference. As stated before, it is easier to do so when material is initially published in English – it is another matter when translation is required.

What has not yet been done is to circulate “ad-hoc” information. What I mean here by “ad-hoc” is specifically designed for our network. The example, often mentioned, is the fact that only one organisation sent through the email list a short self-presentation of itself. This was asked already in Mumbai: that each organisation present itself shortly, with some basic data (size, sectors of implantation, political profile...). It is the easier way for us to begin to know one another. Still, it has not been done. A very small example showing that we do need some voluntarism if we want the network to live... So, please do send your self-presentation: better later than never.

4. Discussion

The email list should also be used for ad-hoc political exchanges. It has not been the case yet. It could become the case this year, at least on the issues of the social forum processes, the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements. Alex’s contribution on the WSF should help to initiate such an exchange.

5. Contacts

We have met at the WSF (Mumbai, Porto Alegre) and ESF (London). We feel now the limitations of meeting at such times. Nevertheless, all these occasions should still be used for us to meet and consolidate links. Simply, we have to think what is then the most appropriate agenda, given the busy framework.

Trips should of course also be used to links “bilaterally” and learn to know better one another.

6. Action

Part of what has already been mentioned is action (solidarity...). But we should and could broaden our capacity of common actions. Various proposals have been made: helping to connect workers depending from the same trans-national companies, helping to strengthen the radical social movement wing within the overall social forum process to offer perspectives to the overall movement, etc.

I think that our objective responsibilities are increasing. There is presently a danger of “disarticulation” of international mobilisations. The social forum process is spreading at a time its capacity of coordination is weakening (inadequacy of the WSF International Council, difficulties of coordination of the social movements network, strengthening of the regional processes rather than the world one, etc.). The need of coordination of movements, of articulation of initiatives and mobilisations, of collectivisation of knowledge and understandings, has to be addressed at several levels at once. The problem is that there are all weakening at the same time. Our network can here play a (limited) role. It can contribute to avoid a “disarticulation” of the mobilisations, to maintain a capacity of international collectivisation.

E. The next international meeting?

More could be said on what should be done. But there is somehow a basic choice to make. I see many reasons to keep our network alive and no reason to disband it. But we can make this network

more or less useful.

We can continue as last year, slowly improving the use of the email list, looking at a way to cease in an appropriate way occasions to meet, building up solidarity capacities... The usefulness of our network will then remain limited, until maybe an event forces us forward. Or we can be more voluntarist, by organising an international conference free from any other event, to really initiate a dynamics of cooperation.

This is the concluding question of the Porto Alegre meeting. Should we prepare a three or four days conference, independently from any big event? My own answer tends to be yes, of course. So, this is the questions ask to all of you:

1. Do you wish such an international conference to be held?
2. What should be its agenda?
3. Which countries would be ready to host it?
4. What would be the appropriate dates?
5. Last but not the least, how do we finance the trips?

If we want to prepare an international conference in 2005-2006, we have to get answers to these questions as soon as possible...

Hoping the best to all of you,

In solidarity,

Pierre Rousset

The meeting

List of attending organisations: African People's Democratic Movement (APDUSA, South Africa), All Together (South Korea), Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc, Portugal), Democracia socialista (DS -PT, Brazil), Espacio Alternativo (Spanish State), Freedom Socialist Party (FSP, USA), Herri Batasuna (Basque Country), International Socialist Organisation (ISO, USA), Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR, France), LEEF (Belgique), Les Alternatifs (France), Internationalist Workers Left (Greece), Izquierda Unida (IU, Spanish State), Esquear Unida I Alternativa (IuiA, Catalonia), Mouvement pour le socialisme (MPS, Switzerland), MUS-Esquerda PT (Brazil), NSSP (Sri Lanka), POR (Spanish State), P-Sol (Brazil), Power of the Working Class (South Korea), Parti ouvrier socialiste (SAP-POS, Belgium), Partido socialiste de los Trabadores (PST, Uruguay), PSTU (Brésil), New York Marxist School (USA), Revolutionary Workers' Party-Mindanao (Philippines), SEK (Greece), Solidarités/CASS (Switzerland), SSP-Socialist Worker Platform (Scotland), Socialist Workers' Party (SWP, Irlande), Socialist Workeers' Party (SWP, UK), Synaspismos, Synaspismos Youth's, Workers' Party of the Philippines (PMP). The Organisation révolutionnaire pour la Démocratie nouvelle (ORDN), from Niger, was in Porto Alegre but could not find the meeting place. Some parties, which could not come

to Porto Alegre, sent message of support before hand, as the Labour Party Pakistan or, from India, the CPIML "Liberation" and the CPIML.

Documents (already sent February 14 on the radpart list)

ON EGYPT

(note: the three activists have been released since).

A Petition for the Release of 3 Arrested Egyptians

The Egyptian government, one of the key allies of the United States in the "war on terrorism", has launched another attack on civil liberties. Three members of the Center for Socialist Studies in Egypt — Ibrahim Sahari, Marwa Faruq, Bahu Abdullah — were arrested during the Cairo International Book fair on 28 January allegedly for distributing material critical to the President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak. The three are being held in custody for at least 15 days. Ibrahim and Marwa were arrested along with hundreds of other anti-war activists in 2003. Ibrahim told Amnesty International he was blindfolded and severely beaten during his last detention. We call on the Egyptian government to cease its attack on freedom of expression and immediately to release Ibrahim Sahari, Marwa Faruq, and Bahu Abdullah.

ON THE PHILIPPINES

Second International Meeting of Radical Parties

Solidarity Declaration concerning the Philippines

Porto Alegre, 31st of January 2005

Some 12 years back, the Communist Party of the Philippines began to condemn to death and assassinate member cadres of other progressive and revolutionary organizations. The situation continues to worsen today. All the Left movements find themselves threatened, except for those which the CPP itself is leading. It is especially the case with the different Filipino organizations that participate in our international Network of Radical Parties. Likewise, persons active in the anti-war movement and with whom we oppose capitalist globalization, like Walden Bello and Lidy Nacpil, have been named and denounced as « counter-revolutionaries ».

We cannot accept the use of violence, including armed violence, within the workers and people's movements. We strongly affirm our full and deepest solidarity with the progressive and revolutionary organizations in the Philippines threatened by the CPP. We call for the broadest expression of this solidarity on the international level, for the Communist Party of the Philippines to put a final end to this policy of threats and assassinations.

List of concerned organisations

As of February 26, 2005

Attention: There are three email addresses which can be used, depending on the purpose:

1. When you want to reach all the organisations, or a significant portion of them: .
2. When you want to write to the group of facilitators:
3. If you want to ask me to do something (correction of email address, sending past documents...):

Below are listed all the organisations which participated in one (or more) of the meetings of the Radical Parties' Network (Mumbai, January 2004; London, October 2004; Porto Alegre, January 2005) or, if not, signed letters endorsing these meetings. If I forgot some, please correct me. Most of them are political parties, but there are also some few associations or institutes which are interested in following up this new experiment.

The organisations participating in our network are very divers in history, references, fields of activities and size. It ranges from some small, locally rooted political groups to some full-fledged parties with dozens of thousands of members (more than a hundred thousands in rare cases). As a whole, it is fairly representative of what the anti-capitalist, radical Left is presently.

It must be clear that, properly speaking, this is not a "members" list. The Radical Parties' International Network (RPIN) is informal, opened. One party can quietly come to one meeting and, as quietly, later stop to come. There are no dues so one cannot check which organisations are paying them! But the above list shows both that many organisations are actually looking for international links with others parties, that there is here a need to be addressed and that there is a real potential for building an new type of international framework of collaboration between radical, anti-capitalist, parties.

Two practical remarks:

1. I could not read properly some handwritten email addresses given to me. Please check if those who should actually receive the "radpart" mailing, and if some addresses should be removed.
2. For those who got recently into this email list, I can send, on request, a choice of the most substantial previous mails. Just ask me, indicating when you began to receive the collective mails.

AFRICA

Mali

African Solidarities for Democracy and Independence (SADI)

Niger

Revolutionary Organisation for New Democracy (ORDN)

South Africa

Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC)

Anti-Privatisation Forum

African People's Democratic Movement of Southern Africa (APDUSA)

AMERICAS

Brazil

Movement for Socialist Unity-Workers Party (MUS-Esquerda PT)

Socialist and Freedom Party (P-Sol)

Socialist Democracy-Workers Party (DS-PT)

Unified Workers' Socialist Party (PSTU)

Canada-Quebec

Alternatives

Union of Progressive Forces (UFP)

United States

Freedom Socialist Party (FSP)

International Socialist Organization (ISO)

New York Marxist School

Solidarity

Truth

Uruguay

Workers Socialist Party (PST)

ASIA-PACIFIC

Australia

Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP)

India

Communist Party of India – Marxist Leninist (CPIML Liberation)

Communist Party of India – Marxist Leninist (CPIML)

Indonesia

Democratic People's Party (PRD)

Japan

Japanese Revolutionary Communist League (JRCL)

Pakistan

Labour Party Pakistan (LPP)

Pakistan Workers' and Peasants' Party (PKMP)

Seraiki National Party (SNP)

Philippines

Akbayan!

Democratic Left Initiative

Marxist-Leninist Caucus (MLC)

Marxist-Leninist Party of the Philippines (MLPP)

Revolutionary Workers Party-Mindanao (RPM-M)

Revolutionary Workers Party of the Philippines (RPM-P)

Solidarity of Filipino Workers (BMP)

Workers Party of the Philippines (PMP)

South Korea

All Together

Power of Working Class (PWC)

Sri Lanka

New Left Front (NLF)

New Socialist Party (NSSP)

Thailand

Workers Democracy

EUROPE

Belgique

Left and Ecology Forum (LEEF)

Socialist Workers Party (SAP-POS)

Euskadi

Herri Batasuna

France

Les Alternatifs

Revolutionary Communist League (LCR)

Greece

Communist Organisation of Greece (KOE)

Democratic Communist Organisation of Greece (OKDE)

Internationalist Workers Left (DEA)

Socialist Workers Party (SEK)

Synaspismos

Synaspismos Youth's

Irlande

Socialist Party (SP)

Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

Italy

Communist Refoundation Party (PRC)

Portugal

Left Bloc (BE)

Scotland

Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)

Spanish State

Alternative Space (Espacio Alternativo)

Left Unity (IU)

Left Unity and Alternative (IUiA, Catalonia)

Revolutionary Workers Party (POR)

Suisse

Movement for Socialism (MPS)

Solidarities/CASS

United Kingdom

Socialist Alliance (SA) (SA has now joined Respect)

Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

MIDDLE-EAST

Egypt

20th March Movement for Change

Center of Socialist Studies (CSS)