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Right victorious

Italian elections - a first response

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The principal electoral results are: in the Senate, 47.2% of votes for the right (People of Freedom, Northern League, Movement for Autonomy; 38.1% for the Democratic Party and the Italy of the Values led by di Pietro - IdV); in the Chamber, 46.6% for the right and 37.7% for the DP and IdV. The right has a majority enabling it to “rule” for five years

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Alemanno.jpg>]

Gianni Alemanno - new neo-fascist mayor of Rome

A L'encontre: It is not necessary to be a specialist on Italy to note the marked victory of the right at these elections, even if the exit polls initially created illusions...

Lidia Cirillo: Indeed, the victory of the coalition led by Berlusconi - Party of Freedom, Northern League and Movement for Autonomy - is clear. It has an advantage of more than 9% of votes over the Democratic Party (DP) of Walter Veltroni (ex-mayor of Rome) and of Italy dei Valori (led by the former judge Di Pietro). The result is indubitable: 46.5% against 37.7%, according to the results available and quasi-final as of Tuesday morning.

This victory is all the more significant and alarming in that within this right wing coalition, the Northern League, this racist party, not only obtained very good results in “its” traditional areas (Veneto-Friuli), exceeding 25% sometimes, but was also strong in Piedmont, Lombardy, areas where the so-called traditional left had a strong base.

In the industrial areas of North, the Northern League captured working class votes and roundly defeated the Left Rainbow (Sinistra Arcobaleno), therefore especially the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) of Fausto Bertinotti, who was the president of the Chamber during the last government of Romano Prodi.

Sinistra Arcobaleno (Rainbow Left) obtained 3.2% of the votes to the Senate and 3.1% in the Chamber. At the time of the last European elections in 2004, without having in its ranks the Democratic Left - a faction which split from the DP - the forces present in this new formation had together gained some 11% of the vote.

The present result shows the retreat of these forces - especially the PRC and the more reduced Communist Party of Italy (PCCI) - in working class areas, in areas which were at the end of the 1960s, during the 1970s and until the 1980s, the centres of working class activity and mobilizations. These areas have certainly experienced social transformations, but the wage-earning class has not decreased there at the sociological level and its living conditions have been degraded.

The Northern League, in these areas, has made a breakthrough which made it possible for Umberto Bossi to say that it was the “new working class party”. That symbolizes the vertical fall of Sinistra Arcobaleno and the forces which made it up, more specifically, I repeat it, PRC. With these results, these forces have been expelled from the Chamber and the Senate.

It is then not only a victory of the right in general, but also of this chauvinistic right faction, “northernist” and racist. It is an important new fact. Also the fascist formation Storace (La Destra-Fiamma Tricolour) in various cities - inter alia in Rome - obtained results going from 2.1% in the Senate to 2.4% in the Chamber.

A first conclusion: the overall political framework is serious, not to say threatening and dangerous.

How should we consider the result of the Christian-Democratic operation led by Casini, who split from Berlusconi?

Lidia Cirillo: In the results for the centre right and centre left - to employ the fashionable terminology - it is necessary to take into account the results of the UDC (Union of Christian Democrats and Centre Democrats) of Fernando Casini. It is a force which also will count. Probably it will not be aligned simply with Berlusconi, but it will support various measures relating, *inter alia*, to reactionary Catholic "values".

That is also an element to bear in mind in the new landscape drawn by the elections. In the two chambers, there are only right wing forces, whether the right of the PDL, with the strength acquired by the Northern League, or whether it is the DP, with its reference to Obama, a kind of Democratic Party, certainly in an Italian context.

These elections mark a historical change: the "left", such as the PRC is out of Parliament. How should we understand it?

Lidia Cirillo: As for Sinistra Arcobaleno, it seems clear that its days are numbered. The PCDI (Communist Party Italy) of Diliberto has already packed its bags; the Greens will follow. The PRC is in the most total confusion. Thus, one of its spokespersons, Franco Giordano, insisted on Monday evening on the TV that it is necessary "to build a house of left", with a "program corresponding to the needs of the situation". It is a wooden discourse which you must have heard on behalf of the Socialist Party, or some of its sectors, in France.

There are at least two elements which explain the defeat of Sinistra Arcobaleno. The first, the PD gained the votes of the left, those which Sinistra Arcobaleno sought. The PD did not gain among the right wing electorate, as it had sought to do through adopting the least conflictual profile possible in this campaign. Therefore, PD took votes from the Left rainbow.

But the responsibility for this redistribution of the votes also falls on Sinistra Arcobaleno. Indeed, when you seek to convince the "people of left" - to employ this formula - that the only way to fight the right and the employers is going into government, it is logical that the citizens vote for those who seem able to go there, with the most probabilities and more "capacities to govern".

Secondly there was the abstention rate of 3%; that is to say 1.5 million voters abstained. However, certainly, among them, proportionally, those who had in the past voted for components of Sinistra Arcobaleno represent a great number.

We (Sinistra Critica), were not able to reach them, which is linked not only to our novelty (we have existed only since December 2007, in the strict sense of the term), but also with the very strong scepticism which exists among wage-earners. Many have lost confidence, after the political line followed over a whole period, by a political force calling itself "communist". They do not find it easy to again give their confidence to an emergent organization. Nothing abnormal in that, in the present context marked by a whole history of disillusionment.

Among an active and radicalized layer of employees or of young people there exists - and that is more than understandable - the idea: "They say this or that but, once in Parliament, they all do the same thing".

This attitude also continues within the framework of a certain milieus linked to capital which targets "the political caste", in order to create a revised institutional framework more favourable to counter-reforms. It is necessary to

know this, even if the two elements mentioned should not be confused in any manner.

Berlusconi won, but don't obstacles remain to the construction of politico-official institutions more suitable, to employ the language of employers, "to take Italy out of the ditch"?

Lidia Cirillo: Admittedly Berlusconi appears more Confindustria-compatible than in the past. But he must deal with difficulties within the dominant bloc. The vote for the Lega, even if the latter has a capillary presence in North, is more a protest vote than a vote which would reflect - let us say, to be brief – a working class organization.

The degree of disorganization of the “workers’ movement”, of the working class at the trade-union and political levels is very large. Consequently, Berlusconi, in five years – because he has a clear majority in the two chambers (Senate and Parliament) - can inflict new blows leading to a disaster. The CGIL has members who vote Lega, in some numbers in the North. It is thus not a workers’ resistance to support from the Lega for counter-reforms which poses the principal problem to Berlusconi.

On the other hand, contradictions within the dominant bloc remain. The declarations of the new leader of Confindustria, Emma Marcegaglia, as of Monday evening, express the urgent feeling among dominant fractions of Capital on the need to implement “deep reforms”. At the same time, there exists the feeling among certain leaders of the right that social mobilizations can re-appear. They also look at France. Therefore, the strategy will be concocted with more precision, in the weeks to come.

Moreover, we note: the severe economic crisis; possible popular reactions; the taking into account of clientelist interests, as much for the Lega as Berlusconi; all that makes me think that the situation for a political line conforming to the interests of the dominant fractions of Capital, in terms of timing, is still to be tested.

You are a member of Sinistra Critica, how do you judge the results for this organization in formation, for “any young person”, since you were in the PRC still in 2007 and broke clearly with the “party of Bertinotti”?

Lidia Cirillo: As Sinistra Critica, we obtained the following results: 0.416% in the Senate, with 136, 396 votes; and 0.459% in the Chamber with 167, 673 votes. Flavia D' Angeli got a good reception: by her youth, her direct speech; above all among young sectors, employees and students; that does not mean that these people voted for Sinistra Critica, because some wanted to vote “usefully” or to abstain. Franco Turigliatto [ex-senator, who voted against the proposals of Prodi] developed an very political and educational argument and was recognized by a layer of workers with whom he had worked for a long time. The results indicate it. What shows through in the first results: we get more votes where we are present and carry out work. It is a vote which reflects a political and trade-union activity, carried out by militants for a long time, sometimes.

The Communist Party of Workers (PCL) led by Marco Ferrando [Trotskyist current] obtained 0.55% of the votes in the Senate, that is to say 180,454 votes; and 0.571% in the Chamber, or 208, 394 votes. Its results are more “homogeneous” on the ground, because the PCL and Marco Ferrando were more known, at least in certain areas. For the remainder, it is still too early to carry out an assessment.

What is obvious can be expressed in a formula: long term work in the various social mobilizations is a precondition to reaffirming an anti-capitalist and Communist perspective, while working out a programmatic and theoretical reflexion which takes into account the features of the present historical period and, also, the political dynamics of the last decade, in an open way. It is to this that I devote myself – as a member of the leading circle of Sinistra Critica -

in various contributions on the topics of feminism, of "Leninism today", or the crisis of politics.

* Interview by Charles-Andre Udry for the site of "[A l'encontre](#)".