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Italy - Dossier

Draft Resolution on Afghanistan

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Draft Resolution on Afghanistan presented by Claudio Grassi (Essere Comunisti) and Salvatore Cannavo (Sinistra Critica) [1] and put to a vote of the National Leadership of PRC on July 17. The proposal was in a minority, the majority of the Party resolutely committing itself to support Prodi.

We are going through a very difficult and dramatic phase of international politics. At present a new old war is re-emerging violently in the Middle East, with indiscriminate bombing of civilians, state terror and the unilateral refusal of dialogue and negotiation. A war which is added to and which is entangled with dramatic effects in the intensification of the war, from Iraq to Afghanistan, against which we have always fought.

As the appeal of the pacifist assembly of July 15 says, “the war increasingly appears as the preferred means of the most powerful states on the planet, and behind them the multinationals, for constructing an international “order” based on domination and oppression, which engenders death, misery, and ever-increasing signs of poverty. War is thus establishing itself as a global political system, in its most repugnant version, that of US unilateralism, or through its toned-down version of multilateralism under cover of the UN and NATO”.

It is against this war that we intend to fight without hesitation, because faced with war there are no half measures. If war is a system of domination and oppression - which does not reduce or weaken terrorist phenomena, as recent history has shown - “NO” to the war is the foundation of a collective political identity of the movement, which was accumulated during the demonstrations against the war in Kosovo, then against those against the “endless pre-emptive war” that is being conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq.

That is why we are opposed to the measures being proposed by the government, which intends - after the important withdrawal from Iraq, which was the result of powerful mobilizations by the pacifist movement - to maintain Italian troops in Afghanistan, which is not only contrary to Article 11 of the Constitution, but is opposed to the spirit and the aspiration of this movement. It is a measure which violates the undertaking in the programme of the Union, which accepted the exceptional character of votes concerning the overseas missions. [2] It is not surprising that this was defined by the outgoing Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fini, as an attitude that was “similar” to his own, thus marking the continuity with the policies of the outgoing government.

In the coming hours and the coming days the PRC will have to fight to modify the draft law that the government is presenting to Parliament, and to propose a strategy of withdrawal from Afghanistan and the ending of the Enduring Freedom mission, [3] which Italy is taking part in without there being any clarity about its real aims.

But the action of pacifists cannot be measured only on the terrain of parliamentary initiatives.

It must address the movement and serve to unleash a new course and a new unitary and radical initiative which is capable of putting the refusal of the war at the centre of the attention of the country. This initiative means today total solidarity with the Palestinian people for the establishment of a secular and democratic state, which includes the territories occupied in 1967 and which has Jerusalem as its capital. For this objective to become reality implies substantial conditions: an immediate ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, dismantling of the Wall, the unblocking of European aid to the legitimate Palestinian government. The Italian government must give undertakings on these points and start by revising the military cooperation agreement with Israel. The UN must send a contingent of interposition in the occupied territories.

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The withdrawal of troops “from Iraq and Afghanistan” must be accompanied by a peace initiative and by Italy undertaking to participate in civilian cooperation. This means putting in question NATO's role as a world policeman, starting with the revision of the Washington agreement of 1999.

The refusal of foreign military bases and of any presence of nuclear weapons on Italian soil is another important objective of the anti-war movement.

Lastly, we have to re-launch the campaign for the reduction of military spending and for a complete revision of new model of defence policy, which provides for the multiplication of military missions abroad, in favour of a policy of disarmament and re-conversion of the arms industry, without negative consequences for those who work in it. On all these questions we have to strengthen the mobilization initiatives that are underway and build the unitary conditions for the future. The choices which have to be made are difficult and demand a great sense of responsibility from all of us. The PRC does not intend to put in question the present framework of the government, but only to strongly reaffirm its refusal of the war, as an element that is part of its identity and its orientation - which takes precedence over parliamentary tactics. For that the national leadership of the PRC asks the government to make a gesture of being ready to make concessions, which it could do by modifying the measures concerning international missions, thus making it possible, voting with a clear conscience, to strengthen the confidence of its parliamentary majority.

Finally, such a choice must also be made concerning the document on economic and financial programming (DPEF). In reality, this document deserves to be treated as it was by the PRC delegation in the Council of Ministers. This is an attitude that we shared and that we fully supported. The government must modify the document, which will be submitted to Parliament for approval, in particular by eliminating any references to the reduction of spending on pensions, on public employment, and on local and social budgets. Similarly any references to “moderation of wage demands” must disappear. The Prodi government was formed to carry out a rupture with the liberal policies of the past. This discontinuity cannot be carried out by envisaging cuts in social spending, a deterioration of the workers' living conditions, or a reduction of public services. On the contrary, it necessitates strongly re-launching an improvement in the living conditions of workers, starting by repealing Law 30, as well as the Bossi-Fini Law and the Muratti Law, [4] which represent the worst legacy of the preceding government.

It is in this spirit that Rifondazione Comunista will approach the parliamentary debate on the DPEF. But first of all the PRC will support the initiative of the movement against job insecurity, starting with the demonstration called for the month of October by the assembly in Rome on July 8 of the network “Stop Precarietà Ora” [“For an end to job insecurity now”].

[1] Claudio Grassi is a senator, a member of the National Leadership of the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) and coordinator of the Essere Comunisti current (which is also known as L'Ernesto from the name of its journal). This current won 26% of the votes during the Sixth Congress of the PRC in 2005. Salvatore Cannavo is a deputy, member of the National Leadership of the PRC, assistant director of the PRC daily Liberazione and one of the organizers of the Sinistra Critica current (Critical Left, also known as Erre from the name of its journal) which won 6.5% of the votes during the Sixth Congress of the PRC. Salvatore Cannavo is a member of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International.

[2] Italian law stipulates that Parliament cannot vote to finance foreign mission - in other words, sending the armed forces beyond its own borders - for a period of more than 6 months. The agreements that set up the Union envisaged that the deputies would be allowed to vote according to their conscience in this domain. But from the first vote the Prodi government decided to use strong tactics, by engaging the responsibility of its government for this vote in the Senate, where the Union has only 2 votes more than the Berlusconi bloc.

[3] “We have opened a new front in our war against terrorism”. With these words, the spokesperson of the White House announced on Sunday October 7, 2001, the beginning of the “Enduring Freedom” operation. The new Afghan war had just begun. It is still going on...

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[4] These are laws adopted by the Berlusconi government: Law 30 introduces flexibility into work contracts, the Bossi-Fini Law limits the rights of immigrants and the Moratti Law is a neo-liberal counter-reform of the education system.