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Italy

# Open letter to those who supported me

- News from around the world -

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Dear comrades and friends,

**I am waiting in this moment for the Senate to accept my resignation, which I have not withdrawn, and will not withdraw. Meanwhile, in the days to come I will have to give my vote in a motion of confidence in the Prodi government. I would like to thus explain the reasons which push me to vote for this motion confidence, but to vote for it in a way which I would define as “technical”, while rejecting the twelve points of Prodi as a whole. I will explain very clearly in my intervention in the Senate that they cannot count on me to approve the mission in Afghanistan, nor to carry out the TAV [1] or the counter-reform of retirement pensions. Because I will not vote these measures, even if a new governmental crisis is at stake. And, of course, I will continue with you the fight against the base of Vicenza.**

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### **Farnco Turigliatto at Italian parliament press conference**

In refusing to vote in favour of the government's foreign policy, I never intended to make a "politician's" gesture and provoke a governmental crisis. It was an act of responsibility towards my convictions and those for all those who like me feel very distant from foreign policy which continues to make war, however multilateral it is; which supports a neoliberal model for Europe; which thinks that sending soldiers all over the world is a way of "counting" in the arena of international politics. An act which comes from a rejection of the idea that what is nothing other than a military occupation can be considered "civilizing and peace mission". A small gesture in support of the extraordinary fight of Vicenza against the construction of an American military base, which will destroy the land and which will be a fundamental tool for the intervention strategy of the United States within the framework of total and permanent war.

I have no regrets for having made this gesture and I would do it again at any time. It is the starting point for my disagreement with the government on foreign policy, linked to my irreducible opposition to the war in Afghanistan and the decision of the government to authorize the doubling of the military base of Vicenza. This is the meaning of my vote, in disagreement with my party, but in disagreement on a point which I consider fundamental and central for whoever is involved in politics: no to war.

I do not believe I am responsible for the governmental crisis. The main responsibility lies with the government itself and the policies which it adopted during all these months, and which has gradually moved away from all those who voted for it. This crisis emerged partly for obscure reasons and partly because the reformist wing of the Unione wanted to dramatise the situation, in order to force the alternative left to keep silent on the most important questions. A crisis which was used to stop any demands at all and to establish the "neoliberal" trajectory of governmental action. In that sense the debate in the Senate was blackmail, in particular on Vicenza. This is also the reason for my vote.

The solution to the crisis it seems to me to confirm this analysis. The twelve points presented by Prodi are the approval of a neoliberal turn, and a clear desire to affirm a policy of sacrifices and multilateral war. The purpose of the attacks directed at me, the scarecrow of the return of Berlusconi to the government brandished by my accusers, were precisely to hide this simple reality: the balance sheet of the Prodi government during the last few months is very negative, and what is likely to come will be even worse. This judgement, obviously, is not shared by my party, which on the contrary strongly supports the new government. And it has been received in different ways by civil society, the movements, the trade-union leaders, the representatives of radical pacifism, by those who on February 17 took to the streets in Vicenza. The fear of the return of a rightwing government is indeed very strong. There are also those who think that the possibility of a fight with the Prodi government is not finished, and that its survival is the framework within which one can obtain better results or at least a democratic dialectic.

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As I was not the one to decide the fall of the Prodi government, I think that it is right to check the validity of these intentions, to continue the debate with greatest part of the movement and of the people of the left who think this, and thus that the Prodi government should remain in place. But I think that that can be done only with great clarity on positions. I will never be willing to vote for the war in Afghanistan, nor support the anti-social policies of this government.

Obviously, I do not think that the future will be simple. The twelve points are a political retreat and a slap on the face for the movements and the parties of the alternative left. I thus envisage a phase in which it will be necessary to develop a social opposition to measures taken by the Prodi government, opposition which must also have repercussions on the members of Parliament. That is my intention. To say it differently, one can choose the government to oppose, while insisting on certain principles and certain constraints that are in my opinion essential: those which bind us to the movements of the workers, the popular communities in fight against the TAV and for the environment, with the peace movement which one recently saw in Vicenza. These are the principles which determine my political activity, not an abstract idealistic coherence, but a political project which has been mine all my life.

In the fifteen last years these principles, these convictions corresponded perfectly with those of Rifondazione Comunista. A few days ago however, my party declared me "incompatible" simply because I remained faithful to the historical programme of the PRC. I do not want to discuss a decision which concerns me, but there is one thing I can say. I built Rifondazione from the start, I defended it when it was attacked, I spent hundreds of hours discussing with working men and women in factories in Turin and all over Italy.

The threat of expulsion makes me bitter and disappoints me at the same time. But it is the result of a basic change in the political priorities of the PRC and its action: certain higher ideals are put at the service of a contingent political project, thus establishing a process of deformation of the left which leaves me voiceless. And that the same time putting in the pillory a fundamental quality of politics - coherence between conscience and action, whose absence is today at the base of this "crisis" of the policy which we have defended for more than ten years. It is not the first time in the history of the left that those who oppose war from the left, who in Parliament say no against all comers, are accused of being in "splendid isolation", of being "noble souls", "incapable of being realistic", "irresponsible" or "idealistic": these accusations do not hurt me, but a whole project in which I believed, to which I gave all my energy and my commitment, which today is disappearing because of the actions of those who decide to accept things as they are.

Because I respected my convictions and my links with the movement, I apparently betrayed my commitment to my party and forced the government to resign. I do not think I am so important, that I had such a fundamental role. Perhaps all this reveals many contradictions which relate to the left as a whole and the relationship between the government and its people. A more than weakened relationship, as all the surveys and the demonstrations of dissatisfaction show. For my part, I can only continue what I have said and done in these last days. If the Senate rejects my resignation, and thus as long as I will be in the Senate, I will vote against the war, because not to war and the relationship with the labour movement are the guiding force of my political action: they have always been the alpha and the omega of a class and anticapitalist perspective.

I would like now to thank you for the messages that you have sent me, some of which have been very touching. Honestly I do not think I deserve them, simply because, in this world, it seems abnormal to do what should seem normal to somebody serious: to act according to their convictions. If this small gesture has helped to rehabilitate this logic that some judge, with contempt, as too "idealist", then it will have been useful. In any case, this is my path, and I hope to continue to follow it at your side.

Once again thank you,

Franco Turigliatto

Rome, 27th February 2007.

**Read Tariq Ali's article** in the Uk daily paper *The Guardian*: [The government crisis in Italy over US bases and Afghanistan reflects the increasing gap in Europe between rulers and ruled](#). Tariq says "Bertinotti signed without hesitation and instructed his enforcer inside the Refounded Communist party to remove the dissenting senator Franco Turigliatto from the party without further ado (ironically, the same enforcer, Guido Cappelloni, expelled the dissident 'Manifesto group' from the old Communist party in 1969)."

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[1] The TAV or Treno ad Alta Velocit  is a new high speed rail link to achieve a freight link-up between Barcelona and Kiev. But environmentalists think it will be a catastrophe, and a major struggle against it is ongoing. To achieve the pan-European dream, two big tunnels - the longer one 53 kilometers, or nearly 35 miles, long - are to be blasted through the mountains on either side of tiny Venaus, which sits in a narrow valley. The two tunnels are to be connected ultimately with a bridge that will carry roaring freight trains over Venaus. In Italy's northwest Piedmont region, which includes Turin and a large swath of Alpine valleys, the TAV is widely regarded as an environmental and public health disaster. Last year, 50,000 of the 70,000 inhabitants in the Susa Valley, just a short distance from Venaus, joined a major protest against it.