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Italy

The Left Turn

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In today's world there are two great antagonistic currents, two long-waves that are destined to mark the future of the humanity, of work and life. They go in opposite directions. The first is a cold current speaking the language of competition, the supremacy of the market and commodities, of the economy, of domination and war. The other, a warm current, speaks the languages of the people, of another possible world, of peace; and is critical of this economy. Our individual and collective destiny depends on which of the two prevail. Global capitalism has changed its pace and is ever more riven by the crises which it itself generates and feeds.

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

War is accompanied by neo-liberalism, so that capitalism marches forward unstably on these two legs. But at the same time an unknown and extraordinary movement has been born and is growing, fighting against just this neo-liberalism and war.

The spirit of Seattle gave birth to the "movement of the movements", from which have grown fights, resistance, opposition and new social experiences, and alongside this movement a diffuse and diverse criticism of globalisation has taken shape.

These two contrasting currents are in conflict, with the first continuing to dominate while the second one, which contests and criticises, still has not succeeded in blocking the first or putting it into crisis or producing societal alternatives on a wide scale which could reverse the general tendency.

This is the political problem that we are facing. I am putting it sharply because we see a real possibility of transforming society, but also a serious risk that capitalist globalisation will concretise the destructive tendencies latent within it.

The problem in terms of the development of the movement is to be able to construct a new political project within the necessary timescale and that can win the space, in Europe and the world that is needed to meet the challenge.

The problem is how to reconstruct the critical strength and mass to restore effectiveness to alternative politics, a politics of transformation. The political project is born from our class-based criticism of capitalist globalisation and the experience of the movement. It proposes to construct an alternative social model and idea of democracy, which can also become governmental alternative, founded on the two distinctive principles of "no to war" and "no to neo-liberalism", in Italy and in Europe....

Recent attempts of reformism, so intimately connected as they are, and not coincidentally, with the dictates of capitalist globalisation, show that it is completely wrong and misleading to search for a left perspective tied to the problems of a political way out in the short term and to the search for a particular rigid pattern of alliances as the basis of an alternative politics. We have made a completely different choice, to restore the primacy of politics, and to rescue politics from a subordinate role.

These two bench marks are a radical repositioning of the PRC on the left and making the social and political fight for the transformation of capitalist society a reality.

'No global' and the new workers' movement

Our relationship with the movement is the main foundation. We want to help open a new chapter in the history of the class struggle, of the fight for the liberation of women and men from exploitation and alienation....

It is important for the movement that the party made this choice - which was an innovation given our historic tradition - of discussing with others in the movement as equal partners, contributing along with others to its growth. We put forward our political ideas, but at the same time operate in a unitary manner, putting aside every propensity to vanguardism.

We are not interested in the hegemony of the party over the movement, but in contributing to the hegemony of the movement in society....

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

The 'movement of movements' - mass demonstration called by CGIL on 23 March

The March 23 demonstration was a great, extraordinary and new event. Without lessening the importance of the decisions of the different trade unions and the direct engagement of all the workers who took strike action, I would argue that this would not have happened in this way, on this scale and at this level of intensity, without the movement. The general strike was born out of the movement, and could not have taken place without the movement's growth....

This is not an explicitly anti-capitalist movement - at least, not at the moment. We will work for this, and we know there is a huge potential for this. This is shown in the movement's approach to the great problems of the world: war, hunger, disease, the environment. It opposes the philosophy of the globalisation which it defines as neo-liberalism, and, if it does not unanimously see the roots of the problem in the capitalist mode of production, it certainly understands that they are imbedded in the social model and the system of power constructed by globalisation....

Our strategic objective is ambitious but clear: the birth of a new workers' movement. The PRC can help immediately by travelling the difficult but necessary road of finding the connections between immediate questions and longer-term perspectives, between the present and the future.

The construction of an alternative platform is a defining moment in this process. An ambitious task lies ahead for the alternative forces of the left, for the movement.

A constituent process for the alternative left

The proposal that we have advanced, and which we are launching from this conference with a great sense of urgency, is to open a preparatory phase in building the alternative left in Italy.

We are not going to pretend we are the movement, whose autonomy, pluralism, ways of organising, diversity and political originality we understand as decisive for its history and its future. On the contrary the alternative left must come into being through its relationship with the movement, starting by opposing war and neo-liberalism in order to create itself as a political subject, and in an open and plural process, giving itself a visible identity and an organised shape.

We communists want to work with others who are not communist. We, as a party, want to work with those who are not in a party and do not want to become part of one, or who want one, but do not yet have it, -mutually acknowledging our differences and sharing in a joint political project.

The alternative left, and ourselves as part of it, can stop being a minority and become a real actor in the public life of the country. So far, this perspective has come up against difficulties. But today it is posed anew from a twofold requirement: to exit from the crisis of politics, which will not happen spontaneously; and also from the growth of the movement and the accentuation of the social and political crisis....

The refounding of the party

The party is being subjected to formidable strains. What was not possible yesterday is today becoming possible. Resistance has ended, a new cycle of politics has begun. An opportunity is unfolding ahead of us, but also, perhaps, an extreme challenge.

The debate at this conference is another step on the road of rifondazione. The debate serves to clarify the positions....

For my part I have noticed that on the ideological basis of "L'Ernesto", [\[1\]](#) this magazine legitimately supported a package of amendments as the expression of a determined political position. I also noticed that most of those speakers who supported that position, expressed ever more openly a global critique of the document that I strongly support. This led to a political choice which I do not support, because it seemed to me to be a total brake on innovation - in the name of a history which is behind us, and which we are supposed to share without criticism. But that is not the case.

I see that position as a weakening of the radical character of the left turn that we are proposing. Such a weakening, a reduction, a brake, I believe, would condemn this turn to impotence.

The political choice that we propose consists, on the other hand, of radicalism and openness, exactly what is needed to seize the opportunity present in the historical moment we are witnessing today.

To put the question another way: if not now, when? I am convinced that this turn of ours, from what I can make out, has already been shown to be correct in more than one way. Without it we would not have gone through Genoa in the way that we did. With it we can now try to tackle the building of our future.

To construct it we need all the comrades, the whole of the party, its sympathizers, and also those who observe it with interest. Above all we need all the different cultures, tendencies and histories that live in the party, and we also need so many others who stand outside the party and who do not accept the existing order of things....

In this conference we have discussed everything including our joint history. We have done it not in an ideological conference, which in fact would be a good thing to do, not in a closed debate between the full timers, but in the circles, amongst the party membership, without claiming titles and science, which would not have corresponded to people's familiar cultural and political, individual or collective environment.

Stalinism is incompatible with communism

"Why," someone asks "from Livorno [\[2\]](#) onwards have you continued this profound and persistent settlement with Stalinism?" Because when the opponent resists, it is he who chooses the battleground and sets the hierarchy of problems, hence some negligence in the debate is always possible.

But when the chance comes again, when the possibility and the necessity to refound your politics is confronting you, then you cannot drag your feet. This time you must start from the movement itself, and seize this new opportunity with both hands as the movement has reached its highest level, posing the transformation of the society. Then you have to show that you can do both these things, showing which side you're on, how you react, the culture that you carry with you, and the idea of society that you put forward.

The movement of the movements, the idea that another world is possible which for us is socialism, rise up against this capitalist modernization in name of a process of liberation of women and men. Our communism can speak the same free language if it can free itself from a big defeat that is part of our history, if it can free itself from the burden that it carries along behind it. The comrades who witnessed it, far from the epicentre, but inside a story as unique as the Italian story itself, carry the marks of it in different ways, but all with the honour of people who fought for a great cause, the democratic Republic.

But this story cannot dazzle us. Stalinism is incompatible with communism. This critique of a part of our heritage, the eradication from our rules of every form of authoritarianism and the substitution of the power of the representatives for the liberation of women and the men. This together with the fight against the idea that politics is autonomous from life, from work and from society, is part not of one struggle in the 1930s in the East, but of the 20th century in the world.

[\[1\]](#) A political magazine published in Bologna, which organizes nationally the "orthodox"- "communist" current, led by Grassi-Burgio.

[\[2\]](#) The place where Bertinotti launched the real debate for the PRC congress.