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Mare Nostrum

Statement on Italian military intervention abroad

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

11th September 2006

The Italian army has taken up position on Lebanon's southern border. The fleet will be patrolling the coasts, now that Israel has lifted its naval blockade. As far as the rebuilding of Lebanon is concerned, Italy has good hopes of doing business with Beirut's powerful construction companies.

Hezbollah is contented. Israel says thank you. Syria, for the first time in ages, is spoken to firmly, but this time without threats. Italy's head of government receives the Iranian delegation on the "nuclear question". France, Spain and Turkey follow behind and join up. On the Mediterranean front of the great conflict there is now the chance for a break in the war that nobody wants to win because it never ends.

In fact, after half destroying Lebanon, Israel goes on destroying and spreading terror in Gaza and the West Bank, but announces that it is looking forward to the Palestinian factions forming a government of national unity that could be the precursor to a ceasefire. A ceasefire which would bear the guarantee of the very clever Nasrallah, who is busy trying to reconcile the image of national lib-

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erator with that one regret (for the consumption of all those who reprimanded him for having caused the disaster).

So how long will it last? Maybe not very long — depending on the other fronts. It may also depend on a couple of questions (questions which lie behind the ongoing war) that have an audience on opposing sides and that are probably at the root of Italy's eagerness to be involved, in the name of the EU.

First, the energy question. Within a few years, 3 pipelines bringing oil from Russian and the Caspian Sea will reach the Eastern Mediterranean (Turkey and Greece). "Peaceful" access to those terminals requires potential purchasers to agree with the local geopolitics. Israel has insured itself against local competition by destroying Lebanon, but Europe too, thirsty for oil and gas, is in the game. Italy's in Lebanon is a message to Algeria, which has made agreements with Gazprom (Russia); it is a message to Syria, which will be home to a Russian naval base in Tartus; it is also a message to Iran, which is seeking outlets to the west for its gas and for oil. European access to these energy resources and terminals, providing support for the USA but with a change of tactics on the Mediterranean front, military intervention in Lebanon along the lines of Bosnia and Kosovo, containing Russian expansionism: these are the goals of Italy's renewed enthusiasm for a central role within the dynamics of imperialism — one step up in the system of dependencies between world and regional powers. But only by hoping that Israel renounces the next slaughter.

Then there is the security question. If there is one thing in the European Mediterranean and in the Near East that, propaganda and appearances aside, everyone agrees on — States, real or supposed national liberation movements, various military elites — it is the fear of Al-Qaeda (itself or by proxy) taking root in the Mediterranean with a consequent contamination à la Iraq. Europe fears it, Israel fears it, the regimes in power in Arab countries (all traitors in the eyes of Al-Qaeda) fear it, and above all it is feared by Hamas, who realise that they cannot prolong the crisis without running

the risk of contamination and losing control of its own supporters. It is probably not a good idea even for Iran, which is seeking to impose its own “pax” as a regional power.

But Italy has not developed an alternative to, nor has it distanced itself from, US unilateralism. It has not given the UN any sort of boost, neither does it go any further to promote the much talked-about multilateralism. It is just that the never-ending trouble on the Afghan and Iraqi fronts demanded a break in hostilities on the Middle-Eastern front. That the showdown between the USA and Iran could not count on an adequate and approving audience. Hence this new opportunity for Italy’s general.

The mission in Lebanon will cost €160 million every six months, to be added to the €1,396 million for Kosovo, €155 million for Bosnia, €1,612 million for Afghanistan and €1,611 million for Iraq. Italy’s economic recovery is going towards financing military expenditure rather than social expenditure. But what does the centre-left government care, given the “strategic” financial gains to be made? There is always Article 11 of the Constitution, which can be waved in an attempt to save face and consciences.¹

The anti-war movement which blossomed throughout Italy between 2003 and 2005 has become bogged down with its former leaders busy in parliament or involved in political musical chairs between the various factions in the ruling coalition. Many are fooling themselves into believing that somehow our presence in Lebanon really is helping to keep the peace, not like in Iraq. But an army is an army. It is a war machine, no matter where it is!!

Peace in the Mediterranean cannot depend on military peace missions, only on the re-birth of civil society and on the autonomy of the workers’ movements in each country, together with de-militarization and disarmament on all fronts.

¹ Article 11 of the Italian constitution states that “Italy rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means for the settlement of international disputes”.

We urgently need a new demonstration of committed civil, secular solidarity. This country urgently needs a new pacifist, anti-militarist, internationalist, feminist anti-war movement to oppose aggression and oppression. A movement which can support local initiatives abroad in their struggle for equal and free access to resources, to free themselves from national and foreign oppressors, for the emancipation of the poor and exploited classes. Because peace takes root and spreads hand-in-hand with the freedom of thought and organization, with the expansion of rights and policies for economic and civil equality.