

MOTION 14 - A COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Rifondazione Comunista is more than ever an international necessity: as the refoundation of a communist International based on a revolutionary Marxist programme that is able to bring together all the revolutionary organisations and currents of the anti-imperialist, working-class movement in the world.

The deepening of the social and political world crisis, the historical relevance of the socialist perspective as the only real, progressive response and the great difference between the anticapitalist potential that lies in the renewal of the movements and the limits of their political consciousness all make the prospect of refounding the revolutionary communist International even more crucial. It is the indispensable instrument for an alternative policy line, for the development of the political consciousness of the masses and the anticapitalist recomposition of the vanguard.

The Marxist movement has always been conceived as an international movement not only in its strategic perspective but also in an organisational sense. It was the very international nature of the communist programme that defined the international nature of the communist party. Marx and Engels' Manifesto, in 1848, was drawn up as an international platform for an international association of workers (the League of Communists). The international nature of the party was then reaffirmed by the 1st International (1864-1876) and the 2nd International (founded 1889). The reforming drift of the latter, culminating in the majority's support for the war (1914) was opposed by the International's revolutionary left (led by Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Liebknecht) who, in 1915, launched the prospect of a new revolutionary International: the Third Communist International that would be formally constituted after the victory of the Russian revolution (greeted by Lenin as the "beginning of world revolution").

Stalinism broke radically with the international tradition of revolutionary Marxism, its programme and consequently its organisation. Starting from a new, anti-Marxist theory of "socialism in a single country" – the ideological expression of the interests of a new social bureaucratic clique – Stalinism led the International first to collaborate with the "progressive bourgeoisie" government and class (the "popular fronts"), then to its formal dissolution in 1943. The representation of Stalinism as a sort of dogmatic Marxist fundamentalism – the prevalent representation in the current majority of the PRC – is therefore, even in this sense, the exact opposite of historical truth.

Today there can be no true, deep rupture from Stalinism without returning to the perspective of the communist international as the world party for the working class. The refusal to adopt this perspective, even as the terrain for discussion, has represented and still represents a grave error in the governing majority of PRC. This is the case whether the refusal comes from a "camp" theory, that considers the inter-state "anti-imperialist" alliance between Russia, China and India as the axis for its international perspective, a view that is completely without any class basis and has been radically belied by the current war; or whether the refusal comes – as is the case for the most part – from the superimposition of the old position of left-wing social democracy ("the reforming governments") and the ideas of the anti-Leninist "new left", in order to combine their enthusiasm for the movements with support for the Jospin government.

In truth, only a strategic, programmatic change of direction in the PRC could recover this international perspective that is an undeniable, fundamental part of Refoundation. The international we are working for must be a wide, democratic grouping with clear political tenets. As Lenin affirmed: “without a revolutionary theory there is no revolutionary movement”. A communist international, therefore, can only be based on the theory and programme of revolutionary Marxism, developed historically by the great theorists of Marxism: Marx, Engels, Trotsky, Luxemburg and, in Italy, Gramsci. These positions must obviously be continually brought up to date on the basis of the evolution of events, but as Gramsci declared “ on their own tenets” and not against them

The difficulty in refounding a revolutionary International on a wider basis has been shown by the experience of the past decades. But this difficulty must not be seen as an obstacle but rather a stimulus for this prospect, especially in this new historical context that is emerging, so complex but so rich with new potential. After the collapse of the USSR the political representatives of the working-class movement regrouped dramatically. The old policy of the working-class, anti-imperialistic movement had gone bankrupt, documented once again by the tragedy of war. The growing rebellion of the lower classes and the young world-wide against the current international order makes a revolutionary reference point even more necessary. The global party of the working class and its vanguard can and must oppose “global capital”.

The PRC must therefore put forward a proposal for organised discussion aimed at an international grouping as soon as possible, on the basis above, among the organisations and revolutionary currents in the world working-class, anti-imperialistic movement.

MOTION 15 – ITALIAN IMPERIALISM

Italian capitalism is imperialist in character. In the nineties, the transition to the Second Republic and full participation in European imperialism led to an enlargement of its material basis and a more marked international presence.

For a long time, Italian capitalism has not been a “ragamuffin capitalism” but has participated in the group of dominant countries internationally, and so in the carving-up of raw materials, zones of influence and areas of dominion. In this picture, since 1992, the pressure from the international capitalist crisis, the collapse of the URSS and the development of the imperialist European pole had a decisive effect on the crises of the First Republic. On the one hand, the international capitalist crisis and the re-emergence of the anti-imperialist contradictions led Italian imperialism to tackle the structural burden of its “delays” and “distortions”. On the other hand, the collapse of the USSR has dispelled the true historical basis for the bourgeois discrimination against the old PCI leaders, allowing access to government. Therefore, financial capital has been able to distance itself from its old political representatives in the First Republic and begin a far-reaching regrouping of its own political and institutional structures.

Economically speaking, the great bourgeoisie has greatly consolidated its material basis in the last decade. The process of the privatisation of strategic sectors of the economy, such as banking, energy and telecommunications, and the restructuring and concentration of the credit system have worked together to reinforce the basis of financial capitalism and the specific importance of the great monopolies, the principal beneficiaries of privatisation. As the European “single currency” comes into force, Italian imperialism has a strikingly increased structural importance which, not by chance, corresponds to its growing attention for foreign policy.

Simultaneously, the Italian bourgeoisie has had to tackle the problem of the social impact of policies that are the consequence of its further imperialist leap forward. The material impoverishment and splintering of huge class sectors, the dynamics of the “proletarianisation” of the lower strata in the lower middle class and the fall in living conditions in vast areas in the South of Italy all make up the potential critical mass of a dangerous social explosion in the eyes of the bourgeoisie. In addition, the divide within the lower-middle and middle classes in the context of European integration, above all in the North East where a separatist, corporatist, wealthy clique has emerged, has produced new contradictory groups even within the same dominant social bloc.

MOTION 16 – THE NINETIES AND THE CENTRE-LEFT

The centre-left has not only represented the bad policy of the “Italian Left” but it has represented the political expression of Italian imperialism and its strategic investment in the nineties. The series of centre-left governments have waged the heaviest social assault on the lower classes of the last thirty years, thereby paving the way for Berlusconi’s victory. The coalition with the bourgeois centre has thus condemned the working-class movement to a heavy social and political defeat.

In the nineties, within the bipolar choice, the centre-left became the privileged point of reference for the great capitalist families in order to ensure the peaceful subordination of the working-class movement in relation to the crisis and European integration. The politicians of the centre-left, even if in different parties, had already been the essential reference point for the Italian bourgeoisie in 1992 and 1993 when Amato and Ciampi began the Italian “transition”. The defeat of the progressive pole and the victory of the right in 1994 represented a moment of contradiction that led the bourgeoisie to play the Berlusconi card for a short time. But even in that brief arc of time, financial capital’s relationship with the right was of instrumental use alone, not a strategic reference. It was the strategic defeat of the first Berlusconi government – which had proved incapable of managing either a stable policy of agreement-seeking or winning a decisive battle against the workers – that attracted bourgeois investment to the centre-left again: in the Prodi government, in the D’Alema government, and in the Amato government. Therefore, the centre-left has not represented solely the “bad” policy of the working-class movement and the “Italian left” but the political expression of the great bourgeoisie. In its turn, the DS apparatus, as the pillar of the centre-left, has been a decisive part of the bourgeois design in the nineties, as the means of a subordinate enlistment of a significant part of the working masses in the centre-left.

It is mistaken to state simply that “the centre-left has failed”. From the bourgeois point of view, the centre-left governments have all represented excellent boards of directors. Both in terms of an economic policy designed to sustain large manufacturing industries (purchasing incentives, money for scrap) and in terms of their structural and strategic interests nationally and internationally (casual, temporary labour, privatisation) but even more so in maintaining an extraordinary social harmony. At the same time the organic unity of the bourgeois policies of the centre left has progressively mined its political and social base. Politically speaking, it is the liberal evolution of DS social democracy and the growing ramification of its direct relations with the elite that have progressively sharpened the internal power-struggle between the DS apparatus and the traditional bourgeois centre represented by the Ulivo. The struggle for the hegemony of a new “democratic party” as the main representative for the Italian bourgeoisie has been an element of fundamental instability for the coalition.

Above all, on a social level, central-left policies have progressively dispersed their rank and file support. The bloc of the great bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy of the organised working-class movement have proved incapable of hegemony in Italian society. On the one hand, it has opened up room for rebellion in organised sectors of the lower-middle and middle industrial classes against the so-called privileges of the large companies and the particular favours granted to them by the Ulivo governments and the CGIL bureaucracy. On the other hand, the deeply de-motivated rank and file

supporters of the centre-left, mainly dependent workers, have responded with political passivity, often distancing themselves from the centre-left or rejecting it.

The victory of the Polo della Libertà on 13th May was, therefore, its capitalisation of the crisis of the progressive, centre-left Pole's policies and its social bloc over the last decade. This is the real reason for Berlusconi's victory, and the new political season ahead repeats an old lesson, recurring all through the events of the twentieth century and the history of the Italian working-class movement: any collaboration with the bourgeois centre will mean defeat for the workers, either from a social or union stance, or in more general political terms. It is a fact: the alliance with the centre that was to have "beaten the right" paved the way for its victory. This is the lesson for the decade. It is a lesson that charges the ruling apparatus of the DS and the unions with their responsibility as the true organisers of the defeat. But it is a lesson that inevitably calls into question, on a different level, the political course of our party over the last ten years.

MOTION 17 – ON PRC POLICY

The long cycle of PRC policy, marked by the conditioning, pervasion and contamination first by the “progressive pole” and then by the centre-left, has been unsuccessful, both in terms of the general interest of the working-class movement and in terms of building our party. It is the proof of the failure of reformist politics nationally and the measure of the need to change direction.

After ten years of history, this critical appraisal can no longer be avoided. Our party, from its very foundation, has certainly been an important obstacle to the regressive processes in the early nineties and a valuable factor for the political regrouping of the vanguard forces. Our party has successfully resisted the repeated attempts at institutional smothering that followed in the nineties (especially by the leaders of the DS and Centre-left). The PRC still represents, in the current political panorama, the natural, valuable reference point for the dynamics of the movements of workers and the young, which would be otherwise aimless or without more consistent, credible references.

But a serious, honest appraisal cannot stop at this. A communist party cannot be an end in itself, but must be a class instrument to achieve a project for an alternative hegemony. And the results of ten years’ deliberate political direction are inevitably to blame. For ten years, in different ways and contexts, the ruling majority in the PRC has consistently rejected building up the party as an alternative strategic force, opting for a “reforming” policy of pressure and conditioning by the DS apparatus and the political line-up of the bourgeois alternation (first the progressive pole, then the Centre-left).

This policy has not been linear but has seen abrupt, hasty changes in its parliamentary allegiances over this period (from opposition to government majority and from government majority to opposition). But it has maintained this basic strategic course. Indeed, each time our position as the opposition to government was intended to pave the way, yet again, for a (potential or real) regrouping with the line-up of the alternation government. This was the case during the formation of the progressive pole in spring 94 around a common electoral government programme. This was the case in 95-96 in the abrupt passage from our radical opposition to the Dini government to the formation of a majority government with Prodi and Dini. This was the case after the rupture with the Prodi government. First there was an attempt to reform the old majority government after a hoped-for phase of “decantation”; then, after the unexpected failure of that attempt (and the headlong clash with the D’Alema government over the Balkans war), 14 (out of 15) regional government agreements were stipulated for the administrative elections in 1999, which was clearly intended to then be projected on a national scale but was destroyed by the Centre-left’s clamorous defeat. Even after the by now inevitable failure of this regrouping policy, opting for “non-belligerence” towards the Centre-left in the political elections and the increased collaboration with the Ulivo in local government have sanctioned in different ways the basic continuity of this strategy.

This strategy has been seen to be deeply mistaken. Upheld in the name of a principle

of “realism” and “the concreteness” of the possible results, it has not produced any real or concrete results. All attempts to “contaminate” and reform the progressive pole and then the Centre-left, whether in government or opposition, have been belied by the liberal shift in the DS and the fundamental relationship between the Centre-left and the Italian bourgeoisie. And, what is more, these attempts have had the opposite effect – in a dramatic passage, our party shares responsibility, for more than half of the preceding government term, for the adoption of anti-popular policies, with grave effects not only on the material conditions of the workers but also on the evolution of class relations (a dramatic drop in strike hours and the stabilisation of social harmony). Moreover, our continuing collaboration in local government in the Regions and cities has shown yet again, on a different level, our continuing political agreement on privatisation, the reduction in social spending and flexible policies which totally contradict our national role as the opposition.

The chosen line has also failed to lead to a growth in our party membership. Formally defended as a way to widen electoral consensus and the social rooting of the PRC, this line has failed to achieve either objective. After ten years, the party’s electoral consensus is objectively less than that at its foundation. These are indeed difficult years, but this fact must be interpreted in the context of a historical passage that has seen the drifting and crisis in the DS, the explosion of crisis in its political and organisational structure. The PRC has not taken advantage of the vacuum to the left of the DS. The extraordinary leaps forward in 93 as the “heart of the opposition” in the working-class cities of Turin and Milan, the measure of our great potential, were successively destroyed by the wavering policies of the following years. And the fact that we have failed to develop an alternative hegemony of the lower classes has not represented solely our party’s failure, but a fact that is loaded with grave consequences for the all Italian society, as the victory of the Centre-right has proved.

MOTION 18 – ON THE “PLURAL LEFT GOVERNMENT”

The prospect of a plural left government based on a reforming programme as a post-Berlusconi solution does not only fail to recognise the need for a critical appraisal of the past ten years, but it proposes yet again, in essence, the very same policy. Pursuing it from the standpoint of the movements would not only fail to change its nature, but would profoundly damage the movements themselves and their future policy.

The strategic proposal for the plural left government represents a profound error and holds great risks for our party. After having pursued unsuccessfully for the last ten years the “contamination” first of the progressive pole and then the Centre-left, we cannot propose yet again, as though nothing had happened, the same basic line; otherwise we would end up following a path we have already been down and that has already failed. Not only in Italy, but all over the world. At national level, the plural left had already been experienced by our party during the progressive Pole’s bloc in 94 (DS, Greens, Orlando’s Rete, and PRC). Its official programme (viz. Liberazione, 4/2/94) proclaimed, within *“the competition for the government of the country”*, *“Italy’s authoritative, solid presence in international markets and internationally”* and the appeal *“to those forces in the business world that take to heart the social, civil and democratic growth of Italy”*. On this basis, it proposed *“combining social equity and the logic of efficiency and the market ethos”* in order to *“promote privatisation where appropriate”*, to carry out *“the recovery of the deficit which will imply austerity”* albeit with *“the guarantee that any sacrifice will be shared fairly”*. Berlusconi’s electoral victory blocked the experimentation of this governmental programme, keeping the PRC in opposition until 1996. But that programme reflected and reflects the only possible character of a plural left government with the DS apparatus; namely, that would subordinate the interests of the working-class movement to the needs of Italian capitalism.

At an international level, the current experience of a plural left government in France (PS-PCF-Greens) has been and is unequivocal. If in the first French plural left government (81-83) under Mitterand austerity and workers’ sacrifices went hand in hand with the formal language of the reforming tradition, in Jospin’s government austerity and sacrifice have gone hand in hand with a (tempered) liberal language of privatisation and flexibility. It is yet more proof that, in the current picture of the capitalist crisis and global competition, a “plural left” government does not differ, in essence, from an ordinary liberal bourgeois government. This is another reason why our cry for an “Italian Mitterand” after the last political elections, and praise for the Jospin government (that *“contests the entire logic of flexibility and introduces directly into the economy the parameter of the defence of workers’ interests”* as the PRC secretary declared in a front-page editorial on 29/9/99) have represented a grave error that our party must come to terms with. Above all, the prospect of a plural left government in Italy today would have an even more regressive nature than in France or compared to the Progressive Pole in 94. Unlike Jospin’s party, the DS apparatus, by a large majority, has broken with the role and function of social democracy to present itself as the direct representative of the Italian bourgeoisie, in open competition with the Margherita and, on the other side, with Forza Italia. A “plural left” coalition in Italy would therefore be, in fact, the re-proposal of a centre-left.

The pursuit of the prospect of a reforming plural left government as an outlet for the

grassroots movements and their “contaminating” action does not make this project any better. On the contrary, in many respects, it makes it worse. Instead of directing the work of the masses towards the autonomy of the movements from the liberal bourgeois centre, it uses the movements as a lever to put pressure on the DS apparatus and the Ulivo. Instead of freeing the movement and movements from any illusion of being able to contaminate the liberals, it promotes this very illusion in the movement. It is the exact opposite of an autonomous class-based politics. Above all, it damages profoundly the movement and its future as none of the fundamental tenets of mass movements, whether working-class or anti-global, could find any satisfaction in a bourgeois plural left government.

For all these reasons, this prospect must be openly and explicitly rejected by our party’s V Congress.

MOTION 19 – AN AUTONOMOUS CLASS POLE

The V PRC Congress must adopt the development of the working-class movement's independence from any bourgeois force as the new strategic axis of party policy. This means the strategic autonomy from any old or new force in the bourgeois centre (Centre-left or liberal DS apparatus), rupture with any hypothesis of a government of alternation with these forces and the adoption of the perspective of an anticapitalist class alternative as the strategic outlet for mass opposition and the recomposition of the struggles in the new historical bloc.

Our party's political experience over the last ten years, a class analysis of the political situation and the re-emergence of mass movements all demand a fundamental political change of direction: a change that will adopt as its basic axis the autonomy of the working-class movement and mass movements from any bourgeois force and thus claim an autonomous class pole, openly opposed to the ruling classes and their alternating governments (Centre-right and Centre-left). The politics of the autonomous class pole do not concern solely the certainty and clarity of the autonomous strategic position of our party as the opposition to the two alternating bourgeois poles, which is, however, a necessary condition. It concerns above all a proposal for the masses that recovers an elementary principle of Marxism: the counter-position of the workers' interests and those of all the individuals and groups in an alternative social bloc against the ruling classes' interests, and all their political representation in relation to the perspective of social revolution. The rupture with the "Centre" in any of its expressions, whether old or new, must therefore not only be a binding principle for the PRC but a fundamental demand of communists in the movements. In this way we would avoid building up sectarian compartments but we could indicate the terrain for a wider unity within the autonomy of the working-class and mass movements in the fight against the bourgeoisie for an anticapitalist alternative.

The proposal for an alternative, autonomous class pole is even more relevant after the long season of the Centre-left: millions of workers were subordinated to the Ulivo when it became the chosen channel to represent the Italian bourgeoisie. Millions of workers have experienced first hand the social and political failure of this collaboration with the bourgeoisie. The demand for a rupture with the Centre can therefore use this actual experience and pave the way for the young generations that are now lifting up their heads again. Furthermore, each day shows even more clearly the organic relationship between the Ulivo and the ruling classes, even after the success of the centre-right government. The bipartisan policy towards Berlusconi, commissioned by the elites in Italian society, the demand for a "more liberalist" policy than the government's on strategic terrain for capitalist accumulation (viz. privatisation), the vote in favour of the imperialist war in Afghanistan together with the adoption of the FIAT Minister Ruggiero as their privileged interlocutor (viz. the Airbus affair) do not represent "errors" or "strategic divergence" with the communists. They all represent the material base of interests in which the Centre-left has now planted its roots. This material base has not changed with their passage "to the opposition" but has on the contrary remained the irremovable anchor for the bourgeois perspective that is "the opposition's" goal. This is the reason why the rupture with the centre-left is a permanent, impelling class necessity for the working-

class movement and mass movements.

MOTION 20 – THE DS IN CRISIS AND ADRIFT

The DS bureaucratic apparatus, traditionally the agent for the ruling classes in the working-class movement, has, for the most part, now broken with its social-democratic function and role to begin the mutation of the party into a liberal bourgeois force that directly represents the elite in society. This evolution reinforces the need for an autonomous class pole in alternative to any hypothesis of a plural left. The vertical crisis in the DS that has gone hand in hand with this evolution has created a new space for the autonomous development of the communist party and an alternative hegemony.

The DS is now going through the deepest crisis in its political history. This crisis is not due to the extent of its electoral defeat or the failure of its first government experience. It comes from the fact that defeat struck at the most delicate point in the historical mutation of the DS: from a social-democratic party, the instrument to control the working-class movement on behalf of the bourgeoisie, to a liberal, bourgeois democratic party that is the direct representative of the elite in society.

The DS's prolonged experience of government in the nineties was the indicator of this process of mutation. Against the background of the crisis in the First Republic, the crisis in the central political representation of the Italian bourgeoisie and capital's strategic investment in the Centre-left, the bureaucratic DS apparatus has multiplied, at every level, its material relations with the ruling classes since 1995. A large majority of the ruling bureaucracy of the party has therefore progressively taken on board its transformation into the central political representative force of Italian capital (with a base in the masses) as its strategic objective. The congress of Lingotto has symbolically crowned this new liberal prospect. And the rupture with its social-democratic function is not merely a purely political-cultural fact, but has gone hand in hand with relevant changes in the material constitution of the party and its relation with the mass organisations, with the dynamics of the class struggle and with its territorial base of rank and file members. This does not mean the disappearance of every trace of social democracy (present in the active framework of the working-class movement, its relations with the union apparatus, and the presence of social-democratic tendencies within the DS apparatus itself, such as Socialism 2000 and the Left DS). It means that the social-democratic presence and function, however important, are no longer the centre of gravity for the party nor the material basis for DS relations with the bourgeoisie. The open contrast between the DS apparatus and CGIL bureaucracy, the substantial marginality of the DS's role in the dynamics of the new class movements (metal-mechanic workers) and youth movements (anti-global) are a reflection of this rupture. Fassino and D'Alema's sweeping victory at the congress, among the party's bureaucracy, especially after passing to the opposition, shows how profound this rupture has been. Moreover, all the current policy direction of the DS apparatus, from the declaration in support of the NATO war to the opening up to Confindustria (Confederation of Italian Business) on the liberalisation of redundancies is proof not only of the prospect of an alternation of government but of the search and desire to maintain material relations with the bourgeoisie: a sort of shadow committee for bourgeois affairs waiting in the wings. Therefore, the description of the DS as "moderate left", which in the past seemed improper, is more than ever totally erroneous.

Yet if the rupture with social democracy has been clear-cut, the DS's final destination

is uncertain. The loss of an outlet in government, the emergence of a new, threatening competitor for the bourgeois centre (the Margherita) and the internal lacerations in the liberal apparatus of the party have all placed new obstacles in the path of the continuity of a liberal bourgeois project. The reassembling of the industrial bloc around the Berlusconi government is a further factor in the crisis of D'Alema's project. All this has not led to a rejection of the project (difficult to reverse thanks to its deep roots in the party) but it certainly exposes it to a higher risk of failure among the bourgeoisie. In the meanwhile, the tenacious pursuit of this policy increases its distance from the old social base and rank and file members of the DS.

The DS's drift towards bourgeois liberalism and the vertical crisis that has accompanied it are a measure of the need for a policy of an autonomous class pole and a new historical space where it can be constructed. Large sectors of the masses are today dramatically experiencing not only the betrayal of their own policy lines but the crisis and dissolution of their traditional political representation. The very renewal of the working-class and youth movements, while it involves growing numbers in the left, accentuates the political confusion and redoubles new demands for points of reference. Our party can and must respond to these demands by opening up to the masses, with the proposal of an autonomous class pole. This would offer an alternative reference point in this crisis of representation for the working-class movement, providing wide sectors of the masses with a way out from the crisis: namely, the break with the DS liberal apparatus and the Ulivo in order to fight autonomously against the Berlusconi government and the Italian bourgeoisie. In this sense the demand for an autonomous class pole on anticapitalist terrain represents a tool for the construction of an alternative communist hegemony among the lower classes and their movements.

MOTION 21- THE PRC AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The development of a policy for an autonomous class pole and an alternative social bloc requires clarity and coherence in the PRC as the opposition, even at local level. Therefore, we must stop the collaboration between the PRC and the Centre-left in local government, starting from the Regions and the large cities. This change of direction is even more relevant given the Ulivo's support for the war and the development of a liberalist institutional federalism.

During the last ten years, our party has promoted and consistently followed the policy of collaborating with Centre-left governments in local administrations. On the one hand, this policy has proved unsuccessful in "beating the right", as the failure of many Ulivo-PRC coalitions showed in the administrative elections on 16 April 2000 (such as the Lazio Region). On the other hand, and more importantly, it has made the PRC co-responsible for the agreement and local implementation of liberalist policies that are in open contradiction with the social tenets of our party. The new policy of an autonomous anticapitalist class pole would therefore require a profound change in our local policy.

At local level, the Centre-left is no different from the national Centre-left: policy programmes, social references and governmental methods are inevitably the same. On the contrary, in the nineties the Ulivo local administrations have often been "in the vanguard" in the experimentation of liberalist policies. The victory of the Berlusconi government with the passage of the Ulivo to the "opposition" has not changed the local policies of the Centre-left in the slightest. Indeed, the Ulivo's attempt to gain credit with the bourgeoisie again nationally also involves using its local administrations, often held up as models of managerial efficiency compared to the presumed uncertainties of the Pole (viz. privatisation). More generally speaking, local administrations have become more than ever before an important instrument for the consolidation or renewal of relations between the Ulivo and the elite in Italian society.

The development of a liberalist institutional federalism, begun by the Ulivo and further exacerbated by the new Berlusconi government, also reinforces and extends the liberalist tendencies of local administrations. The old theory of the distinction between national and local politics (which had always been unfounded) has now been demolished completely. The transfer of decision-making power concerning the so-called welfare state to regional government will make the regional Centre-left governments the new agents for national agreement with the right-wing national government and at the same time an even greater experimental precursor of the national alternation of government. In addition, the large number of Ulivo local governments that support the war, together with the Pole, is the final, even more shocking proof of the basic homogeneity of bourgeois liberalism, whether at national or local level.

Our party is called on to change its policy here, too. More than ever before, the PRC cannot adopt a central role in the opposition to the war declaring that "nothing will be as it was before" but continue to support "as before" regional governments that support the war. The PRC cannot adopt a central role in the no-global movement declaring that after Genoa nothing will be as before, but then continue to support as before those councils that oppose or block the movement's demands (starting from the city council in Genoa). A coherent general line is needed: communists must be part

of the opposition in local government in the Regions and the large cities, too.

Obviously, the situation is different – albeit exceptional today – where the communists are an essential part of local councils that are really trying to create an anticapitalist alternative: here, opposition to the national government strictly linked to class interests and outside any false institutional neutrality becomes fundamental.

MOTION 22 – REPUDIATING THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT

The Berlusconi government is a reactionary government that is trying to resolve its contradictions in a new, general attack on the working-class movement. Our party's opposition to the Berlusconi-Bossi-Fini government cannot be an ordinary opposition, but it can and must openly work to repudiate it on the wave of massive, working-class, popular mobilisation. The objective of repudiating the government must not be an end in itself but a lever for the anticapitalist class alternative.

The Polo delle Libertà's government differs from the first Berlusconi government ('94). Politically, Forza Italia has greatly strengthened its position in the coalition, forged a more stable relationship with the Northern League and come to a wide-reaching agreement with homogeneous local authorities. In social terms, unlike in '94, it is supported by big business that, although having supported the Centre-left during the previous government, and having worked to re-confirm the Ulivo in office, chose to invest in the new Berlusconi government after the election result through the direct participation of its own exponents (Ruggiero). Big business was well aware of the greater force of the new government and thus seized the opportunity to use it, but clearly desired to place it under the control of one of their own faithful. On its part, the government is trying to reconcile the business and personal interests of the Fininvest empire and the corrupt environment of capital while representing the general interest of the bourgeoisie.

The new government's programme is, objectively speaking, reactionary: it extends and develops in a concentrated form all the government policies of the preceding legislature both in social and institutional terms. As far as foreign policy is concerned, a closer collaboration with American policy lies uneasily with the continuity of its strategic position in European imperialism (embraced in particular by FIAT and its minister Ruggiero).

The direction of this general programme has not yet been completely defined, but it oscillates between a policy of agreement-seeking with the working-class organisations and attempts to sink them completely. However, an objective contradiction weighs heavily on the government: on the one hand, the political need to bankroll a bloc of wide-ranging but contradictory and expensive interests, and on the other, the need to do so within the European stability pact and in the light of the international economic crisis. This contradiction fans the growing tensions in the Berlusconi social bloc (as between Industry and the Confederation of Italian Trade over fiscal policy). But this is the very reason why the government is going down the slippery slope of social conflict with the opposing bloc: only a lunge against dependent workers can contain the centrifugal forces of the dominant bloc and increase the margins for mediation within it. Moreover, the subordinate paralysis of the CGIL and the crisis and complicity of the Centre-left encourage this social offensive. And the international context of war, with its possible diversionary effects, has provided the government with an opportunity to anticipate its attack. It is not by chance that they have plunged into a headlong attack on the pension system, health and school, culminating in the assault on article 18 of the Statute of Workers. This is likely to be combined with new antidemocratic, restrictive policies in the field of union rights and public order. AN's open championing of the most reactionary impulses of the State's restrictive apparatus, which emerged from the events in Genoa, is the measure and anticipation of a deep-seated tendency that is encouraged by the composition of the new

government. In conclusion, the more stable the new government, the more its political and social contradictions will move “to the right”.

The objective of repudiating the Berlusconi government therefore responds to a general interest of the working-class movement and all the alternative social bloc. It responds to the common interest in freeing us from an objectively reactionary threat. Adopting this rallying cry does not mean cherishing illusions or making predictions. The greater force of the second Berlusconi government, the damage already done to the working-class movement during the preceding legislature and international dynamics all tend to favour the continuation of this government. However, a communist party must determine the level and goals of its opposition irrespective of the difficulty of the task ahead. It can and must adopt the needs of the working-class movement as the basis for reference and act to stimulate a counter-tendency. Furthermore, despite the difficulties in our path, there is certainly room to build up a radical, mass opposition to the right-wing government. Despite its more-consolidated position, the Berlusconi government did not gain power on the wave of increased consensus in Italian society, but in the context of a fall in right-wing coalition support with respect to the elections of '94 and '96. At the same time, despite the damage done, signs of renewal in the working-class movement have recently appeared, not least the huge mobilisation of the metal-mechanic workers and the action of a new working-class generation. And this renewal of class awareness, even though still fragile, in turn unites with the development of the anti-globalisation movement – prevalently of young people – that has emerged as a mass movement in Italy more than in other European countries. In addition, in particular after the events in Genoa, a certain active, antigovernment sensibility has developed among large sectors of the left in support of the anti-globalisation movement, spurred on by a sincere concern for democracy (viz. the demonstrations on 24th July). All these factors do not automatically incite mass opposition to this government, but they are a measure of a potential counteroffensive, supported by a wider social and political base, to its reactionary programme. Our party's task is to gather and develop all these potential supporters and regroup them around a unifying programme and a single goal.

Therefore, more than ever before, we cannot merely close ranks in the routine of parliamentary opposition combined with praise for the spontaneity of the grass-roots movements. But, within the experience of the movements, we must promote the conditions for a concentrated social explosion against the ruling classes and their government. Only a concentrated social eruption can overturn the relations between the classes and pave the way for an anticapitalist alternative. And only an anticapitalist alternative can truly respond to the fundamental tenets of the lower classes and their struggle. The demand to repudiate the Berlusconi government can and must be part of the anticapitalist prospect and one of the levers to achieve it. This is the reason why it must be discussed openly within the movements, without “politician” distortion but also without self-censure, in an active relationship with the objective dynamics of their struggles.

MOTION 23 –A CLASS OPPOSITION TO BERLUSCONI AND THE GENERAL DISPUTE

The working class and the world of work are the core of the opposition to Berlusconi and the lever for a possible repudiation of his government. But this is only possible on condition that a true, independent class aggregation, in alternative to the liberal centre-left, is recomposed in this struggle, on the terrain of a general, unifying dispute.

The experience of the nineties has proved a valuable lesson for communists and the Italian working-class movement. Only the working-class movement, with its concentrated class action, was able to stop Berlusconi's rise, split his social bloc and lay down the conditions for his fall: this was the experience of autumn '94. This lesson must be recalled in the minds of the masses and adopted to steer our new policy against the second government of the right-wing parties.

The recomposition of a unitary working-class movement does not only have a union significance but also a more general political one. Therefore, the creation of a unifying general dispute for workers and the unemployed can and must be the immediate orientation for our party's contribution in a new independent class action. This means selecting a unified set of demands to develop general and radical mass opposition and unify the alternative social bloc. The proposal for a general dispute of workers and the unemployed, in the perspective of a general strike against the government and the bosses, is more necessary now than ever before.

The demand for a general, substantial salary increase for all dependent workers is more than ever in direct contrast to the assault on social dialogue waged by the government. The call to abolish the "Treu Package" and all casual labour (starting from employing casual workers on open-ended contracts) clashes head on with the strategic policy of crushing dependent workers. The demand for a minimum guaranteed salary for all categories (quantifiable as 1000 Euro net, and a reference point for workers' pensions) for all dependent workers contrasts even more than before with the policy of regional differentiation in salaries so dear to liberalist federalism. The demand for the recognition and extension of union rights to all subordinate workers, regardless of their type of contract or the size of firm, collides head on with the shared programme of Confindustria and the government, illustrated by the attack on article 18 of the Statute of Workers. The demand for a true guaranteed salary for the unemployed and young people looking for their first employment (quantifiable as 80% of the minimum inter-category salary or the contractual salary previously earned), financed in the first place by the abolition of public funding for private firms, rejecting the logic of any compromise with "minimum" labour (i.e. casual labour), contrasts with the increase in the use of casual labour and indicates an arm of resistance against the economic blackmail of unemployment or exploitation. The general reduction in the working week at the same salary without flexibility or annualisation, and the abolition of overtime can be the only strategy for an effective fight against mass unemployment. The demand for the progressive taxation of high incomes, profits and patrimonies ("let them pay who have never paid") to fund increased, improved welfare spending (starting from health and education) can and must counter the government line of the de-taxation of profit paid for by the destruction of the welfare state.

This platform of immediate demands must not be considered exhaustive or a substitute for the specific demands of sectors or movements. But it should be adopted as a unifying platform for the mass of communists: in the movements, at local level and in mass organisations. Its function is to play on the reactionary platform of the bosses and government in order to counter-propose a radical alternative class platform. And to play on an alternative class platform to unite all sectors and fragments of the subordinate masses around a class alternative: beyond a mere union logic and against the current splintering of the masses.

In this framework and on this terrain, the PRC must advance the general proposal of a single class front against the Berlusconi government and the bosses. Its rationale is simple: if the government now regroups around itself the bourgeois unity of action, the workers must create a greater unity of action against the government and the vested interests that support it. This means promoting greater unity in the workers' struggle, irrespective of political or union differences, favouring wherever possible the convergence of action in a common programme. More in general, an appeal should be made to all those forces and tendencies within the working-class movement that could converge around an independent class programme, in an open break with the bourgeois forces of the centre. If the subordination of the working-class movement to the bourgeois centre has laid the grounds for Berlusconi's victory over five years, only the rupture with the bourgeois centre can allow the working-class movement to repudiate Berlusconi. The pressing need for unity of action in the working-class movement against the government must thus openly counter any proposal to create a front with bourgeois forces. The struggle for class hegemony in the opposition to the government of the right as an alternative to the bourgeois centre-left precisely defines the new battleground for communists.

MOTION 24 – UNION REFOUNDATION

An organised class struggle must be developed in the CGIL and non-confederate trade unions in the perspective of the “Constitution of a mass, democratic, confederate, unitary, class-based union”. At the same time, we must fight to develop a structure for mass self-organisation (co-ordinating committees of delegates, fight and strike committees and councils).

There must be a profound change of direction in our union policy. First of all, it is essential that we condemn unequivocally union bureaucracy, the true agent of the ruling classes within the working-class movement. Confederate union leaders’ policy of agreement-seeking, principally the CGIL, does not merely represent a “mistaken policy” however serious. It reflects the profound nature of the bureaucratic union apparatus: “a political clique” and its corresponding structure, whose action allows the rule of capital to continue.

The first task for our party is therefore to abandon the policy that has been followed so far: “to move the CGIL to the left”. On the contrary, the PRC is called on to openly repudiate the union movement’s bureaucracy as a new axis of its own union policy, first of all, condemning the “unreformability” of its structure.

This does not preclude communists playing a role in traditional organisations, chiefly in the CGIL. But it certainly implies the complete abandonment of any attempt to bring pressure to bear on the managing bureaucracy and the development of an open class-based opposition able to challenge the “rules” of the union apparatus and become an autonomous reference point for all workers. Even the emergence of partial contradictions inside the apparatus and the needs imposed by the presence of a centre-right government do not change this general picture. Sabbatini and the FIOM bureaucracy, who have too easily become a reference point and a privileged interlocutor for the current party majority, do not represent a strategic counter-opposition to Cofferati’s policy of class collaboration (also expressed over the war). His most recent statements are only the tactical expression of an inescapable self-defence of the social-democratic bureaucracy against an assault that aims to drastically reduce the role of agreement-seeking. Indeed, agreement-seeking has been reconfirmed as the strategic axis of the CGIL bureaucracy in relation to the government’s current offensive. Just as for the majority group in the Comisiones Obreras in Spain, Cofferati’s aim is to create a framework for agreement-seeking and social dialogue with the centre-right government: the only problem is that Berlusconi is not Aznar and so this objective is much less practicable.

The constitution of a new area in the CGIL - Work and Society: a change of tack - is certainly positive, because it supersedes the former split essentially caused by the praxis of our party, not based on political-union policy but on the need to have a sector that is a “faithful” supporter of party policy in particular at the time when it was part of the centre-left majority government (it is not by chance that the conditions for the re-unification of the left-wing union areas have materialised since our break with the Prodi government). However, this is only positive in terms of organisation. Indeed, there is no analysis of the incapacity of the “Alternative Union” movement or the “Communist CGIL area” to represent a class-based opposition to the collaborationist policy of the CGIL majority. This incapacity is reconfirmed by the betrayal of the anti-government movement represented by the “half-hearted strikes” in

December 2001. Showing all its reformist limits, Work and Society, instead of opposing the decisions of the bureaucracy head on, accepted them for the most part.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop a coherent class area, based on communist militants but open to the aggregation of other independent sectors, that can present itself as a candidate for the hegemony of the left of the confederation and is based on an anticapitalist programme of action in open opposition to the union leaders.

At the same time, the PRC must constantly forge a link between the refounded CGIL left and the communists who should develop their action in extra-confederate union movements: this union activity is, of course, a more advanced framework of action in the field of political-union objectives, but on a different basis it is also subject to practical limits beyond its control, such as the chronic tendency to splinter. In this picture, the battle for the unification of extra-confederate union activity must be developed as a central question in the next phase by its militant communist members.

The PRC must not deceive itself that it can supersede the current scattering of militant communists in the different unions “by decree” and this situation has been “legitimised” both by the objective complexity of the union question and the concrete nature of Italian unions. Only the development of the class struggle and the experience of the anti-bureaucratic struggle will change this in the future. The PRC can and must, on the other hand, immediately indicate the general orientation for proposals and the basis for its programme to unite the militant communist union members whether they are in the confederate unions or the extra-confederate ones.

The general orientation of the V Congress is the proposal for a “Constitution of a mass, democratic, confederate, unitary, class-based union”.

With this directive, communists must address all workers to achieve unity on a wider basis in a unitary union confederation, based on the democracy of workers and the defence of their autonomous interests, breaking away from the current union bureaucracies. This means advancing the prospect of unity from the bottom, starting from unitary assemblies of members (and non-members) in the workplace. The structure could vary in relation to the concrete development of the situation. But it must adopt as its crux the communist struggle for the hegemony of the politically active masses, and those active in the unions, outside the logic of creating a ghetto on a purely union basis or the logic of subordination to the current union apparatus. In this perspective of common work, a co-ordinating committee of militant communist trade unionists, whatever union they belong to, is needed. This co-ordinating committee must exist from now to unify our union debate at local level and in different sectors.

At the same time, on the basis of the proposal of this “constitution”, we must work for the unitary grouping of a larger sector, beyond militant communists, creating in the workplace wherever possible “committees for union refoundation” which would involve active trade unionists from different areas and aim to become the point of reference for anti-bureaucratic action against the bosses.

It is equally important that PRC works to re-launch the movement of the RSU (workplace based union representation) delegates. A permanent co-ordinating committee of the broad left among the elected members of the RSU on an immediate class programme could be, in fact, an important instrument for the anti-bureaucratic

struggle and the development of mass movements. From this point of view, the unitary initiative of class-based trade unionism that first emerged significantly in the meeting of the trade union delegates on 1 December 2001 in Bologna must be fully supported, and will continue in the assembly on 11 January 2002 in Milan.

Finally, however crucial the struggle in the trade union organisations, communists must avoid any type of formalism. In particular, as the struggle is intensifying, it is crucial to work to promote the self-organisation of the masses, both in the form of fight committees, and in the higher form of democratically elected and controlled structures (strike committees, councils). In the final analysis, it is within these structures rather than the trade union organisations that the communist battle for the conquest of a class majority will be played out.

