

INTRODUCTION – SYNTHESIS

World capitalism increasingly lays the blame for its crisis on the general condition of humanity, threatening a true historical regression of civilisation. The renewal of wars that has stained the last decade – first in Iraq, then in the Balkans, now in Afghanistan - with the death and destruction they have brought, is both the material and the symbolic reflection of this. The representation of the so-called capitalistic “globalisation” as the coming of a “new capitalism”, able to supersede its historical contradictions, has been belied by reality.

Not only has the crisis that has marked world economy for a quarter of a century not been superseded, but it has re-emerged today in the classic form of a recession. The contradictions between the capitalist blocs have not melted away into an indistinct, homogeneous “empire”, but rather they have been sharpened after the collapse of the USSR and under the spur of the crisis. The contradiction between capital and work, far from being superseded or reduced, has re-emerged as the central issue in the crisis and the new global capitalist competition.

The very increase in militarism and the progression of the war in course – with its regressive effects on democratic freedoms and social conquests – is inseparable from the general context of the capitalist crisis. Far from being a conflict between two ideological “fundamentalist beliefs” (the Market and Terror), it is an imperialist war against oppressed peoples: it aims to control the Middle East and Central Asia; it hopes to intimidate national liberation movements (starting from the Palestinians); it aims to block economic recession by a large-scale reinvestment in defence spending; and it answers the American imperialist interest in counter-balancing European economic growth with the re-launching of its own, undisputed military hegemony.

On another level, the political developments and the dynamics of capital in the 90s were devastating for the environment. All the historical problems have become even more widespread, and new emergencies have arisen on a global scale. Faced with all this, both ethical-cultural theories and green reformism have been seen to be inadequate and powerless: no new development model will be possible without a new production model, without overthrowing capitalism.

In short, ten years after the collapse of the USSR, the capitalist reconstruction of world unity has by no means led to a peaceful, more stable world, but a worsening of the international crisis.

This general picture of crisis and regression has revealed once again the utopian nature of all reformist projects. The idea of “reforming governments” that support workers, of a possible “fair” capitalism bridled by the rules of a “progressive civil society”, and of a pacifist reform of the world order, founded on a re-evaluation of the UN in line with the Gandhian concept of “non-violence” represent more than ever an impotent illusion. This is not a concrete way to build a new world, but means accepting with resignation today’s world, even if nourished with dreams.

The V Congress of our party is, therefore, called on to renew and contrast every reforming utopia, taking on board a new strategic aim that is openly anticapitalist and revolutionary. Another world is possible. It is called Socialism. The name must not be evoked alone, but a general programme must be proposed as the only real answer to

the crisis facing humanity. Only the abolition of private property, starting from the two hundred multinationals that today dominate the world economy; only a democratically-planned world economy, freed from the dominion of profit, and only the conquest of political power by the lower classes as the decisive lever for transition can create the conditions for a new “development model”: a model that allows new relations between individuals and peoples, a new relationship between the individual and the environment, and control over the directions and applications of science that promote quality of life as the new frontier of progress. Thus, the recovery and analysis of the original programme of communism and the October revolution as the scenario for the liberation of mankind, free from the Stalinist bureaucratic heritage, is the primary duty for communists and our party. It must be employed to steer a new strategy that leads the immediate objectives of each battle and each movement back to the need for social revolution.

Moreover, the very start of a renewed class struggle and the world mass movements (what in the party we have called “the thaw”) – after twenty years of the ruling politics’ hegemony – represents an extraordinary opportunity to re-launch the socialist future in the younger generations: as a revolutionary answer in the heart of the grass-roots movements to their social, environmental, democratic demands, their demands for peace that are all incompatible with the current bourgeois order. So, it is not a question of abandoning the mystical rhetoric of the grass-roots movements or of ignoring the crucial issue of class, but rather, it is a question of leading the invaluable anti-liberal sentiments of the new generation to a clear perspective of an anticapitalist class. This is the only perspective that can offer the grass-roots movements themselves a future, that can develop mobilisation against imperialism and war outside pacifist illusion. It is the only perspective that can make the working class and the world of work in its new composition and extension the centre of an alternative historical bloc. Consequently, a struggle in the grass-roots movements for the hegemony of class is needed: not a bureaucratic self-formulation but an open, loyal struggle for the socialist future against those neo-reforming mind-sets that lead the grass-roots movements themselves into a blind alley of failure and defeat. The complex job of re-founding a revolutionary, communist international movement that takes on the battle for an anticapitalist hegemony on a world scale is a basic need for communists today more than ever.

The experience of the last three years, after the IV Congress, has shown that our passage to the opposition has not in itself solved any of the basic problems that beset our party. The PRC will arrive at this new Congress with a significantly reduced rooting in society, a drop in militancy and membership and with its structures evidently in crisis. Paradoxically, the very explosion of the antiglobalisation movement and the start of a renewal in the mobilisation of workers and the young have not improved the situation. On the contrary, the essence of the proposals put forward in the party lies in the attempt to resolve the structural and political crisis in the PRC with a clear “change of direction” towards the movements that would rationalise and justify the abandonment of the perspective of constructing a revolutionary communist party able to fight for a leading role in the Italian working-class movement. In reality, this “change of direction” does not take us toward the movement, that is to say the hundreds of thousands of people who have been involved in the mobilisation against the G8 or the war, but in the direction of the leadership of the Social Forum that represents the most moderate, bureaucratic part, light years away from the real anticapitalist aspirations that are the true driving force of the

movement. At the same time, despite the declared “shift to the left” in the direction of the movements, the proposed line is still dominated by a reformist perspective. This is clearly expressed in the refusal to analyse honestly the policies pursued in the last years and the perspective described above that, between the lines, would be a re-launching of the alliance with the Ulivo once the balance of power in the left has been re-stabilised on the basis of a “reforming programme” that echoes the failures of 1996-8. The new element that leads us to talk of the danger of political and structural disintegration of the PRC is the emergence of this radicalism towards the movements that masks a substantial incapacity to propose a serious, lasting battle for hegemony behind high-flown rhetoric (that abounds in the party’s propaganda and writing), and expresses even more clearly the loss of the proletarian social roots in our party.

On the contrary, it is the very re-emergence of the movements that urges the re-launching of the party’s role, of revolutionary communist ideas and the construction of strong structures, the training of cadres, in a word a PRC that is able to fight on all fronts, from the antiglobalisation movement to the student movement, and that gives the movements what they cannot express themselves: namely, a programme for social change and the instruments to put it into effect. Otherwise, there is a real risk of another, inevitable phase of struggle against the Berlusconi government, channelled and hegemonised by union bureaucracy and the DS, that repeats the experience of Autumn ’94, while the suicidal policy of “suspending all criticism”, proposed and carried out by the party leaders, allowed those forces to deviate the movement and led it to flounder, paving the way not for a class-based alternative but the class collaboration embodied by the Dini government and then the Centre-left.

The intransigent defence of an independent class-based programme is, therefore, the first, essential condition if the PRC is to gain ground in this new context. However, the PRC is weaker and less rooted today than in the past. The divisions in the DS and the CGIL undoubtedly indicate a political crisis and lack of strategy that leave room for the PRC. Therefore, as well as a clear programme of demands, we must develop the necessary tactics to tackle this new phase and re-launch our battle for hegemony in the working-class movement with more than just words.

As a consequence, we must put forward a general dispute around the proposals for a significant wage increase for all dependent workers, a guaranteed minimum salary for all categories, a real guaranteed salary for the unemployed and young people looking for their first employment, the abolition of the new precarious, temporary employment laws (viz. “Treu package” and the most recent laws introduced by the Berlusconi government) with open-ended contracts for all short-term workers and the generalised reduction in working hours. This proposal for mobilisation can and must be put forward by our party in all workplaces, in all union organisations, nationally, and to the anti-globalisation movement, supporting the internal tendencies of the movement that already push for a direct struggle side by side with the workers. It is this very unitary re-composition in the struggle of the new generation, from the working class and from the anti-globalisation movement, that can set off the dynamics of a social explosion against the government of the right and the ruling classes. Promoting the work of the mass of the party in this direction, extending the framework of our demands to every social sector affected by the ruling politics (viz. Immigration and Education), linking this framework of immediate demands to a more general programme of rupture with capitalist ownership and the State and developing an anticapitalist conscience in every grassroots movement - these are the necessary

duties of the communist opposition for a class alternative. And in this context, our party cannot theorise the principle of a silent adjustment to the grassroots movements, trusting passively in their directions and choices: it must elaborate the capacity to propose political choices – on the small and large scale – working towards an anticapitalist future. The forms of struggle, starting from the necessary defence of the right to public demonstration, against every temptation to retreat; the questions linked to the defence of peaceful, mass demonstration against violent aggression, wherever it comes from; and the organisation of grassroots movements and their democratic development, today crucial in the anti-globalisation movement, are all areas in which our party cannot stay silent in the name of an unconditional bloc with the hegemonic directions of the grassroots movements. But we must put forward proposals, of course in line with the interests of the interlocutors and the concreteness of the problems, but always inspired by a single, fundamental criterion: the development of an autonomous force in the lower classes and grassroots movements in the direction of an alternative society and power. As Rosa Luxemburg affirmed: “ *the conquest of political power remains our final aim and our final aim remains the heart of our struggle. The working class must not adopt the view “the final aim isn’t important, but the movement is everything”. No, on the contrary, the movement as such, unless in relation with the final aim, the movement as an end in itself, is nothing, but it is the final aim that is everything.*” (1898).

Only this programme of an anticapitalist alternative can establish the structural and political basis of the party in its relations with the movements and the class struggle. A party that exists only to represent social demands institutionally, in the perspective of a reforming government, denies its independent strategy and so, whatever its intentions, undermines the very reason for its existence. Without a specific anticapitalist project the party loses any basis that distinguishes it from the movement. And so the invitation to open up to the movement, however important in itself, risks leading to its dissolution in the movement and the transformation of its structures into “places for the movement”. The paradoxical outcome would not be the reinforcement of the party in the movement but, on the contrary, the beginning of the dispersal of forces and their uprooting, to the damage both of the party and the movements themselves, deprived of an organisation that is able to provide indications and proposals.

Therefore, the logic proposed by the majority of PRC must be turned upside down. Of course, the party must defend, as its priority, the need to participate fully in the grassroots movements without doctrinal separation or rather with the maximum concentration of its force. But it needs this as a *party*, that is as a specific collective, anticapitalist, revolutionary project that requires specific structuring, specific instruments that can organise the collective battle for that project with the grassroots movements, starting from the working class. And it is also the widest development of the internal democracy of the party, a decisive condition for the collective elaboration and the formation of its cadres. In this sense, the vanguard function of the party, not as a bureaucratic imposition but as a programmed project to develop consensus and hegemony, is the very condition for its rooting and the reinforcement of its organisation.

(Bellotti-Giardillo-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 15 – ITALIAN IMPERIALISM

During the past decade, Italian capitalism has worked to increase its share of the imperialistic carving-up of the world. This has taken place through the direct participation in neo-colonial enterprises (the Gulf War, two operations in Albania – 1992 and 1996 -, the operations in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and now Afghanistan) and through a relative increase in exported capital (some 500,000 jobs have been exported abroad by Italian industry, in particular in the Balkans).

Italian imperialism, however, is still unwieldy due to the traditional weaknesses in the capitalism that supports it: the disinterest of big business, the insufficient concentration of capital compared to the other competing nations etc. Even from a strictly military point of view, despite the current increase in military spending, with more planned for the future, Italy remains a secondary force, unable to play an autonomous role in the conflicts in course and forced to tail along in the rear of the principal protagonists, perhaps trying to make up for this structural weakness in the numbers of troops employed in action (as in the Balkans).

Although one of the principal imperialist countries, Italy confirms its position of “ragamuffin imperialism”, forced to take advantage of any gap opened up by the conflicts between the heavyweights of world politics, as the recent events in Afghanistan have confirmed.

Although in the '90s the ruling class invested greatly in an attempt to restore and rationalise its traditional weak points, the results can certainly not be said to be definitive! Ten years of “blood, sweat and tears” in their budgets, the bombardment of privatisation and the assault on the pensions and welfare state have papered over the widest cracks, but they certainly have not changed the general condition of Italian capitalism, that remains one of the weakest links in the chain of advanced capitalist countries.

These contradictions can also be seen in the division in the Berlusconi government, clearly split between a majority wing that hands itself over to Bush as an American Trojan horse in the European Union (the Airbus affair, the conflict with the EU over justice, etc) and a minority, headed by Ruggiero, that attempts to follow the pro-European strategy adopted by the Ulivo in previous years.

This weakness has precise consequences. Faced with an international economic crisis and tougher international competition in economic and diplomatic-military terms, the Italian bourgeoisie will be forced to look for internal solutions to its problems, in terms of a direct conflict with the Italian working class and the masses in general, rather than trying to offload its contradictions abroad, which can only be partially successful because of the relatively weak structure of Italian capitalism.

(Bellotti-GiardIELLO-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 16 – THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE ITALIAN SITUATION

In Italy, the evolution of the PDS/DS, as well as sharing the characteristics of the other European social-democratic parties, has shown specific characteristics that are peculiar to the specific nature of the Italian political situation. It has coincided with

the collapse of the Christian Democrat party and all the bourgeois political representation at the time, marking an extremely confused, unstable phase that has lasted for a decade and that has been improperly defined as the “Italian transition”.

All through the '90s, part of the ruling classes have embraced the line of a so-called democratic Party, namely the construction of a liberal-democratic political force that would be able to win over the support of masses at election-time, and that would give the Italian bourgeoisie a liberal “mass” party that had never emerged in over a century of Italian history. This project has taken on varied guises, but always bore at its heart the aim of the absorption of the PDS and then the DS within the new party, thereby severing the historical links with the working-class movement and bringing the new party a dowry of significant electoral support.

On the basis of this perspective, a so-called pro-Ulivo line developed in the DS: some time in the future, the latter would be absorbed into the democratic party, whether embodied by Prodi, the Asinello, all the Ulivo coalition, etc. However, this project has never had nor will it ever have any likelihood of coming into being. Whether for historical reasons or the specific distortions and weaknesses of Italian capitalism, the bourgeois political representation has not re-grouped around a democratic party, but around parties like AN, the Northern League and above all Forza Italia. This reflects the historical weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie, in particular in political terms. Indeed, in 140 years of history, it has continuously had to make compromises with other social groups. At the beginning of the Unity of Italy, there was a compromise with the old, ruling agrarian class in the South, successively the agreement with the specific interests of the Catholic hierarchy, and then the long period of fascist rule that meant a significant expropriation of direct bourgeois control of political power. The Christian Democrat party itself, as is well-known, represented a compromise between a string of forces that included the mafia middle-class, the Catholic hierarchy and parts of the union movement or associations, a compromise that was cemented by the anti-communist and anti-working class repression in the '50s and the post-war economic boom.

After the collapse of the DS, the Italian bourgeoisie, in the last decade, has had to choose between the lesser of two evils. The first was ruling through the working-class bureaucracy and in particular the union bureaucracy (the centre-left in its various forms), with the advantage of relying on the continuation of social harmony, but with the disadvantage of having to put up with the time needed for agreement-seeking and the union leaders' relative power of veto. The second was ruling through the right, that is certainly an advocate of anti-working-class measures, but with many internal contradictions and peculiarities (the conflict of interest, a privileged relationship with the mafia middle-class, elements of right-wing popularism, Northern League secessionism etc) but above all with the permanent risk of setting off a widespread explosion of social conflict, as in 1994.

The passage from one position to the other does not respond in the slightest to a “strategic design” matured in some inner sanctum of power, but is the fruit of the adapting to the circumstances that has always been the first characteristic of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the political struggle. Once Berlusconi was defeated in '94, it was absolutely necessary to opt for the opposing coalition; having exhausted the Ulivo in five years of government, it was equally natural to move again to the right. In this decade, all attempts to get support for the centre, whether Catholic

or lay, have rapidly collapsed, not least D'Antoni and Andreotti's recent experiment with Democrazia Europea. The deep-seated cause of these failures can be seen in the social and political polarisation that, however tortuous and complex, has characterised Italian society in the last decade.

(Bellotti-Giardiello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

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 a 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 “*Italy's authoritative, solid presence in international markets and internationally*”, within “*the competition for the government of the country*”, 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, subordinating 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 had gone 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 call 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.

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.

(Bellotti-Giardello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 19 – OPPOSITION TO THE RIGHT, A UNITED FRONT AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNISTS

The new phase ahead undoubtedly holds huge potential for expanding our party's rooting in society. The crisis in the policy of class collaboration – whether at the union (the crisis in social dialogue) or political (the centre-left's electoral defeat) level – the renewal in social mobilisation and the international context all combine to stir up the masses and call into question the convictions and prejudices crystallised in recent years.

The intransigent defence of an independent class-based programme is the first, indispensable condition for the PRC to gain ground in this new context. However, we must realise that it is difficult, if not impossible, for the current crisis in the leadership of the working-class movement, after the failure of the centre-left, to be resolved by merely gathering the growing consensus for our party. The PRC, thanks to its mistakes over the last years, is now weaker and less-rooted than it was in the past. The party's authority has been greatly compromised in the eyes of many, while for others we still have much ground to gain. At the same time, despite the profound crisis in the DS, it is evident that their grip on organised labour is still firm. The divisions that have emerged in the DS and the CGIL undoubtedly signal a political crisis and lack of strategy, leaving room for the PRC. However, it is equally true that even in the more organised sectors, traditionally in the vanguard, as in the new working-class generation that is becoming more radical, the consensus for our party is a question of general sympathy, shared opinions, but it is not considered an adequate structure for the organisation of a systematic battle against the majority positions in the left and the union movement.

Therefore, as well as a programme of demands, we need to develop the necessary tactics to tackle this new phase and re-launch our battle for hegemony in the working-class movement with more than mere words. In this context, we should insist on the following, essential lines:

- 1) *The question of a "rupture with the centre"*. This rallying cry, rightly used on occasion, has never been truly developed or analysed. But the rupture with the centre means translating the widespread awareness of the failure of the centre-left into a political proposal. We must constantly explain, argued from all points of view, that the crisis in the left, that led to Berlusconi's victory, can only be superseded by a radical rupture with bourgeois policies and so with those parties (basically the Margherita) that were the principal vehicle for the centre-left coalition. The left-wing of the DS, that suggests opening up the coalition to Di Pietro and Rifondazione as their response to electoral defeat, must be answered by our clear policy – any agreement with the PRC is fundamentally incompatible with any alliance with the centre. The lynchpin of our position towards the DS and other left-wing forces (e.g. the PDCI) must be to present them with a clear option – either an alliance with the centre against PRC or a rupture with their preceding line.
- 2) *The question of a single front and the unity of the movements' action*. In a context in which the CGIL, FIOM or other union bureaucracies are embracing, however

timorously and instrumentally, some of the movements' mobilisation, the picture has changed with respect to the prevailing situation in the last years. Without forgetting that the working-class movement cannot be switched on and off by some leaders, even if "of the left", or that our task is not to await "permission" from Sabattini or Cofferati for support for mobilisation, we must seize with both hands the opportunities that this new situation brings us. Whether on a strictly defensive (article 18, defence of national contracts, etc) or offensive terrain (the recovery of salaries, fight against the flexibility and precariousness of employment), we must constantly challenge our adversaries in the working-class movement on the terrain of mobilisation, showing that we are able to fight more effectively the limited battles that the CGIL leadership has now been forced to organise (e.g. the metal-mechanic workers struggle). At the same time, we must refuse to act as a mere extra force or mass to be manoeuvred, never renouncing our right to criticise and propose alternatives, seizing every occasion to push mobilisation beyond the limits imposed by the union bureaucracies. This is particularly relevant in the context of the trade unions, but in the future it will be equally valid in other fields, considering the Berlusconi government's programme of attack on all fronts, threatening not only trade union rights in their limited sense, but also the rights of women, immigrants, state education etc. Finally, we must emphasise that the policy of a single front, in other words, unity of action, must always aim at an increase in our influence, to gain the ear of vast sectors outside our party and to expose contradictions in the opposing front. Therefore, this policy must not become a totem or a dogma, as there will obviously be moments when it must fade into the background, or will even prove useless, leaving room for pure, simple direct actions under the flag and rallying cry of our party.

- 3) *What alternative to the government of the right?* The conflict between the Berlusconi government and the working-class movement is only at the beginning, and it is impossible to predict its time-scale, methods or, above all, its outcome. However, it is clear that if a new cycle of struggle manages to create a crisis in the right or even overturn the government, we will see the umpteenth attempt at imprisoning the workers in the straitjacket of class collaboration and an updated version of the Centre-left. Whatever the combinations that may arise, our alternative must revolve around the concept that only a government based directly on the working class and that responds to the working class alone, with an anticapitalist programme, can truly respond to the contradictions generated by the crisis in Italian and international capitalism. We must work for the rupture with the policy of class collaboration and rupture with the centre, throwing down the gauntlet to the other left-wing forces just as we are now challenging them on the terrain of opposition in government and mobilisation against the right.

(Bellotti-Giardiello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 20 – THE DS IN CRISIS AND ADRIFT

In the '80s and '90s, we have seen everywhere the crisis and downward slide of social-democratic forces towards more moderate positions. In the '90s, the parties in the Socialist International were elected to government, alone or in coalition, in all the principal countries in the European Union, apart from Spain, where the right returned to power after 17 years of socialist government.

The leaders of social-democracy have everywhere adopted one or another variant of liberalism, and the internal left-wing currents in social-democracy have undergone a crisis and been virtually wiped out from the political scene in this phase: such as Lafontaine in Germany and the left in the Labour party.

To sum this situation up, we can speak of the passage from a reforming policy to a counter-reforming policy in social democracy. This change was the consequence of three strictly linked phenomena:

- 1) The new economic context compared to the '50s and '60s, the classic period of the development of the welfare state in Europe. International competition has become increasingly intense and, to compete with the USA, Europe has been forced to attack the social conquests of the preceding generations.
- 2) The change in international relations, after the collapse of the USSR, that has objectively weakened the possibility for the working class in western Europe to obtain favourable mediation in its class struggle.
- 3) The regression in the wave of movements in the '60s and '70s, that since the '80s has meant the bourgeoisie has definitively re-conquered its power of action both within industry and in more general political terms.

All these factors have led to the downward slide of social democracy to an extent that had not been seen for decades. Yet it would be wrong to interpret this phenomenon as something radically new, or a qualitative change with respect to the past history of international social democracy. The commonly-held theory in the “radical” left and in our party too that social democracy has undergone an uprooting of its base in the working-class movement is based on a superficial, impressionistic analysis of the phenomena described above.

The essence of social democracy is not and has never been to propose “reforms” anyway, or to prefigure a gradual line, but it has always tended towards socialist transition. Upholding this theory basically means idealising past social democracy, which never showed any scruples in supporting the worst policies of the bourgeoisie, in particular in times of social and economic crisis. It is enough to remember social democrats' responsibility for the First World War, the repression of the German revolution in 1919, and the colonial policies of French and British imperialism, etc.

In the same way, an attempt to differentiate between the so-called Jospin line and the Blair line, seeing a different class basis (the former working-class and social-democratic, the latter bourgeois and liberal-democratic) means idealising the PSF line, regardless of the bald facts. The differences that undoubtedly exist between the two parties can be explained not by a different class base, but by the different social and political conditions in France, where the long wave of agitation in the 1995-96 has not

yet died away completely, leaving in its wake labour struggles and a general ferment in movements of the working class and the young in France, which the Jospin government has to take into consideration.

The essence of social-democratic politics, or rather the politics and ideologies of the bureaucratic apparatus that dominates the working-class and union movements, has always been to “represent”, mediate and deal with working-class interests within a framework of economic and political compatibility with the capitalist system. The dominant aspect of social-democratic politics is not, therefore, the “reforms”, but its passive adjustment to this society. Therefore, social democracy was pacifist in times of peace, accepted war in times of conflict, Keynesian in the post-war economic boom and liberalist in the last two decades. In this sense, it cannot be distinguished in the slightest from any other bourgeois democratic party. What truly distinguishes it is its capacity to hegemonise and control the working class, not only in the sense of gaining votes in the election, but to control workers’ organisations such as the unions and exercise effective control over their mobilisation. In recent years, this aspect of social democracy has tended to be overlooked, and its liberal drift has often been mooted, a definitive “uprooting” of parties like the DS or Labour from the working-class movement. This limited interpretation is rigid and formal, merely indicating a series of blatantly evident aspects of the political and ideological evolution of the social-democratic and union bureaucracies, without a concrete analysis of class relations.

The question we must ask ourselves is: given that social democracy has in effect become a liberal democratic party, *through which channels can the political organisation of the working classes express itself?* Can we seriously state that in Italy, Germany, Greece, Spain and Great Britain etc, the only political forces that have any link with the working class are the communist parties (that in the case of Great Britain, is non-existent, and in nearly all the other countries mentioned above, except Italy, have seen a deep crisis in their rooting in the working class)? The social-democratic hegemony over the working-class movement can change its forms, can pass through moments of crisis and a diminution of its authority (as has been the case in Italy in the last two years) but it will not be annulled, nor will it collapse into itself, without leaving any trace but a political chasm. It can disappear only if a consequent revolutionary communist alternative is constructed, that can supplant it through a systematic, long-term battle for what used to be called “the hearts of the masses”, that is to say a communist conquest of recognised leadership in the crucial sectors of the working class, starting from its vanguard groups.

Any theorising of the “liberal” nature of social democracy avoids the problem, masking it under a purely verbal radicalism that can easily give way to the opposite mistake, that is an opportunistic adjustment to the “left-wing” currents in social democracy and the union apparatus once this springs into action again. We can see the first clear signs of danger in the line followed by the PRC towards those members of the unions, like Sabattini, who have begun to criticise, albeit ambiguously, the agreement-seeking policy of the DS and CGIL.

In this context, the outcome of the DS congress seems rather doubtful for all concerned. The contradiction between the union apparatus and party apparatus has emerged even more clearly, and cannot be easily resolved. The crucial point is that D’Alema and Fassino’s line will become increasingly difficult to put into effect. The “ruling opposition” will have to come to terms both with the aggression of the

Berlusconi government and the ruling classes, that are using all the levers available to accelerate conflict, and with the fact that union bureaucracy cannot simply passively accept not only the government's demolition of workers' rights but a direct assault on the union apparatus' power. We have already seen during the events in Genoa and the metal-mechanic workers' strike that the D'Alema current in the party was trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea, forced to contradict itself blatantly in the space of few hours. It can be seen in the case of Genoa, and the shameful episode of the later-withdrawn adherence to the demonstration on 21st July, and in the case of the metal-mechanic workers and their refusal to vote a motion in solidarity, which they later attempted to mask by their presence in the demonstration in November. These desperate attempts show that the line that they attempt to follow is in truth impracticable and will lead to new divisions and crises in the party, particularly when the social tension shows its hand in the next mobilisation of the movements.

In this new context, there is enormous potential for the PRC to gain greater social rooting and consensus in the working class and the movements of young people. The increase in mobilisation will create extremely favourable conditions for us, and it will become increasingly difficult for the DS and CGIL leaders to blind the masses to their aims. The rupture of bureaucratic solidarity in the various currents of the DS will open up further space for our party. All this, however, can benefit the PRC only on two conditions:

- 1) that we are able to keep our complete political independence in action, drawing up our demands and working concretely and constantly to build up mobilisation, joining the more advanced groupings and contributing to the creation of the necessary instruments for the self-organisation of the struggles and the internal battle within the union movement.
- 2) that this is combined with our understanding that the major role, at present, of the social-democratic currents in the working-class movement forces us to coherently, systematically adopt the tactic of a single front, moving from the current defensive battles (article 18, state education etc) to develop the awareness of the impelling need for a counter-offensive on all fronts in the workers, a counter-offensive that is up to the task of fighting the adversary's assault on all levels.

(Bellotti-Giardello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 22 – REPUDIATING THE BERLUSCONI GOVERNMENT

The Berlusconi government sums up all the worst reactionary traditions of the Italian bourgeoisie. Its programme, the traditions of the parties that make up the government and its front-line politicians all push this government to a reactionary, anti-working class offensive.

The national and international economic situation accentuates this impulse that is today continually fanned by the crucial power centres of the ruling class: the Bank of Italy, Confindustria, most of the national newspapers, etc. This is also the terrain on which they attempt to recompose the internal contradictions in the government and the bloc of social forces that supports it. The government line is simply to deal a

deathblow, isolating the CGIL in a repetition of the '50s. It remains to be seen how likely it is that this policy is put into effect and how it can be opposed. In the past we have seen that the election successes of reactionary governments, like those of Reagan and Thatcher, have paved the way for a long cycle of more or less openly reactionary policies that lasted for about 15 years.

Today, however, the conditions are completely different. The reactionary policies of the '80s took hold only after having defeated in the field the working-class mobilisation in the first years of the decade: the British miners' strike, the labour struggles in Fiat in Italy, and the fight over the sliding scale for salaries, and the air-controllers' strike in the USA. Therefore, an election victory is not enough (which anyway in Italy came about thanks to the unification of the right, not an increase in their electoral consensus). If reactionary policies are to gain the upper hand completely, they must win a crushing victory in the labour struggle, demoralising the working-class movement and forcing it to withdraw from the field. Not only has this not happened today, but the situation is the reverse: in the '80s, the working-class movement experienced the last blaze of the struggles of the '60s and '70s, in a context in which a generation of workers began to lose faith in their own strength, after the exceptional levels of mobilisation in the preceding decades. On the contrary, we can now see a new cycle, with a new working-class generation entering the arena of the class struggle. The attempts to use repressive methods, as seen in Genoa, risk backfiring, leading to a generalised social explosion. On the other hand, the idea that a generalised offensive may take hold by seeking agreement is destined to failure. The government has nothing to offer the union bureaucracy – in particular the CGIL – beyond words, and if the CGIL accepted negotiation on article 18 in a similar betrayal of its members as on 31st July 1992, it would throw open the door for a spontaneous explosion of the struggle like that of the “autumn of the *bulloni*” [’70s in Italian factories]. This leads to a clear conclusion: today the reactionary policy represented by this government has only gained a relative advantage with its election victory; the government is not hegemonic in society, nor has it definitively tipped the balance of power in its favour. The years ahead are not years of regression, but years of renewed social and political polarisation and conflict, a period in which the working-class movement will have more than one occasion to demonstrate the true balance of power in society.

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 come to 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 continual 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 eruption against the ruling classes and their government. Only this 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.

(Bellotti-Giardiello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 24 – OUR BATTLE IN THE UNIONS

Our action in trade union politics has perhaps most clearly revealed the contradictions and weaknesses in the policy followed by the party in these years. For about a decade we have seen that the various internal oppositions in the CGIL – from "Essere Sindacato" to "Cambiare Rotta" – have proved unable to escape from the logic of a mere opposition in the apparatus to carry out an effectively alternative line to Cofferati's.

Just as the majority of the CGIL scrupulously "played by the rules" in agreement-seeking, the minority, while verbally attacking these rules, also toed the line laid down by the apparatus. The attempts to promote alternative platforms and independent mobilisation among workers in the workplace or in categories were so timorous and sporadic that they have left no trace in the workers' consciousness. At the same time, there were numerous instances of compromise with the leadership, when the minority justified their adherence to a majority document or platform with the insertion of a word or comma. The novelty of the last few years, therefore, does not come from a growth in influence or more initiatives from the left CGIL, but from the recomposition of groupings of the majority, in particular the Secretary of FIOM, that have partially and instrumentally begun to "break the line" and promote conflict, from the Zanussi affair to the metal-mechanic workers' contract. These initiatives have shown the potential among the workers when there is a leadership ready to mobilise them, seen in particular by the FIOM strike on 6th July. However, the programme demands and the methods on which these battles are waged unequivocally show their instrumental character. The platform for the metal-mechanic workers could hardly have raised a cheer in the factories, while the management of the dispute, after the success of the strike on 6th July, decided on a four-month truce that has sown confusion among the workers and allowed the opposing front to re-group.

In this context, the formal extension of the left CGIL to other areas previously part of the majority of the union in practice does not imply a significantly stronger political

position in the organisation, nor a greater capacity for mobilisation, but paradoxically a new reverse. The current left in the CGIL, regardless of its size and unity on paper, is in fact more impermeable to the real needs in the workplace than in the past, more powerless and inconsistent in its initiatives than ever before. What should have been a lever to give weight to workers' demands in the CGIL has become a lever for the apparatus to coop up the more advanced activists. At the same time, we have seen other important processes in the labour movement. The spread of precariousness in employment and the rapid proletarianisation of new sectors, particularly in trade and the service industries, are beginning to spur on a reaction and unionisation. The growth in membership of NIDIL-CGIL – still modest in absolute terms – shows the potential in this sector, as do the struggles in some categories of casual workers, particularly the young, in industry and the service sector, and in companies like Fiat, McDonald's, Ikea, Zanussi, Tim etc. These struggles have often involved short-term and agency workers too, disproving the predictions that these sectors would be condemned to atomisation and a "lack of conflict". These newly-unionised sectors, which are bound to grow significantly, tend in most cases to look to the CGIL as the most rooted structure on the territory in their search for support in the defence of their rights. All these factors (a partial renewal of initiative among the leaders of the CGIL, a political crisis in the left CGIL and the emergence of a newly-unionised working-class generation) must lead us to a critical re-analysis of the PRC's trade union policy.

During the '90s, the party has wavered between two positions. The first is a clear adjustment to the CGIL apparatus, in particular when the latter promoted mobilisation (the first real occasion was in 1994 when the theory of "suspending criticism" was adopted towards the union leadership, the last when during the current metal-mechanic workers dispute it became impossible to see the difference between the position of the union members in the PRC and that of Sabattini and the FIOM). The second is a more or less open flirtation with the idea that sooner or later there will be a break from the CGIL for the construction of a new confederate union movement, clearly expressed in the workers' conference in Treviso.

We must also appraise the role of the grass-roots non-confederate unions in this decade. On paper, conditions could not be more favourable for a mass exit from the confederate unions. Yet, nearly ten years on from the shift of 3^d July 1992, any analysis is somewhat contradictory. The historical grassroots unions have almost completely disappeared from the labour movement panorama: more in general, extra-confederate membership in industry has declined greatly. If it is true that in some sectors (education and transport) there has been a significant increase in membership, it is equally true that only among railway workers have the grassroots unions managed to obtain an unquestioned hegemony. The recent elections in the state sector RSUs have confirmed what happened in the preceding elections, namely that the workers see the grass-roots unions as a useful instrument for pressure and organisation, but the radicalisation that pushes them towards these movements at certain times is the very same that leads them to vote CGIL, which obtained a clearer victory than two years before. On this basis, the odd hints at a "rupture" that we should make with the confederate unions come to nothing.

The crucial terrain on which we must fight our battle in the next phase must not be along the path that separates extra-confederate unionism from the Confederation, but the path that crosses the confederate unions, especially the CGIL. Although we are

well aware that the current splintering of the union membership among communists cannot easily be overcome, we believe that only an open fight within the confederate unions, especially the CGIL, can open up the path to the widest numbers of workers and so challenge the union bureaucracy on this crucial terrain. This battle must be waged immediately, abandoning the logic of the apparatus or the hope of a leader “more to the left”, directly addressed to the workers and their delegates. Therefore, our goal is to bring all communist workers together to fight on the same terrain, except in particular situations, such as those where the alternative unions have significant roots or for specific needs linked to the real demands of social conflict, but anyway within a general line that sees the communists involved in a great mass contest in the “most representative” organisations. This does not mean that the PRC can supersede the scattering of militant communists in the different union organisations. No “party order” can substitute a journey whose stages are defined not by decisions but by the real development of the union struggle. In this phase, the crucial distinction will be the platforms, programmes, demands and the capacity to build unitary forms of mobilisation. The PRC must work systematically to this end in order to create unifying arenas for debate and co-ordination for all its militant trade-unionists, whether they are members of confederate or extra-confederate unions.

(Bellotti-Giardiello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

MOTION 25 – INTERVENTION IN THE ANTI-GLOBALISATION MOVEMENT IN ITALY

The anti-globalisation movement in Italy has attained a true mass dimension and holds significant anticapitalist potential. But its convergence with the working-class struggle is crucial if its demands are to be met. We must work so that the working class adopts the demands of the anti-globalisation movement within a class-based programme. We must work so that the anti-globalisation movement opens up to the working-class movement in the context of the central conflict between capital and work. This is today an impelling necessity in the battle for a communist hegemony for the recomposition of an anticapitalist social bloc. But it requires a battle within the movement against the prevalent positions in its current leadership.

The anti-globalisation movement now plays a very important part in the Italian scenario. More than in other European countries, it has really embraced the masses, in particular the young, as shown by the huge demonstration in Genoa; it has involved real sectors of the vanguard of the working-class and its union representatives and it has exercised and exercises a notable political impact on the whole national situation. More in general, it has generated widespread popular sympathy, an indirect effect of the crisis of liberalism’s hegemony in wide sectors of the masses. Therefore, the movement reveals a precious potential for further expansion that the events of war have not prejudiced.

But it is this reality and potential that underline the unresolved problems in the movement’s political direction. The disproportion between the general lack of political awareness in the movement and the public level of conflict with the state apparatus and the government, documented by the events in Genoa, the disparity between the fundamental anti-liberalist critical impulse and the level of conflict imposed by the aggravating of the imperialist war in Afghanistan all represent an objectively dangerous compromise, in part inevitably due to the inexperience of the

young generation and in part magnified by the pacifist-reformist mind-set of the majority of the movement's leaders.

Our party, thanks to its general presence in the movement, can and must work to supersede this contradiction, in the interest of the movement and its basic tenets. We must not see our role as purely institutional representation of the movement's demands nor as the mediator between the movement and the institutions; still less as a mere glue for the unity of the movement in the sense of a political-diplomatic bloc made up of the associations its leadership represent. But it must, on the other hand, combine a loyal action for the daily construction of the mass anti-globalisation movement with an open battle for the political line of the movement itself. This battle must be aimed at developing the political awareness of the movement on anticapitalist and anti-imperialist terrain (see motions...), its autonomy and counter-position to the centre-right and centre-left and its convergence with the working-class struggle for an alternative social bloc, an open fight for an alternative hegemony.

Intervention in the movements implies first of all clear responsibility for proposals concerning the forms for the struggle and the organisation of the movement. In this context, we must oppose all positions that in practice propose a sort of seminar-like withdrawal or a retreat in the level of mobilisation, that have emerged cyclically (for example, following Genoa, before the Naples demonstration against NATO, or in relation to the demonstration in Rome on 10 November). On the contrary, peaceful mass demonstrations must be made the crux of the struggle, necessary for aggregation, political impact and the visibility and polarisation of the movement's motivations. In this framework, the problem of self-defence from any type of aggression during the demonstrations must be seriously discussed in order to protect the peaceful, mass character of the demonstrations themselves (viz. internal organisation for public order). Furthermore, the question of the national democratic organisation of the movement must be discussed – as it has expanded so greatly, it can no longer be based only on a pact of the different associations, but it must now involve the activists democratically, who are at the moment without any decision-making power, in defining the movement's options and its representatives at all level: otherwise, there would be a crisis of democracy, an elusion of options and a lack of representation in decisions.

On a political level, its unity with the working class struggle, in open opposition to the bosses and the Berlusconi government, must be developed. This is not a question of simply representing or class "sensibility" in the colourful mosaic of the movement. This means fighting to win the majority of the movement over to a class perspective as the condition for achieving its demands and as the grounds for enhancing its potential impact.

In the present framework, the anti-globalisation movement, already benefiting from much sympathy and support from vast sectors of society, could really be transformed into the detonator for a social explosion, but only on condition that a new direction and a new proposal emerge from the movement. Contact with the workers cannot merely be reduced to the sum of good relations with the union representatives, nor as pressure on Cofferati or merely registering FIOM support for the GSF (however important that may be). But it can and must become a public proposal for common action, based on a platform of simple, unified proposals, that can establish a common terrain with the social demands of the wider masses and so, in its unity, can challenge

the trade unions, making them aware of their responsibilities. In this sense, the proposal for a general dispute for workers and the unemployed must be openly adopted not only among the workers but also in the anti-globalisation movement in order to indicate a possible common terrain for a unitary, concentrated fight. The very prospect of a general strike against the bosses and the government would be an extraordinary occasion for the invaluable convergence between workers and the young in the dynamics of a rupture with the bourgeoisie.

The very success of mobilisation against G8, together with the new situation created by the outbreak of war in Afghanistan, has created a new situation in the movement. On the one hand, the shock-wave generated by Genoa has further magnified, widening the sectors of society potentially involved in the movement. On the other, both the ruling political proposals and the proposed forms of struggle (civil disobedience) are objectively in crisis. The attempt to resolve the crisis through the Social Forum network has not only failed to resolve the crisis but made it more evident. The Social Forum, particularly in the cities and nationally, does not represent the revolutionary potential of the movement: a suffocating democracy prevails in the relations between the various components and the logic of an assembly and the “lowest common dominator” have created a substantially undemocratic structure. Therefore, the representation of the SF as the “structuring of the movement” distorts the facts: in their composition, methods and programmes, most of the six Social Forums are light years away from the radical, high hopes expressed by the hundreds of thousands of people who took part in the demonstrations against the G8.

Debate over war and the national assembly in Florence have shown the crystallisation around different positions in the Social Forums. This has been a positive clarification, in which, however, the PRC unfortunately did not participate. On the contrary, the party’s line until the bitter end has been to cover up and hide the divergences in the Social Forum. When they became public, the Young Communists adhered to “the laboratory for social disobedience”. In other words, after having denied any need for a clarification of the positions in the Social Forums, when this took place, against our will, we opted to embrace not the most radical sector (that anyway has clear political limits but at least at Genoa expressed a clearer anti-imperialist class-based policy), but a moderate area such as the “white boilersuits”. The acceptance of “social disobedience”, despite the rhetoric it is wrapped in, is in fact a distancing from the real movement towards the logic of “exemplary, emblematic” symbolic action, that can never put forward the prospect of a mass development of the movement and its real link with the working-class movement.

(Bellotti-GiardIELLO-Donato-Letizia-Renda)

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 Rifondazione Comunista.

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 in the various levels of the party because democratically-defined policies are those that are the most supported 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 consciously (and not with the vague impressions taken 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 wide 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 also as the real development of its internal democracy, because only the development of awareness, competence and preparation can reinforce autonomy of judgement and so the real freedom of evaluation.

In recent years there have been clear signs of organisational disintegration: a fall in membership combined with the increase in the number of Circles, increased difficulty in maintaining a “critical mass” of militants to ensure that there is continued vitality in the Circles, the lack of our capacity to train new cadres, etc. Theories on “contamination” do nothing but rationalise our weaknesses, exacerbating the dangers we are exposed to. Irrespective of any subjective intention, it is clear that the message launched by the party leaders in the last year – that the party's structures (Circles and Federations) are not necessarily the most appropriate structures for the construction of a communist force – has become a demobilising factor in many cases. The endlessly-repeated slogans - “the party is the movement” and so on – serve to pose a simple question to all militants: if this is the case, then what sense is there in building up the party? At the same time, since the last Congress, there has been a growing structuring of currents and areas within the party in a process that involves a growing number of Circles and Federations. This is a complex problem that can only find a definitive solution in discussion and debate and, if necessary, a political battle in our party. It would be mistaken, not only an illusion, to think that Rifondazione Comunista can achieve a positive outcome without a process of deep discussion in which the different traditions and political currents in our party can be structured and freely express themselves.

In recent years a vast offensive has been launched inside and outside the party against the idea of democratic centralism. This offensive has been based first of all on the systematic, deliberate confusion between true democratic centralism – at the basis of the Bolshevik regime and the communist parties in their early years – and the bureaucratic caricature imposed by Stalinism in its different forms. In our opinion, democratic centralism is nothing more than the highest, most conscious application of the fundamental principles of autonomy and class unity in the party: the greatest possible freedom of debate, the greatest possible unity of action and the construction of a party and its leadership irrespective of the logic of factions or “pseudo-parliamentarianism”, but on the basis of a real selection and a systematic control of the capacities and competence of each comrade in the leadership. Unlike the traditional caricature, Leninist democratic centralism establishes the right to organise different tendencies when it would be otherwise impossible to engage in real debate

from different positions. The ban on organising factions in the Russian Communist Party, approved in the X Congress in 1921 was an exceptional measure, only intended as a temporary expedient in the most bitter, toughest phase at the end of the civil war and during the famine, but it was never considered a principle, and indeed groupings and factions continued to exist for some years in all the other communist parties (including the Italian Communists), openly clashing on policy, even on different platforms, in the national and international congresses.

However true this may be, it is equally true that the respect for the right to express all opinions in the most appropriate way must not imply the division of the party into “currents” at all levels. Our goal must not be a party structure that bears the stamp of a parliamentary democracy, with national congresses instead of elections, local and national organisms as superfluous mini-parliaments and executives as more or less unstable coalitions of the representatives of the different currents. This system has led on the one hand to the swelling beyond any reasonable proportion of the managing organisms of the party, not least the National Political Committee, that should be drastically downsized. In the second place, although it has created a relatively formal respect for alternative positions, particularly for the Congress, it has also rendered the real democracy in the party barren. The “sovereign” organisms are often simply not able to carry out a truly managerial function in terms of political choices, which are transferred to Secretaries who are often a sort of Conference of “the heads of currents” and so carry out the political debate that should be carried out in the National Political Committee or the political committees in the Federations. A further negative effect has been the development of “loyalty” to the current which seriously damages debate in the party, especially in those areas where the lack of cadres with independent political judgement is most felt. Our concept must aim at the reconstruction of the unity of thinking and action in the party, that is not automatic but really and deeply felt by the militant corps as it comes from a transparent, open debate. Although it is true that this is far from the case today, it is however essential to discuss it as a crucial issue, since the revolutionary project we have suggested in these motions would not be complete if it did not indicate the instrument for putting it into effect.

(Bellotti-Giardello-Donato-Letizia-Renda)