

MOTION 30 – THE PROGRAMME FOR A CLASS ALTERNATIVE

The PRC is and must be in the front line in the opposition to liberalist policies. But this must not be limited to a purely defensive action, although this is a priority. It is, instead, essential that wherever possible our defence of the welfare state and workers' rights is linked to an anticapitalist programme against the crisis, namely an alternative class-based solution. The question of ownership and power cannot only be empty words: it must be the crux of the party programme as the central thread of communist action in the working class.

In recent years, our party has adopted a perspective of capitalist society reform towards a non-liberalist development model. Any immediate demand, from a tax on BOT (investment) or a 35 hour working week, to workers' rights, has been referred back to a reform programme indicated as the realistic grounds for an alternative society that is "possible" today and a "plural left" government that might follow it. The demand for the "Tobin Tax" for a "social Europe" is a clear example of this line.

This line, in spite of its presumed realism, has been shown to be profoundly utopian. Imagining a general reformist solution that is at the same time compatible with capitalism and progressive means pursuing a utopia in current historical conditions. The experiences of the '90s clearly prove this. On the government's part, whether Prodi or Jospin, the programme of possible reform has been turned on its head into a counter-reform programme resulting in the heavy communist co-responsibility for the liberalist policies of capital. On the opposition's part, the same programme, systematically proposed as the terrain for discussion with the ruling political forces and the liberal DS apparatus, has not even been listened to. Continuing to follow this line means raising neo-reforming illusions among the workers that communists, as such, must combat.

The programmatic line of class action must, therefore, be turned upside down. Communists cannot adopt so-called "tangible and possible" objectives as their perspective. Instead, they must construct their own policy on the clear, repeated logic that no serious social progress can be achieved or consolidated without discussing, in the final instance, the relations of property and power. This does not mean, as is obvious, renouncing our immediate, elementary demands that should be structured and re-grouped in a precise proposal (general dispute). It means explaining on the basis of the workers' practical experience, that any reform or eventual partial conquest, any eventual defence of past conquests, can be achieved only as a by-product of a general conflict with capitalist society and its governments (of whatever colour). And only a rupture with the capitalist relations, only a workers' government based on their organised force, can hatch a real alternative society.

This is the real reason why any "compatible" policy line, apparently concrete, is on the contrary concretely abstract. We must identify on every terrain a system of demands that on the one hand accords with the specific concreteness of the class struggle and on the other prefigures a general anticapitalist outcome, free of any reformist illusions.

The defence of the social conquests of the working-class movement from these assaults, and the development and extension of social rights as universal rights represent our essential programme demands. But to achieve them, we must not only fight for the abolition of the liberalist counter-reforms already carried out, but also a re-allocation of welfare spending of the new, immense resources. It is unrealistic to imagine that the re-negotiation of the stability pact within an imperialist Europe can solve the problem. On the other hand, we must propose the "liberation" of at least three hundred billion lire through the elimination of unacceptable bourgeois privileges:

- the abolition of financial, commercial and banking secrecy as the only concrete condition for the real fight against fiscal evasion and elusion;

- an ordinary and extraordinary capital tax on the very wealthy;
- a large increase in taxation on high profits and incomes that have grown thanks to government policies over the last years;
- the abolition of public funding for private business - true state assistance for capital that costs the Treasury tens of thousands of billions;
- the unilateral abolition of the public debt with full guarantees for small savers;

These demands represent the real, possible instruments to finance a new social policy for the working masses, the unemployed, the young, pensioners and the renaissance of the South.

At the same time, especially in this age of crises and huge capitalist concentration, any serious redistribution of wealth clashes with bourgeois ownership. Any design of a new development model that answers the needs of the workers, the unemployed, the poor in the South means questioning the ownership of strategic sectors of the economy in the framework of a basic alternative for society, of alternative power.

In this sense, the V Congress must urge the PRC to develop a coherent anticapitalist campaign, not in ideological terms but based on the experience of the masses. For example, the food pollution by the huge alimentary industries, protected by the European Commission, necessitates worker and consumer control of production and the abolition of commercial secrecy as a guarantee of social self-defence. The oil industry's speculation over petrol prices requires their accounts to be made public under the control of consumers and society. The repeated, chronic scandals in the pharmaceutical industry, damaging health and life-threatening, render necessary the nationalisation of the industry without indemnity under social control. Any criminal action of profit against the majority of society must be linked to the impelling need for an anticapitalist response as the only, fundamental solution.

At the same time, the question of ownership must be posed in the dynamics of the movements' struggle with simple, pure spontaneity, without being modified. In the peace movement, within a more general anti-imperialist line, the demand for the expropriation of the defence industry without indemnity and under worker control must be adopted. In the environmentalist movement, the private ownership of polluting industries must be called into question as the vital condition for a real re-conversion. More in general, the question of private ownership has been objectively posed by the resistance movements as part of their strategy to defend jobs in today's crisis and re-structuring of industry. The demand for the nationalisation of industry in crisis, without indemnity and under worker control, can become an element for unity on a strategically crucial front even if it is unstructured and fragmented.

Moreover, workers must understand that the nationalisation we propose has nothing to do with the traditional "cathedrals in the desert" of nationalised industry. Indeed, communists fight for nationalisation without indemnity (with the necessary guarantees for small savers) because this indemnity has already been "paid for" by the workers' exploitation and public funding. They fight so that under new nationalisation the workers and public will have the instruments to control it in a self-organised, democratic, mass council. They fight against any illusion of a mixed economy and the democratisation of capitalism, linking the demand for nationalisation to the perspective of an alternative system.

MOTION 31 – THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AND THE ANTICLERICAL BATTLE

The communist opposition must recover a coherent proposal on the social terrain of democratic demands. With a new campaign for the abolition of the Agreement between the State and Church, we must change the policy we have so far adopted towards the papacy and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The PRC must start a widespread political campaign for the abolition of the State-Church Agreement, changing the contradictory, confused positions that have been held until now with respect to the Catholic Church. The guarantee repeatedly given to a presumed papal “anti-capitalism” in the logic of a common “approval” has been a grave error for our party.

The Vatican still represents, as it always has, a bulwark of the existing order. The material links between the ecclesiastical hierarchy and capitalist property in banking, property and land constitute the material basis for this conservative function. The formal position of the “openness” of the Church towards social issues or anti-globalisation, and its criticism of the absolutism of profit do indeed represent a real anti-capitalism, but they are part of a more general ideological anti-materialism or an open “competition” with and fight against Marxism for the minds of the oppressed masses. Furthermore, the fundamentalist nature of ecclesiastical institutions has always been expressed in the reactionary position of the papacy on civil rights, women’s right to choose, homosexual and lesbian rights and education. In particular, women’s crucial fight in defence of law 194 (re. Abortion) has found its declared enemy in the Church apparatus.

The political convergence between ecclesiastical interests and the Berlusconi government on many grounds has significantly increased the importance of our fight against ecclesiastical hierarchies. Of course, the PRC is not and must not be an “ideological” party: Marxism must be conceived of as a programme for transformation, not a creed. The conquest of sectors of the Catholic masses to a socialist perspective is an important aspect of the revolutionary strategy, especially in a context that now sees every Catholic group of young people present in the anti-globalisation movement. But this is exactly what impels us to expose, once and for all, the stark contradictions between the progressive needs of those sectors and the reactionary nature of the Church, based on the class struggle and the battle for democratic demands.

In this picture, today, on the back of the open conflict over private schooling and women’s freedom, the demand for the abolition of the Agreement and the end of the material and symbolic privileges it confers on the Church has become very significant.

MOTION 32 – THE NATURE OF THE PARTY

The proposal to “supersede the vanguard function” of the party, in favour of its “contamination” by grass roots movements, represents a grave risk for the PRC and could damage the movements themselves. The analysis of the last decade of party experience and the inception of a strategic and political change of direction reveal the need for the real construction of the communist party as the central instrument in the fight for an anticapitalist hegemony.

The very nature of the party, its function and its forms of organisation and life cannot be separated from the programme that the party follows and the character of its policies. On the contrary, programme and party policy inevitably share the same stamp. During its 10 year history, in the context of the institutional and political choices and the abandonment of a strategic anticapitalist project, our party has progressively succumbed to a series of largely recognisable pathologies: the cyclical scission of the party’s institutional representation, at various levels; a scarce involvement of the militant members in the definition and discussion of the options, insufficient transparency in the political discussion within the party, in the eyes of the members; and the lack of a robust network of cadres, which have all contributed to the deep, lasting crisis in its social class rooting. In other words, our party has defended its own existence but in many ways it has not built anything up. It has become an important venue for aggregation, an instrument for mobilisation and an institutional political presence, but it has not developed a collective party life or any real impact on the dynamics of the class struggle. The need for a change of direction derives from this analysis, in order to make up for lost time and work for the construction of a party and hence new policies: the policies of an anticapitalist alternative and the corresponding hegemony of the movements. These are the only policies that can really motivate, beyond a mere call to arms, a culture of organisation, training, militancy and social rooting...

Instead, the proposal that is now put forward is exactly the opposite. On the one hand it confirms the continuity of a strategic political line nationally and locally, while on the other it proposes a greater dilution of the party in the movements within a renewed direct attack, greater than ever before, on the very concept of “hegemony”. The thesis that the “vanguard” function of the party should now be “definitively superseded”, the concept of “equal dignity” between the party institutions and the movement and the explicit criticism of the very concepts of “circles” and “federations”, opting instead for the “contamination” of the movement, all make up a deeply negative tendency. Instead of finally developing the party’s hegemony in the movements, for the first time the principle of the hegemony of the movements over the party has been theorised. And so the invitation to open up to the movements, in itself extremely important, is transformed into the risk of our dissolution into the movement itself or the transformation of our own structures into indistinct parts of the movement. The paradoxical outcome would not be the strengthening of the party but the contrary: the dispersion of its forces and a further uprooting to the damage both of the party and the movement itself.

MOTION 33 – THE PARTY, HEGEMONY, THE MOVEMENT

We must build the PRC as a communist party in the Leninist Gramscian sense of an intellectual collective, fighting for the anticapitalist hegemony of the working class and mass movements. Recovering and putting into effect the Leninist concept of the party is crucial for the real construction of the PRC, especially in this season of the renewal of the movements. Outside or against the Gramscian culture of hegemony, any defence of the “party form” is reduced to weak, empty rhetoric.

The class struggle and mass movements are the central lever for socialist change. This means that the task of promoting, extending and developing movements for this struggle and the deep rooting in the movements and their dynamics are the basic tasks of a communist party. Anything acting outside the mass movements, any attempt to distance ourselves – however it may be motivated – does not represent the “defence” of the party but, on the contrary, a compromise on the anticapitalist project that is the very basis of the communist party. Therefore, this type of action must be strongly opposed culturally and politically within the PRC.

But our participation in the movements at the deepest level must be adopted as the lever for a battle for hegemony, not as the flag for its removal. In the Leninist and Gramscian sense – in antithesis to the theoretical and practical line of Stalinism – “hegemony” does not mean “administrative control”, the call for the party’s “primacy” within the movements. On the contrary, it means a loyal, free, ideal political struggle to lead the movements to a revolutionary perspective, in open opposition to the reformist, bureaucratic cultural and political tendencies. In the absence of this struggle the *raison d’être* for a communist party would be lost, and the basic tenets of the movements themselves would be compromised. The experience of the 20th century demonstrates that the greatest, most radical mass movements, without a conscious revolutionary line and under the hegemony of reformist forces, are destined to failure and defeat. The old revisionist theory of the late 19th century, according to which “the movement is everything, the end is nothing” (Bernstein), has been radically belied by history. It cannot be re-proposed, in any form, as the “new” principle for communist refoundation.

The theory that the Leninist and Gramscian conception of hegemony has now been superseded since it was based on the old separation between “pre-political movements” and “doctrine” (instead of the latent anti-capitalism of the current movements) radically misinterprets both the past and the present. The representation of the movements as an apolitical mass and the party as “doctrine” distorts the Marxist conception of both movements and the party. Any movement of the lower classes, even if limited, has its political potential: it moves new impulses and ideas, develops the experience of the protagonists and enriches their awareness. In this sense, every movement reveals its “latent anti-capitalism”. The decisive function of the party is not to impose doctrine on the apolitical movements, but to use as a lever the progressive sentiments deep inside the movement and the active dynamics of the struggle that accompany these sentiments so that the latent anti-capitalism of the movements may become anticapitalist political awareness. This quantum leap in consciousness will not come about “spontaneously”. Our party must work tenaciously and methodically, because the communist party alone holds the historical memory of the lessons of the class struggle that no contingent movement can possess. Only the communist party can fight in a concentrated, organised way to free the movements from the control of the old apparatus of the neo-reformist cultural influences that dug their grave. The Party’s vanguard function as a “intellectual collective” has its real roots in this decisive task.

Moreover, far from being superseded, the Leninist concept of the party is even more relevant today. In a situation marked by the renewal of the movements in the new generation and the long historical gap between revolutionary Marxism and the young, the function of the party is even

more crucial if this consciousness is to be developed, to bring a general political vision to the movements and to apply a Marxist reading and interpretation of events. At the same time, the splintering in the working class, under the weight of the last twenty years, which has often been seen as a sign of the “sunset” of the party, proves more than ever its central function. It is a factor for a counter-tendency, for the social recomposition of an alternative bloc and in this a hegemony of the anticapitalist class. In turn, just as the party is the crucial instrument for hegemony, only the policy of hegemony can be the cornerstone of a communist party. Outside or against the Leninist and Gramscian conception of hegemony, any defence of the “party form”, however sincere, is reduced to mere empty words.

MOTION 34 – REFORM OF THE PRC, NOT ITS DILUTION IN THE MOVEMENT

Just because it brings the anticapitalist, revolutionary project to the movements, the party cannot dilute its own structures in the movement. On the contrary, it must defend and develop them as the specific instruments for mass action. This requires a far-reaching reform of the present constitution of the PRC.

A communist party, as an “intellectual collective” needs primarily to develop its own organisation, autonomously, as the instrument for action in the class struggle. The theory that there is “equal dignity” between the party and the grass roots movements within the logic of a reciprocal osmosis and a reciprocal “contamination” is deeply regressive. It dissolves an objective diversity of functions and structures into abstract equivalent values. It is not a question of undermining the sovereign autonomy of the movements and their structures, which should be respected and defended. Nor is it a question of denying what the movement’s experience can bring to the party, which should be enriched by all real relations with the masses. On the contrary, it means taking the communist revolutionary project into the heart of the movement and its autonomous structures, within the active participation of their construction. Therefore, the organisation of the communist party, its autonomous development and its organised rooting must be absolutely distinct from the movement. Without the collective assimilation and understanding of this relationship between the vanguard organisation and mass action, the PRC is destined to waver, in its real life, between an institutional separation from the movements and the political dissolution of its real role in favour of a naïve identification with the movements. And it often combines both these aspects. The adoption of the policy of an anticapitalist hegemony within the movements requires in turn the far-reaching reform of our party. First of all, the concept of a party that is able to provide an institutional presence but is not “institutionalist” must be affirmed. That is to say, a party that does not opt for vote-grabbing policies, but asks for votes for its policies; a party that does not subordinate its mass actions to its institutional representation but subordinates its representation to mass action, developing social opposition and the recomposition of an anticapitalist bloc. The mass nature of the party lies, first of all, in its daily projection towards the conquest of the lower classes. This requires a social rooting in the workplace and on the territory, the development and training of militants and cadres and a constant, vigilant control of its institutional representatives who must be considered the party’s representatives in the institutions and not the institutions’ representatives in the party. To this end, the party and its organisms, at all levels, must be encouraged to formulate verifiable, concrete projects for the social rooting and the vitality of the structure, outside any mere projection of image, or race to meet the election deadline.

MOTION 35 – PARTY DEMOCRACY

This far-reaching political reform of our conception and construction of the party requires an equally far-reaching reform of its democracy as the decisive terrain for communist refoundation.

We need to make all comrades “the landlords” in the common party, to encourage not marginalise our young comrades, and enhance not suffocate the spirit of initiative and independent judgement that is essential for a vital party. Above all, we must let all the militants participate in decision-making at the various levels of the party because democratically-defined policies are those that gain most support in practice while options imposed from above, even when shared, do not mobilise energies and initiative.

At the same time, each comrade’s right to follow the debates, decisions and different positions in the party and to contribute wholeheartedly (and not with vague impressions gathered from a hostile press) must be defended. In this sense, an instrument for internal national debate is necessary, with minutes and acts from the directive organisms, starting from the national Committee, and ample space for contributions from the federations, circles, individuals or groups of militants. At the same time, *Liberazione* must be open for comment from all the party and respect its democratic life without any political interference from the journalists or editors.

Furthermore, it is necessary that the training of comrades – that must be taken on board as a crucial issue in the party – is conceived as the real development of internal democracy, because only the development of awareness, competence and preparation can reinforce the autonomy of judgement and so the real freedom of evaluation.

In general, we need a party of free and equal individuals who make the constant struggle against bureaucracy and discrimination in the party the new code for its actual construction. Therefore, the faculty of initiative in the circles without any bureaucratic control from the federation must be re-established, and the role and nature of the current regional executives greatly revised. The right of the federations to designate their electoral candidates at the different levels must be re-established and affirmed, against any imposition from above in the party.

Finally, our party must combine the necessary unity of external action – fundamental in the battle for hegemony – with the wider freedom of internal discussion and full respect for minority rights (starting from the possibility of becoming in turn the majority). Only full internal democracy and real (not formal) equal dignity between all the positions can lead to the conception and practice of a party of free and equal individuals and above all can legitimise our unity in external action as the absolute, deep-rooted principle of all the party. In this sense, any prejudice or discrimination against political components of the party must be abandoned at all levels with respect to its institutional representation and its executive structures.

In addition, our experience has shown that the real risk for the unity of the party does not lie in the free, loyal discussion of different political opinions, but in silent bureaucratic manoeuvring, a clannish spirit and the logic of bureaucratic fractions and factions that until a few moments before had perhaps proclaimed the need for a unanimity of vote and the “discipline” of the party.

MOTION 36 – YOUNG COMMUNISTS

Young communists have great potential for growth in this phase. But the battle to build political hegemony among the young on an alternative revolutionary project requires strengthening the organisation of the Young Communists and above all their alternative political character, outside any hypothesis of dilution in the abstract “antagonist” areas present in the movements (viz. the “white boilersuits” in the no-global movement).

The V Congress of Rifondazione Comunista must pay particular attention to the question of the young who have taken on a strategic role in the class struggle in Italy. The young – workers, students, or unemployed – have suffered more than any other group from ten years of neo-liberalist policies that the successive governments have undertaken. In some areas of the country, in particular the South, the cohorts of unemployed are to a great extent made up of young men and women. For many, the only alternative to their current social condition is to accept illicit employment, usually underpaid and often in sectors controlled by organised crime. The situation of those who manage to find more or less regular employment is less tragic, but no less difficult. Recently, especially after the so-called “Treu Package” became law, unfortunately approved by our party too, we have seen a-typical employment develop (training contracts, apprenticeship, co-ordinated collaboration, VAT-registered employment etc) which in reality has become the “typical” way for the young to enter the world of work. These forms of employment have had extremely high social costs: they have meant low salaries, an increase in workload, less union and contractual protection and the lack of respect for health and safety conditions in factories and offices (accounting for the enormous number of deaths and injuries in the workplace). In short, there is now a situation of perennial precariousness that leads to economic blackmail by the bosses. In education, we have seen a systematic attack on state education, to the advantage of private schools, started by the Ulivo ministers Berlinguer and De Mauro and now brought to its logical conclusion by minister Moratti. The plan to create parity between public and private schools that would provide regional and state funding for the latter and billions in cuts in state schooling, the creation of a single register for state and private school teachers (the latter employed on the basis of their loyalty to the ideology of the private schools – mostly religious), the institution of the headmaster-manager, and the investments business has made in the universities in order to determine the didactic choices, all make the class character of education in Italy clearer than ever before. The reactionary campaigns that have been launched in recent years concerning sexual freedom (homophobia, the hypothesis of limiting the right to abortion, etc) and the fight against drug use, particularly addressed to the young, can be added to all this. If this is the situation that the young are forced to endure, it is no wonder that they play a front-line role in the mobilisation that has marked the “thawing” of class conflict. In this context, therefore, our party and its youth organisation must adopt a political programme for intervention within these movements to develop the fight for hegemony.

As capitalism increasingly demonstrates its incapacity to guarantee a future for the new generations, then an organisation that fights to overturn it and create a socialist class alternative can answer the legitimate aspirations of the young and earn their trust politically. Therefore, a policy that, starting from the actual levels of consciousness present in the movements, links them to the need for a more general fight against capitalism is essential. It must be explained that only in the perspective of a change of system can their aspirations for an adequate salary, stable employment and a school that is not subject to the diktat of capital be satisfied. On the contrary, the recent choice, made by the current leaders of the Young Communists, to create a political, organisation bloc with the “white boilersuits” (Casarini) and the No Global Network (Caruso) in order to create an area of “social disobedience” must be rejected. Obviously, the possibility of making tactical alliances with certain groups is not in discussion. But there is the risk that as a result, beyond their subjective will, the action for the construction of a young organisation for

refoundation as the driving force and potential hegemonic element in the mobilisation might take a back seat, especially in a phase in which the membership in our youth organisation is growing and full investment here is necessary. Above all, this choice means the Young Communists' structures run the risk of a subordinate dilution in an aggregation with confused political tenets – a mixture of generic “antagonism” and an anti-party, reformist involvement in the movements – that would, in practice, make “disobedience” a hurdle and not one of the stages in the plan for constructing a communist hegemony among the young generations. Therefore, for all these reasons, a political change of direction is needed in the Party and in the Young Communists, who will tackle these issues in their next national Conference.

Marco Ferrando, Ivana Aglietti, Claudio Bellotti, Vito Bisceglie, Anna Ceprano, Franco Grisolia, Luigi Izzo, Matteo Malerba, Francesco Ricci and Michele Terra (PRC National Political Committee)