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Italy

Without ifs or buts, even after 9 April

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The electoral campaign is proving very arduous. On the one hand, the Berlusconi government is on a media campaign seeking desperately to recover the consensus it has lost, with some success. As for the Union, no strong and credible message has emerged of a change and an alternative to neoliberal policies. In fact, the Union programme remains within the framework of neoliberal policies, starting out from the Stability Pact and the Lisbon Strategy. Rifondazione's (PRC) interventions have only succeeded in correcting certain aspects and bring in a few partial correctives. We are a long way from the proposed path of a "Major Reform" in Italy.

This means expectations have been let down by a centrist and moderate offensive within the Union, expressing itself through support for the high-speed train between Lyon and Turin, the European Parliament vote on the Bolkestein guidelines and Prodi's proposals to reduce labour costs, mostly measures targeting the Confindustria, the employers' confederation.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/avanti_popolo2.jpg]

How Liberazione saw election outcome

Marco Ferrando's removal from the PRC slate can be viewed in this context. This grave decision has led to strife in the material and formal make-up of the party but above all, giving in to the moderate and centrist offensive launched against the PRC. Beyond different appreciations about some of Ferrando's statements, the event has been used by the daily *Corriere della Sera* and the *Ulivo*.

In the name of so-called "incompatibility" with the party line, the PRC national secretary has made a choice that is serious in formal terms, mistaken in political terms and worrisome in terms of relations towards minority views. What good is a guarantee of the right to dissent if disciplinary measures are brought in immediately, whenever it is exercised?

And how can the political disagreements that we absolutely don't want to renounce, and which will certainly have public repercussions, be settled in future? If getting closer to government has such effects even before the new parliament takes their seats, what will this situation mean later on? These are questions that threaten the quality of life in the party, its future as a united force with the ability to welcome differing views.

Up against the centrist offensive, PRC needs to change gears, in terms of political line and its electoral campaign. A qualitative leap in political outlook cannot be modelled on the Union's programmatic profile; it needs the ideas and outlook of a coherently anti-capitalist left. These ideas and outlook, as we repeat, are what it takes to beat Berlusconi. For this reason, we are putting forth and standing up for certain programmatic priorities in the electoral campaign to clearly affirm that "No to war and neoliberalism" will remain our stand after the 9 April elections, even after a victory of the centre-left with a Prodi government as its most likely outcome.

1) The first priority is to "Abolish all their laws": this means a commitment to round out what the Union programme has left uncompleted, namely, the need to abrogate the Berlusconi government's worst legislation, not just the Bossi-Fini immigration measures. These include Law 30, the Moratti Act, the Pensions Act, the Fini Act on drugs and Law 40 on artificial fecundation. Abrogating this legislation is not merely a symbolic measure. It is the only way of preventing these laws simply being redrafted or "bypassed" - a return to such centre-left legislation as the Treu package, the Turco-Napolitano, Zecchino-Berlinguer Act or the Dini pensions reform.

2) The second priority is wages. References to redistribution of income are not enough if a precise system to get back the wages lost in twenty years of neoliberal policies is not enacted.

For this reason, we view the call for the re-establishment of a "New sliding scale" as a necessary battle. Beside this, we are fighting for the introduction of a social wage to combat precarity, as well as a higher floor on pensions.

3) Precarity can also be beaten, firstly by re-establishing clear rules in the labour market to protect employees.

4) Although the Union programme does abolish the Bossi-Fini Act, it fails to abolish the CPT. This is the price paid for the philosophy of "migration flows" and hence entrance quotas. Alongside voting rights for migrants, the right to asylum, citizenship and residency, the closing of all types of CPT is one of our priorities.

5) An immediate, definite withdrawal from Iraq. The "technical times" safeguard for protection of troops is an established practice, and cannot be used as an alibi for extending the mission. But Italy is also present on other fronts, beginning with Afghanistan. An antiwar commitment also entails withdrawal on those fronts, as well as a cut in military spending, closing foreign military bases and the reconversion of war industries. This is why we oppose plans for a European Army.

6) The fight for the Palestinian people's rights must continue, starting out from the full recognition of the democratic vote in the latest elections, as well as a refusal of cuts in aid to the Palestinians as blackmail to impose Israel's unilateral plans, with backing from the Western powers.

7) In this context, it is particularly important to successfully build the 18 March demonstration for withdrawal from Iraq and defence of the Palestinian people's rights.

8) The approval of the Bolkestein guidelines and the declarations on the TAV (high-speed train) say more than any programme about the centre-left's intentions. As for us, we are fighting liberalisations, for the defence of labour rights, for the safeguard of the rights of local populations against the logic of profit and environmental devastation.

9) We are the party of rights, freedoms and women's self-determination. The centrist orientation also means denying these rights, especially in terms of freedom of sexual orientation. We must fight for civil unions, for a secular state, for the abrogation of Law 40, for the respect for women's self-determination, to guarantee sexual freedom to everyone.

10) A halt to privatisations and capitalist models must be rounded out by a relaunch of public intervention, foreseeing new forms of nationalisation starting from essential nodes of the economy: energy, telecommunications, transports, banking, health.

As the Critical Left (Sinistra Critica) we are fully committed to the battle to boot out Berlusconi and to promote progress for the regions and the interests of workers, those in precarious employment and the unemployed. We want to work to create the conditions for a real alternative as a society, a change in the system that cannot get around the need to challenge the capitalist order. To do this, we believe that the entire alternative left must stop to reflect on the new co-ordinates of a modern anti-capitalist programme. A new programme that will be in tune with the times and able to face up to the shortcomings behind us; a programme nourished by struggles and movements, in which discussion fosters the development and achievement of a modern anti-capitalist left. In this spirit, we are preparing for a broad collective discussion around a programmatic manifesto: "For an Anti-capitalist Left". We are promoting such a discussion as the Anti-capitalist Left, but hope it will be open, pluralistic, with broad participation.

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In the upcoming months, even in the midst the electoral campaign, we will forge ahead with this task that we see as particularly useful to sketch the outlines of the left in construction and the necessary refoundation. We will do this by organising an extensive discussion, town by town, culminating in a large national meeting in May. We hope that many will take part in this effort, to provide a concrete contribution to communist refoundation, to emerge from the dustbin of a reflection put off for too long, to provide strength and energy to a critical left, a coherently anti-capitalist left.