

From a victory for inter-classism to a new season of class struggles

FdCA statement on the aftermath of the elections in Italy

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

April 20, 2006

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The right's class project

Over these past 5 years it has become clear that the right-wing coalition that governed Italy after 2001 was not proof of the virtuous existence of a system of alternating governments in a bourgeois democracy. It was the expression of a class project aimed at restoring capitalist, authoritarian and clerical-fascist command in this country. A devastating and socially well-rooted project which operated on four main aspects:

- to allow the Italian industrial system to decay as a source of income, wages and jobs, as nothing threatened profits from surplus value and capital gains;
- to marketize the entire system of protections, rights and freedoms, putting millions of Italian and immigrant workers at the mercy of precarity and the market;
- to produce legislation which would destroy the rights and liberties won over preceding decades and impede the extension of these rights and liberties;
- to criminalize, demonize and repress all forms of opposition and all opposition movements involved in labour and social struggles as dangerous for the stability of the country.

This class project became so rapid and destructive during the 5-year period from 2001 to 2006, that it went far beyond the neo-liberal guidelines laid down by the centre-left coalition from 1996 to 2001, even going far beyond the limits of structural compatibility that Italian capitalism could withstand, faced with the collapse in internal demand, zero growth and the abandoning of any public support policy for Italian capitalism. Instead, we witnessed the growth of the personal wealth of government members and their supporters in the elite. The class opposition was too weak to stand up to the attack, despite the tremendous efforts of grassroots social and labour movements. The bourgeois elements who opposed the Berlusconi project were too opportunist to stave off the destruction of the social and productive fabric, which has now reached critical levels.

The Union's inter-class strategy

It was therefore necessary to build a wide alliance based on the old inter-class ideology, allowing the Christian Democratic spirit to find a place within the Union:¹

- to bring together opposing class interests in a common project aimed at winning back political power;
- to recognize parties such as the DS (Left Democrats), the PdCI (Italian Communists) and PRC (Communist Refoundation) as representatives of the interests of the exploited class in order to stem the rising class autonomy which workers over the past 5 years had been showing;

¹ The "Union" is a coalition of the following parties: Democratici di Sinistra (DS), Democrazia e Libertà – La Margherita, Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC), Federazione dei Verdi, Partito dei Comunisti Italiani (PdCI), Socialisti Democratici Italiani, Popolari Unione Democratici per l'Europa, Movimento dei Repubblicani Europei, Italia dei Valori.

- to provide an outlet for the pressure to gain access to the power system by starving lobbies and oligarchies excluded from access to the levers of political, economic and administrative power enjoyed up to now by the predators of the right;
- to involve the exploited classes of Italian and foreign workers in a wide-ranging project of improvement, restoration and the taking on of responsibilities (read “sacrifices”).

Now that Prodi and the Union have technically won the elections, the inter-class strategy will be used in order to:

- open a dialogue with segments of the centre-right social bloc;
- exalt the State institutions as the common heritage of all, irrespective of the coalitions;
- re-distribute political power among the winners;
- enact policies of public support to the economy, to the benefit of Confindustria;²
- alleviate and heal the social wounds provoked by Berlusconi neo-liberalism;
- inhibit any potential for demands, protests, opposition or self-organization on the part of diehards among the exploited classes directed at the new capitalist rulers.

However, in its work to re-define the capitalist and institutional command, the true nature of the winning inter-class alliance must reveal itself:

- there are risks regarding the disappearance of anti-Berlusconiism, which glossed over the political differences among the forces of social opposition, differences which are much wider and radical than the alliance of the Union;
- it will most likely be necessary to involve segments (both political and economic) of the centre-right, introducing a collaborationist dimension;
- the conditions seem ripe for the victorious bourgeois elements to re-launch the Italian system on the unequal basis of a new pact of social partnership which will require its sacrificial lamb (an end to the National Employment Contract; a free hand to employers on employment; etc.);
- it will be necessary for the winning parties within the Union coalition to represent the working classes to a point which falls short of the needs of these classes;
- agreement will be reached with the major “partnership-friendly” unions who intend to regain their role as partners and re-establish command against the intolerable examples of workers’ autonomy which have appeared both inside these unions (the case of the FIOM within the CGIL, for example) and in the grassroots unions;
- a legislative and institutional framework will be required to re-establish statutory legality and the fiction of the equality of every citizen in the eyes of the law;

² Italian industrial employers’ federation.

- it is likely that there will be 2 steps in their general approach: first, restore the country to health; then, soften the demands of the neo-liberal economy in order to ensure the survival of the workers; this is a policy which could be acceptable to certain sectors of the centre-right.

The prospects for the opposition movements

This situation of clearing the fog constitutes the basis for new possibilities and new openings for the grassroots social and labour movements and for revolutionary political organizations; for a new re-polarization of the movements of class opposition. The road is open to ensure that the technical defeat of the right in the April 9–10 elections does not end up as the final act of all those movements which sprang up in Italy after 2001. The many grassroots movements who, thanks to their capacity for self-organization and self-management, have been leading players in the anti-capitalist struggles (workers' and labour struggles, ecologist and environmental struggles, pacifist and anti-militarist struggles, migrants' and anti-State repression struggles, feminist, secularist and anti-clerical struggles) now have the chance to demonstrate and re-affirm their autonomy and their ideas.

In fact, it is just as important now to continue fighting both against these authoritarian tendencies which, though beaten at the ballot box, have by no means been eliminated as a political danger to society, and against the damage caused by the negative values of the right combined with the negative values of neo-liberalism (individualism, competition, arrogance, corruption, ignorance, injustice, the deregulation of civil life, the increasing precariousness of individual lives, and so on). Given the Union's need for social peace and class collaboration now that it has won, it is even more important that we promote and practise the collective values of freedom in solidarity, through the defence and use of self-organization, through the demand for and protection of the individual and collective rights of people, workers, migrants. These movements and this experience of struggle are now facing a future where their autonomy is threatened. Having realised that elections are not and never have been a way to carry out any sort of structural change in the political and economic set-up, we must promote an awareness of the need to launch a renewed social opposition against the Union government too.

The role of anarchist communists

For anarchist communists and the revolutionary, libertarian left in general, it is vital that we act in order that the contradictions within the inter-class alliance can become evident and counteract the phase of class collaboration that is in danger of emerging. We must promote the political capacity to express self-organization and conflict of all those with an interest in struggling and federate in order to carry out a radical change within society towards self-management and equality.

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Retrieved on 29th October 2021 from www.anarkismo.net
Published in *Alternativa Libertaria*, April 2006 issue.

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