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Italy

PRC opens congress discussion

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We publish below extracts from the first draft resolution under discussion for the next congress of Italy's Party of Communist Refoundation, which will take place in spring 2002. This text was adopted by a very large majority by the National Political Committee (CPN) on September 16, but it was written before the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.

It is the subject of a broad discussion, which is developing even outside of the party. A second session of the CPN, taking account of the contributions of members, sympathizers and all those who will have discussed the text, will draw up a second draft, whose final version, after a new round of discussions, will be debated at a third session of the CPN and thereafter subjected to debate in all party branches.

To understand certain allusions in the draft which we publish, it is necessary to be aware that there exists in the party a current which it would be abusive to define as Stalinist or neo-Stalinist, but which is, so to speak, more "continuist" in relation to the past and which, in the review it publishes, gives a good deal of space to texts originating from the former Communist movement, including the Russian party of Gennady Ziuganov. Some of the members of this current believe that Fausto Bertinotti has "movementist inclinations" and, more generally, that the party has excessively diluted its identity in the anti-globalisation movement. Up to now this current has always avoided differentiating itself explicitly when voting on resolutions on the leadership bodies, limiting the expression of its dissent to organizational questions.

We publish then extracts of [Fausto Bertinotti's report](#) to the CPN of September 15-16 concerning the new situation after September 11.

Opening and innovation: Changing ourselves to transform society (extracts)

THE balance sheet of our refoundation can help us in our future political engagement. We have made some steps forward and made some courageous breaks. That enabled us to defend the very existence of our party and thus maintain an antagonistic political project.

It is not negligible. But our survival has led us to a rendezvous with the movement which requires a qualitative leap, which requires that innovation itself is not achieved only through splits, but becomes systematic, by an open struggle against the defects and conservatism which constitute a barrier to those who are, under other angles, interested in our point of view. The rupture with the centre-left and the exit of the majority who supported the Prodi government was one of these acts of refoundation, a rupture also with the prevalent culture of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and with the heritage of Togliatti, [1] still strong and respectable.

Through this act we questioned the priority of governmental action in the political battle and moved our attention from the political-parliamentary terrain to the political-social level. We thus rejected the idea that there would be a double terrain, the "realistic" terrain of the immediate facts, in particular in the governmental field, and the utopian terrain of a future socialism. The problem which has been posed, and not resolved, is that of the link between daily political practice (governmental action included) and the transformation of capitalist society.

The problem is the displacement of the centre of politics from the level of the state and its institutions to the dynamic of social forces and mass struggles (which is, in a certain sense, a return to the origins of the communist movement).

The analysis of neo-liberal globalisation has reinforced this innovation and carried with it another: no longer to privilege relationships with parties and even with states, an ideological affinity, but to privilege the experiences and the critical elaborations of capitalist globalisation, while placing within this framework also the effort to build an alternative left subjectivity at the European level. These are the problems of the rights of the person and democracy which caused the radical rupture with Stalinism in the Italian workers' movement. Our radical rupture with Stalinism integrates these reasons and develops them in the name of the socialism of the liberation of wage labour, the critique of alienation, of the separation between the citizen and the State, of the revolution as indivisible world phenomenon. This rupture was not only a historical necessity; it was also an effort aiming to better understand from where it was necessary to restart and with what baggage.

The definitive separation with Stalinism is today the necessary condition to be able to propose the theme of Communism and also a permanent warning to release oneself from any residue of Stalinism in daily practice. This was the meaning of our meeting in Livorno. [\[2\]](#)

The [anti-globalisation] movement offers us a difficult work of reconstruction, on both the practical and theoretical level, of the subject of the transformation and at the same time makes this work possible and again relevant. We can learn from the errors of our history that liberation of labour does not come from its expansion and its ubiquity; that the conquest of power does not guarantee a new society, on the other hand, it can generate new oppressions; that productivism does not ensure a new quality of life. We have even learned that, for the proletariat itself, the challenge of the future does not have a certain outcome.

However, we maintain the fundamental conquest from where we were born, i.e. the history, the past, the present, the organization of society are not objectively given and that to understand and change them we need a science of the society in which we live. Which is a capitalist society and therefore dialectical: the labour force cannot be reduced to a subject of capital and can thus always generate class conflict and antagonism.

This subjectivity, i.e. what "remains outside", is the object of our research on the new proletariat as a subject of transformation. Thus one understands better why it is possible and necessary to seek connections, social and cultural links between the traditional working class and new critical subjectivities which are being formed.

Today, under neo-liberal globalisation, labour dependent on capital grows in absolute terms on a world scale, but this growth, which relates also to its relative weight in society, goes hand in hand with a fragmentation and a dispersion in social composition, with an individualization and an apparent autonomisation of a number of its components and with a reorganization of relations between the classes and the company and the worker. Globalisation exploits the uncertainty and precariousness which constitute the prevailing features of the new social condition.

In addition, the centrality of the workers always lay not in their quantity, but in their capacity for unification. It was always given not by their strength at the distributive level, but by their opposition to the tendency quite simply to reduce the labour force to variable capital, by its affirmation as living labour, capable of opening a prospect of liberation. This is why the reflexion which reconsiders the years 1968-69 is not a nostalgic reaction.

It is a tiger's leap which makes it possible to grasp the essence to propose it again: the radical and irreducible contestation of the centrality of labour as centre of capitalist accumulation, the contestation of the centrality of labour as human activity subjected to capital to affirm, on the other hand, the centrality of critical practice and the social subject which produces it, within the framework of the labour process and outside of it.

The ambiguous and dual nature of labour in capitalist society means, following globalisation, a new step ahead. It does not disappear in a society marked by the "end of work" and does not unify the masses under a sociologically homogeneous condition of work. It assumes, on the contrary, multiple forms of a prolongation of working time for some and its absence in unemployment for others. Work becomes dependent and autonomous, but in all cases, it becomes more and more organically precarious and it does not automatically determine well-defined social memberships. There are then new class frontiers. The process of unification of the alienated and exploited social subjects is not registered in reality in itself; it can be built in subjectivity, in politics, but no organized force can bring it from the outside. The challenge of a first innovation resides, for us, in the fact of "being in the movement", by stimulating this new research, which is possible and necessary, but at the same time so difficult and novel.

After Genoa

The organization of the political force of the [anti-globalisation] movement and the reorganization of the political force of an alternative left in Italy and Europe are distinct problems, but from now on they are structurally and closely dependent. After Genoa, the second cannot be resolved in an effective way without approaching the first and their reciprocal relationship. Any durable movement tends to give itself forms of self-organization, rooting itself in territories and reciprocal relationships. Thus emerges again the topic of direct democracy. The crisis of representative democracy and the nature of the movement critical of globalisation, which constitutes the principal cause of it, proposes a radical critique of the delegation of power and the search for a tissue of social experiences capable of producing forms of direct democracy. It is, in addition, very significant that when the metal-workers' union [the FIOM, which belongs to the CGIL] breaks the social truce negotiated by the confederations and call a national strike, there emerges immediately, for the development of their struggle, a problem of democracy.

The organization of a program built on the autonomy of objectives which arises from the relationship between needs and the critique of neo-liberal globalisation; the social practice of a diffuse, prolonged, multiple conflict and the construction, in this conflict, of a fabric of positive relations and elements of unification; all this outlines the first elements of a project, which moreover considers that its first political outlet lies in the quantitative and qualitative growth of the movement itself. The axis of this course is the construction of another possible world.

It is within the framework of such a growth that the constitution of an alternative left can make a qualitative leap. Genoa represents a line of cleavage and an enormous potentiality. Our own proposals for an alternative left and a plural left must be radically reconsidered.

The question of the party

(...) The party is for us a decisive, fundamental, point, with regard to which we must practice opening and innovation. We have defended the role of the party in contemporary society faced with the devastating effects of the crisis of the First Republic, in Italy, with a crisis of the politics arising from the restorationist capitalist revolution and the corrosion of the society of the media with its process of spectacularisation, leaderism, individualism, reduction of everything, including politics, to an instantaneous consumption. We have defended the role of the party in the representative institutions faced with the irruption of the culture of the majority system, of alternation and of the primacy of coalitions. We also defended the existence of a Communist Party after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, at the time of the "single thought" and through a profound reflexion, in the anti-capitalist camp also, on the 20th century. We defended the reasons for and the future of a Communist Party including against the claims of a centre-left which was in the ascendancy at the time. We refused to throw the baby out with the bathwater. To conclude this fight, a fight for our survival, once again, at the time of the last legislative elections, we paid, for our part, a price for a conservative

attitude which went further than that which might have been considered, to a certain extent, as inevitable. There were experiences of innovation, but we were not able to transform them into a process of self-reform of the party.

Thus, we did not manage a real process of opening to society which is the keystone of reform. Thus, whereas significant elements of refoundation have been introduced into theoretical research, into the political line and in our relationship with the movement, the party's operation remains imprisoned in the impoverished form of tradition, within the framework of a society disrupted by capitalist modernization, in the area of work as well as in the area of social reproduction, in culture as well as in the assertion of a sense of belonging, in the places of socialization and communication as well as in the cities. Consequently the reality of the party is marked by a split between, on the one hand, the richness of the contributions of the women and men of the party at the time of the festivals of our newspaper, the mass demonstrations, both general political and specific mobilizations, including on the newest topics, which reveals a party largely present in the Italy of struggle and participation, and, on the other hand, there is the darker side, contained in a self-reproduction refractory to the reality in which it is plunged. The appearance is given of a verticalist party, closed to experimentation, leading to the paradox of bureaucratic propensities in a party almost deprived of bureaucracy or to stimulate very strong tendencies to institutionalisation in a party which often even tends to deny any value to a presence in the institutions.

If all that was harmful, but politically bearable, until now, that is no longer the case today, as we enter a new phase of movement where openness and innovation become a strict necessity.

(...) We believe that in this phase also the party, as permanent organization of women and men who choose to constitute themselves as a political community in the goal of carrying out a project of society, is essential to express a unitary project of struggle which is present in society, in the economy, in the state, national and supranational organizations. It not only continues to represent a body of participation, but also a possibility of input from the masses into the arena of politics. It is above all an international dimension that the party must reconquer at a time of globalisation.

(...) We can now see better that we have not opposed to the innovation of the centre-left the conservation of the history of the workers' movement, but an innovation of an opposite kind, that of the Communism of liberation

(...) We must be able to carry out an opening to the movements, the experiences of struggle, the different critical cultures in the sense both of introducing a reciprocity of relationships and allowing ourselves, through this, to transcend definitively any vanguardist party attitude. It is necessary to continue to root it in the workplaces, in cultural production, in society, based on exchange and agreement on a project or, at least, a fertile approximation, likely to generate the first elements of another possible world.

This opening to society, to its movements, its experiences and critical knowledge must be related to a definitive opening up of the party. It is not enough that dissent is accepted and recognized, as it is already the case.

It is necessary to advance our capacity to organize a really free discussion. Those who look at us from outside with interest must be able to intervene meaningfully.

That goes still more for the members of the party, women and men who must be in condition to take part in its developments and decisions. Nobody should fear anything if they defend a minority position, but at the same time it is necessary to resolutely dismantle the old mechanism of self-protection of "yes, but", seeking to conceal a disagreement which one considers dangerous. Openness implies a complete transparency of political debate, the clear expression of positions. It is not only a question of political ethics, although it is decisive for the democracy of the party. It concerns the idea of the society that we propose and still more some comprehension of the new political

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phase and the problems that it poses. The current movements do not develop in continuity with the big solid ideological constructions and the big, sometimes terrible, ideas of the primacy of a party-guide over the movements: they develop elsewhere. Such an awakening has led the PRC to choose to live its own autonomy and to be present at the same time in the movement as one of its components and which is at the origin of our success.

[1] The PRC supported the Prodi government without being part of it from the elections of spring 1996. The break with Prodi came in October 1998.

[2] On January 21, 2001, on the anniversary of the foundation of the Communist Party of Italy, Bertinotti made a speech in which an essential theme was an unreserved critique of Stalinism.