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The crisis in democracy in Italy

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

31 October 2010

In Italy, there is a clear deterioration in the levels of democracy in the country, which can be seen both at institutional level and in general within society:

- in the concentration of power in the executive, with the consequent authoritarian tendency to rely more and more on executive orders and deregulation;
- in the decline of the legislative power of parliament, reduced to merely ratifying the government's work and the decisions taken in the corridors of power, where there is collusion and connivance between the executive and the various economic oligarchies and the re-composition of the interests of various sectors of the Italian bourgeoisie;
- in the current use of parliament against the judiciary;
- in the destruction of the representation of minorities in favour of a homogenization of bourgeois interests.

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This situation has in effect marginalized the parliamentary strategy as an instrument for the emancipation of the popular classes, and evidenced the uselessness of seeking to represent the interests of the workers within parliament and/or the government.

The doubling of power throughout the country as a result of the expansion of administrative power and the use of vertical subsidiarity (EU) and horizontal subsidiarity on regions and macroregions that guide the economic, financial and occupational structures of services, where the State merely has to ensure compatibility with Maastricht and manage the social contradictions that derive from them, in effect makes it impossible for the grassroots to participate and organize, either in a constructive way or in seeking redress in disputes.

The deterioration in democracy and participation also affects the world of labour through

- changes to the bargaining structures and the renewal of contracts without prior consultation with the workers;
- the exclusion of combative union minorities;
- the exclusion of grassroots union opposition.

The reform of the collective bargaining system imposed by Confindustria aims to accelerate these processes by pushing for the full involvement of unions in individual company affairs (which can be seen in a whole range of changes including the new limit of 3 years on the validity of collective agreements, the 7-month freeze on the right to strike during labour disputes and the new bilateral bodies) and by effectively cancelling collective agreements for thousands of workers in small and medium businesses, who are mostly unrepresented by unions.

In exchange for concentrating bargaining power in the hands of companies and eliminating its collective, universal

and solid nature, the unions are being offered bilateral bodies and guarantees of survival, in an attempt to force them to accelerate the process already under way which transforms them into service agencies. The penalties for anyone wishing to violate the rules imposed by Confindustria are a clear signal of the end to all trade union autonomy and any grassroots action in the workplace.

But the deterioration of democracy can also be seen in the reduction of freedom for grassroots participation thanks to the implementation of:

- racist institutional policies and violence which seeks to persecute and criminalize immigrants and other minorities;
- authoritarian policies which seek to resolve by force the contradictions in environmental and territorial management, both on a local scale (refuse, quarries, etc.) and on a wider scale (military bases, nuclear power and energy in general);
- policies to reduce income and encourage debt, increasing the ability to blackmail the working class, promoting the search for individual solutions (increased productivity, double-jobbing, overtime, post-pension age work) with a contemporaneous weakening and destruction of collective bargaining and labour struggles;
- destructive policies in the public and social spheres, from schools to transport, from healthcare to pensions.

Lastly, the attack on our freedoms also affects our rights regarding self-determination in reproduction, relationships, health and individual behaviour.

Faced with this fiction of institutional democracy, with the fencing in of union democracy, with the passive democracy

within society, we need to promote grassroots democracy, democracy from below, direct democracy, through:

- the defence and creation of collective, self-managed spaces for the grassroots, where different views can come together and where decisions regarding our communities and jobs can be taken;
- on the political level, building relations between organizations, militants and activists, on the basis of self-organization, reciprocal legitimation and equality of relations, with the aim of contributing to the development of political and social opposition in the community to the legislative, administrative and economic decisions that support neo-liberalism. To that aim, we should establish which struggles may be able to unify; we should build anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-sexist networks; promote grassroots coordinations and associations which can foster participation by the people and by class-struggle activists, encouraging protest and giving power back to the community;
- in our trade unions, supporting a process of aggregation of the CGIL's internal opposition, beginning in the workplace, with delegates and representatives;
- supporting the processes of the widest possible aggregation of grassroots unions, starting in the workplace and in the community;
- building self-managed structures in the community for debate and formulation, counter-information and trade union mobilization, across the various trade unions;
- defending the national collective bargaining system and guaranteeing worker democracy and decision-making power in the workplace.

For first-person involvement of the exploited and oppressed, for the autonomy of the immediate interests of the working class:

- **rebuild and root within the fabric of society and of our communities the ideas and paths of anti-capitalist criticism and struggle;**
- **accumulate, form and federate potentially revolutionary experiences towards a project for a solid, communist society, self-managed and libertarian.**