

CWI 11th World Congress

A world in turmoil

The following is a report of the plenary discussion on world perspectives at the 11th World Congress of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) held in Belgium from 24-30 January 2016. The very successful week-long Congress was attended by CWI comrades from 34 countries, with delegates and visitors from east and west Europe and Russia, Africa, all parts of Asia, North and Latin America, Australia and the Middle East.

The Congress took place against a backdrop of volatility in world stock markets due to fears over the Chinese economies and the effects of falling oil prices, the latter partly linked to the turmoil in the Middle East and the threat of further clashes, and increasing crisis in Europe. Peter Taaffe, from the International Secretariat introduced the discussion on World Perspectives by noting that the instability in Europe as a whole is epitomised by Moldova, wracked by a banking crisis, which has just appointed its sixth prime minister in a year.

The task of the Congress was to politically arm the CWI with the likely perspectives for the economy, world relations and, above all, the class struggle. Arising from this are the role and possibilities for all CWI sections.

At the beginning of this year, there were many articles from a few self-designated 'super-prophets', who foresaw the longevity of capitalism despite all the

obvious evidence: chaos, economic and environmental catastrophes, terrorism and the overall object failure of the system, all of which is evident to the more serious capitalist analysts and commentators.

We counter-pose to this the Marxist science of perspectives - serious analyses of objective reality and possible rising trends - which means we have been able to trace out likely developments in society. For example, our last Congress in 2010 suggested turmoil in Egypt was possible; we foresaw the 'Arab Spring', in reality a revolution.

The defining moment for the world economy was the financial crash of 2007-08. Peter remarked that just weeks into 2016 it is difficult to find an optimist. The media is full of pundits predicting a looming economic crisis, with only its timing uncertain. We commented after last July's falls in shares and stocks that this may not lead to an immediate crash but may be a tremor denoting the earthquake to come. Moreover, we said previously there would be not just one crisis but a chain of crises; so we have had the US sub-prime mortgages collapse that led to 2007-08 – with, of course, big repercussions in the rest of the world – then the euro-zone crisis since 2010 and now the devastating crisis in the neo-colonial world. The so-called 'BRICS' have hit a brick wall, which has had major repercussions in Latin America, particularly Brazil, and in South Africa.

China was vital in the recovery of the world economy following 2007-08 but it is now leading the downturn. These presage a serious crisis caused by underlying serious economic problems. China's boom was based on debt-fuelled growth; debt has risen from 100% of GDP in 2008 to 250% now, which is unsustainable. The slowdown will affect China's role as both a 'market of last resort' and as a major exporter to other countries, which will reduce world trade. Its slowdown was affecting countries such as Australia and many countries in Africa and Latin America, as domestic economies were hit by falling commodity prices.

Niall Mulholland from the CWI International Secretariat replied to the discussion, pointing out that we have to emphasise the possibilities for struggle. There is extreme nervousness of capitalists towards their own system. The

entry of China into the capitalist economy was welcomed but has become a burden through overproduction in steel and other industries. These problems would not be easily solved in a further economic crisis, as many 'emergency' measures have been already been used. Niall quoted comrade Sebei, from South Africa, who commented during the discussion that the "molten lava" of heroic struggles like the Marikana strike have long-lasting effects on the working class. Many can join the CWI and help building our sections, thus having a decisive effect in the class struggle and the battles for socialism.

The Congress formally recognised the Workers and Socialist Party as the CWI section in South Africa. WASP replaces the Democratic Socialist Movement which has been dissolved upon the basis of WASP's reorganisation as a revolutionary party throughout the course of 2015.

Three comrades from WASP's Executive Committee were elected onto the International Executive Committee (IEC), the leading body of the CWI between Congresses. Weizmann Hamilton was re-elected as a full IEC member and Mametwe Sebei and Shaun Arendse were elected as alternates (deputy members) for a four year term.



Mametwe Sebei addresses Congress



The CWI website is updated daily with news and Marxist analysis of the latest struggles and issues facing the world's workers and poor – an invaluable resource, not to be missed!