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Italy - Dossier

No Blank Cheque, Ours is a Clockwork “Yes”

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Gigi Malabarba, a long standing member of the Fourth International, who is a trade unionist at the Alfa Romeo car factory, is one of the organizers of the Sinistra Critica current of the PRC. He was the leader of the PRC group in the Senate during the previous legislative and was re-elected in 2006, announcing from the start that he was going to withdraw in order to give his seat to Signora Haidi Giuliani, whose son Carlo was assassinated by the police during the global justice demonstration against the G8 in Genoa in July 2001. He presented his resignation to the Senate on July 19th 2006, but has continued to conduct to the end the battle that had been started over the financing of the military mission in Afghanistan. We publish here an interview with him conducted by the parliamentary journalist, Luca Telese, which appeared in the daily *Il Giornale* on July 26, 2006.

The government is trying victory. So are they. To understand whether the vote of confidence over the mission in Afghanistan was a success for the hard core of the "eight rebels" of the antagonistic Left or on the contrary a defeat, we have to listen to the most battle-hardened of them, Gigi Malabarba, senator of Rifondazione, who says: "No credit. Our vote of confidence is ... a clockwork one."

Luca Telese: Senator, let's start with the facts. You will have to give a vote of confidence, although the text of the law has not been changed as you wanted it to be. So have Prodi and D'Alema won?

Gigi Malabarba: Not at all. We have conducted a battle and in two months we have gone, according to the government's own terms, from the most ferocious epithets, from being defined as irresponsible, troublemakers, subversives that we have to get rid of, to yesterday's respectful declarations.

Luca Telese: Honeyed words, certainly. But you don't seem to be the kind of person who is satisfied with honey.

Gigi Malabarba: Indeed. To start with there is a political fact: today the Minister Chiti [\[1\]](#) says that our disagreement is legitimate, that our positions deserve to be represented, that they correspond to real moods in the country.

Luca Telese: For the moment they are courting you because they need your votes, but you think that they will continue to?

Gigi Malabarba: They have gone from threats to flattery, that is undeniably a first positive fact.

Luca Telese: Let's see what the second one is.

Gigi Malabarba: Our opposition has blocked the danger of a secret and unprincipled agreement.

Luca Telese: Aren't you being too optimistic?

Gigi Malabarba: No. It's a question of fact: the government had the possibility of choosing and it preferred to reply to us rather than to accept the help of the centre-right which was prepared to support it ... for its own reasons.

Luca Telese: OK, there were no centrist votes. But the warships are still setting off and Enduring Freedom is continuing.

Gigi Malabarba: Yes that's really what is essential. Chiti assured us that there is a change of perspective in government policies concerning military mission. In six months, we, the pacifists, will be able to verify whether the promise has been kept.

Luca Telese: Excuse me, but in six months you will give a vote of confidence, all the more so because you have already done it this time.

Gigi Malabarba: And why should that be? We haven't signed any blank cheque. Even faced with those electors who, disturbed by a campaign aiming to make demons of us, asked us whether we were not being too maximalist and whether it was not necessary to give the government a little time, whether it was not excessive to provoke a crisis on a question of foreign policy... Now, in relation to those electors we will be stronger in December, because we will be able to say: "We asked for a change and we allowed time for this change to take place".

Luca Telese: So in December, if things remain as they are at present you will be ready to refuse a vote of confidence? I don't believe you.

Gigi Malabarba: You don't pull your punches. On the contrary, I will say to you that we shouldn't wait for December: As far I'm concerned, I am not ready to accept the neo-liberal manoeuvre of Padoa-Schioppa. [\[2\]](#) The movements are opposed to war and to neo-liberalism.

Luca Telese: But what about the question of confidence then?

Gigi Malabarba: It's a question of time, of clockwork, if things change. If they don't change, the next time the answer will be no.

[\[1\]](#) Vannino Chiti, member of the Secretariat of the Left Democrats (DS), was appointed Minister of the Reform of State Institutions in the second Prodi government, following the legislative elections of 2006.

[\[2\]](#) Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa has been since April 20, 2006 the Minister of the Economy of the Prodi government. He was previously a member of the Council of Administration of the European Central Bank (1998-2006). He is preparing to impose a "reform of public finances" along ultra-liberal lines. He has just declared: "the government and the parliament are responsible for public finances" and "consultations are important, but they must be complementary to the action of the government, because after that it is up to the executive body to decide" (La Repubblica, September 3, 2006).