

# Rete dei Comunisti International Bulletin Winter 2020

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## Communists in Italy from 1989 to the crisis

Interview with Mauro Casadio

The second volume of “Una storia anomala. Dall’Organizzazione Proletaria Romana alla Rete dei Comunisti” will be published in the coming weeks. The volume will address a time span from the end of the 1970s to the early 2000s. A decade and more full of events that have profoundly changed the political, economic face and the entire Italian society and, without a shadow of a doubt, of the entire Western world.

In those years, the Communist subjectivity (starting with the old PCI but with political and organizational reverberations in all the organized forms of the time) was overwhelmed by the rapid succession of those events with consequences, in various capacities, that reach up to the present day.

About 30 years after that political season - which for the singers of capital had to sanction the End of History - the eggheads of mainstream information continue their crusade, head down, against the ideas and the function of the communists .

In recent weeks we have been recording a crescendo of interviews, reports and commemorations where the explicit goal is, again, the funeral of Communism.

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*Evidently the current manifestation of the forms of the systemic capitalist crisis - starting with the limits and disasters deriving from the Covid 19 Pandemic - triggers an alarm bell about the urgent need, historical and immediate, for a new social model and a general system alternative*

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How to interpret, otherwise, the obscene revival of the various "historians" such as Paolo Mieli, Ezio Mauro and - without any fear of shame - of Matteo Renzi himself who return, anxiously, to the issues relating to the "Livorno split", the foundation of PCd'I [Communist Party of Italy] and the entire history of the communists throughout the twentieth century with a demolishing and, above all, inhibiting intent towards a possible new season of struggle and political organization

To discuss on some key junctures of that historical period (the years a little before and a little after 1989 / '91) we met Mauro Casadio of the Rete dei Comunisti, with whom we had this conversation that we relaunch among our readers and among all comrades and activists.

QUESTION: On 12 November 1989 the then secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Achille Occhetto, went to Bologna - to the 'Bolognina' neighbourhood - to commemorate an episode of the Resistance (the battle of Porta Lame) and, to an audience composed largely of Partisans, delivered a speech in which he announced the start of a political process of dissolution of the Party and the formation of "a new left political formation". This event deeply shook the Italian society (and beyond) and produced a real avalanche that swept away what was "the largest communist party in the capitalist West". The Berlin Wall had come down since almost a month, the Federal Republic of Germany was embarking on what was configured as the annexation of the GDR and the Soviet Union, led by M. Gorbachev, was at the end. As a militant companion of the then OPR (Organizzazione Proletaria Romana) how did you perceive those events and what were the first (certainly partial) reflections that you elaborated in that complex junction of contemporary history?

ANSWER: A quick response was impossible considering the powerful tug we were subjected to. We followed, convulsively, the events to understand what was happening. Certainly Occhetto's turning point did not surprise us as our judgment on the PCI had been consolidated for some time and the social democratic turn was evident already from Berlinguer's secretariat. Indeed for us it was the end of a misunderstanding protracted for too long to which the "base" of the PCI was "clinging" as it was said that "the Party knew what it was doing", regardless. This is the reason widely used, since the 1970s, to digest all the changes made, starting with the so-called "historical compromise" strategy.

Obviously, it was completely different on the international level. Faced with the collapse of the countries of Eastern Europe, that of the USSR did not seem credible to us. The judgment on Gorbachev's political course was consolidated for us as early as 1988 after the Reykjavik agreements but the referendum that was held in that country on the maintenance of the USSR in March 1991 had given positive results and in non-apparatus elections. So the collapse, which took place at the end of 1991, was as unexpected as the quick and explicit

betrayal of the entire leadership of the CPSU, which was the direct political cause of the end of the Soviet experience.

Certainly, ***the structural causes of the collapse had matured over time, but the traumatic outcome was the political product of the deviation of the management group.*** Here, too, ***the story was by no means taken for granted as the Cuban experience demonstrated*** - later on - despite the difficulties that that country was facing ***and also the great and important Chinese experience.*** At the time, our judgment was clear and in no uncertain terms about the responsibilities of the leadership of the CPSU, unlike the judgments of most of the rest of the Communists and the left, who were largely seduced by the "novelty / Gorbachev".

QUESTION: The discussion on the proposed dissolution of the PCI set in motion a broad process of reorganization that has been configured, for over thirty years, like that of the "Rifondazione Comunista" [Party of the Communist Refoundation]. In that container were added, little by little, not only those in the old PCI who did not agree with "the Turn of the Bolognina" but also a large part of what in the 1980s and even before in the 1970s defined itself as the Revolutionary Left. In short, a structured party was formed, with a good participation of workers and proletarians and with a decent parliamentary presence. This process of new organization - although supported by enthusiasm and manifestations of Communist pride - was unable to develop a theory and practice that was up to the tasks that the new cycle of the phase, both internal and international, needed. It is no coincidence that after a few years of growth that political process has - slowly but steadily - been consumed and dissolved over time up to the present day. In that period - we are now in 1991 - you decided not to join the Communist Refoundation with a courageous and, certainly, counter-current decision. Can you explain to us the reasons for your choice and the lines of political work on which you then concentrated and experimented?

ANSWER: Meanwhile, it must be said that the split of the PCI was not made by those who gave life to the PRC but by Occhetto and his management team as he broke with the PCI and its history. Those who founded the 'Partito della Rifondazione Comunista' limited themselves to taking note of what had happened, ***to react in a subordinate way without any analysis of the dramatic transformation and claiming a continuity that was not in the "new history" that had just opened.*** In fact, the PCI itself in its entirety had its responsibilities in the outcome that happened, the same thing cannot be said for example for other communist parties such as the Greek or Portuguese which have interpreted a different political path from the old PCI.

Furthermore, we had had a direct experience on the political practice of Cossutta [a politician within PCI, who was then among the founders of Rifondazione Comunista] at the time of the Interstampa magazine in the fight against the installation of Euromissiles in Italy and in Europe, in which we had directly seen the progress of a continuous tactical manoeuvre that in reality hid a lack of will to arrive at clear conclusions of a break with the party line. This happened both during Berlinguer's secretariat but above all in the subsequent phase, after Berlinguer's death in 1984, where the results had become evident.

This state of affairs was then concretely verified in the course of the following years where it was demonstrated that - in the action of the Communist Refoundation - there was very little of the characteristics of the "historical" PCI within that experience breaking with the very



roots of Italian communism. It was certainly no coincidence that the secretary / manager of the party Bertinotti came from the experience of the "socialist left".

QUESTION: It would be politically wrong to read that context of the history of the communists in our country only with the events concerning the parties' leadership. We recall that the early 1990s recorded the implosion not only of the PCI but - immediately afterwards - of the so-called 'First Republic' and of all the legislative and party framework that had managed the country from the post-war period until then. Moreover, on the international level, the dissolution of the USSR paved a highway for the supporters of the idea of the 'End of History' and for the apologists of the full capitalist globalization. In Italy these upheavals did not affect - only – the political level but affected the economic and productive structure, further disrupted the social classes' structure, the rules of the game (the Institutional Reform) and prepared the conditions for an acceleration of the construction of the European Imperialistic Pole (from Maastricht to the launch of the Euro to the season of the Treaties). How did you address these strong innovations while you began the theoretical reconstruction of a communist point of view - while you were, however, aware of acting while the whole Left, including that which loved to call itself radical, turned its attention elsewhere?

ANSWER: They were dealt "calmly", in the sense that both the international events and the birth of Communist Refoundation had shown that a reconstruction process could not progress with the short times of politics but rather with the long ones of history.

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*It was necessary to redefine the theoretical parameters of the communists to have a general point of view on the dynamics and it was necessary to understand where the set of reforms prepared with the de facto birth of the European Union would lead us*

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We have therefore equipped ourselves for long-running theoretical and analytical work that continues today.

Certainly this aspect was fundamental but it was not enough to cope with the situation and verify and maintain an experience like ours. For this reason, **on a practical level, we have focused on material class conflict, in other words on social and trade union conflict**. This condition was an important holding point because even the birth of the Party of Communist Refoundation could not represent a perspective of conflict, being internal to the trade union and associative structures of the left starting with the CGIL. Furthermore, the space [for political action] was also objective as the restructuring and counter-reform processes of the entire political system directly affected the conditions of the workers and the popular classes, fuelling further fragmentation and disintegration. Research and theoretical / political confrontation and real class conflict have been the two legs on which we have held the bar of our all-out initiative over time.

QUESTION: After about thirty years from these events we are dramatically going through a global Pandemic Crisis in which it is clearly shown that the CMP (Capitalistic Mode of

Production) clashes deeply with the natural needs of life of men and nature. We are placed in a historical turning point in which an alternative to these hateful social relations in force is - objectively - on the agenda. Of course - for our readers - I stress the term "objectively"! How do you think that in this complicated and unprecedented context the Communists - a Communist Organization, the Rete dei Comunisti- can carry out a holding function and, hopefully, a vanguard in the workplace, in the territories and in society? In short, is it possible to be and act as Communists today?

ANSWER: In reality this is a story to be written. On the objective level, the conditions are being created to bring out the need for a revolutionary alternative to this mode of production. This path will not be a short process as we are at the beginning of the manifestation of the hegemonic crisis, on the level of subjectivity, unfortunately, things are very different. We know that the Marxist toolbox is still able today to give the right readings of the general dynamics, a very different thing is the political sphere, where the inadequacy of the communists in this end of the century has clearly shown itself.

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*It is now a question of entering the concrete reality in which we have been projected - on a national and international level - to understand how to reconnect the threads of a political project of social alternative. Certainly for the purposes of this objective politics is important but the rooting of the communists, in the forms historically possible today, within the subordinate social classes for how materially they live and manifest themselves in the reality of 21st century capitalism is equally decisive*

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QUESTION: The current pandemic crisis in Italy highlights a phenomenon that has been manifesting itself in embryo for about fifteen years: politics losing its function. The current health emergency seems to have further developed this phenomenon.

The ongoing brawl between different parties, between leaders of the same party, between virologists in different positions and opinion makers of different natures shows that the function of politics that Gramsci said was the "hinge", i.e. the conjunction between civil society and its material structure - structure and superstructure - seems to have been blown. What space of intervention does a communist organization have today, and what are its perspectives, in this context where the ability to bring together individual interests seems so long decayed?

ANSWER: The crisis in which we are immersed is a systemic one, therefore the first relevant insight for the Communists is that **a time of radical, possibly revolutionary, change is beginning, which, however, must be interpreted for the forms, ways and times in which its characteristics will be evident.** Certainly, the dimension of such change is world-wide and, as we know, it comes in a phase where the power relations between imperialism are caught in a stalemate: this is due both to the global financial intertwining that prevents "hostile" competition – because everyone would be

penalized by this possibility – and to military balance: a substantial self-destructive balance for all would be entailed by the decision to use nuclear weapons, even though we have observed for a long time the US attempting to regain a prevailing position of strength in this regard. However, the stalemate is a transitory phase and there were already several attempts to overcome it: economic areas are trying to break away from this international interconnection, which is becoming increasingly problematic. Instances of such attempts are the Asian RCEP agreement – is in conflict with US interests –, and the EU issuing bonds within the Recovery Fund initiative, together with other financial funds denominated in euros, which are directly competing with the dollar.

If this is the objective level, in which we can already glimpse the deep contradictions, the subjective level of analysis of the Communists and Class Left – who still cannot find a unitary point of view on general dynamics – is far less developed, therefore any steps forward in relations are often followed by backward steps. It would be necessary to have an area of discussion between the different forces within Europe, because every process of re-aggregation can only start from a general vision which must be as homogeneous as possible.

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*A common approach to the relationship with the Class would be just as important: within the EU imperialist pole, the Class' forms and features are different from the past – and need to be understood – but its subordinate position in relation to the bourgeoisie remains unchanged*

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QUESTION: The movement that manifested itself in the last week of October in Italy seems to be a clear symptom of the situation that we are living: the social sectors which have taken to the streets are the product of the policies of liberalization and outsourcing that have characterized the last thirty years, sectors which no longer find easy conditions of self-reproduction.

It is a rather composite "petit-bourgeoisie", a subject which, however complicated it may be, must be tackled, we can't leave it to the Right. Plus, in this context of social regression, the social forces which were traditionally more organized are now less in the "front line", and are less willing to mobilize. Perhaps the yellow vests movement in France – and the Italian forconi movement dating back a few years – anticipated a few features of the current social malaise experienced by this impoverished middle class.

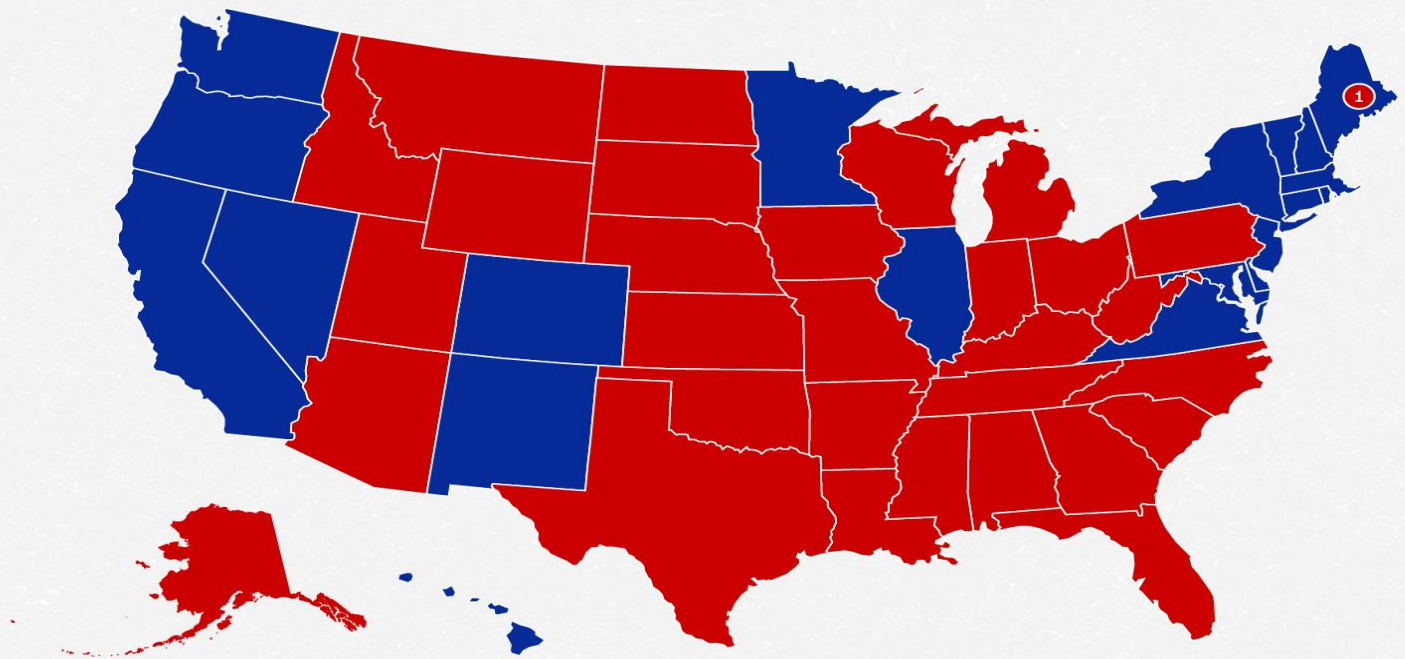
Can you describe and frame this phenomenon?

ANSWER: This brings us back to the previous question. It is paramount to place the form of the proletariat – and of the subordinate classes in modern society, namely European society – in their historical dynamics. As we know, **the form of the working class until the 1980s was the product of a certain stage of development of productive forces; Western imperialism was forced to overcome such stage of development by the international class struggle, in order to regain "command"**. This radically changed the proletariat, in terms of productive, social, and territorial characteristics. In fact, we find very different forms of the proletarian condition,

ranging from some fringes of the old "Fordist" working class to extremely precarious workers. Even intellectual labor is now subject to the laws of profit, which is proletarianizing social segments that do not feel proletarian at all. Moreover, this extreme variety of characteristics of the workforce is widespread across different countries, further complicating the process of identity recomposition. Finally, the subordinate condition has widened to include figures which traditionally should be placed in the small bourgeoisie, small entrepreneurship or self-employment in its various forms. In the processes of centralization of Capital, these figures, too, become subordinate to the Law of Value while maintaining an appearance of professional independence.

***The anomaly of these movements, which are emerging in different conditions in France and in Italy, must be placed within this process of making profit out of all parts of society, a process which is far from being over.*** Therefore, these movements are not stable, and they must be analyzed individually to understand whether they can be part of a recomposed front of the anti-capitalist forces. Certainly, it would be a mistake and a favor to the Class opponent to treat these social segments as enemies: a mistake which, unfortunately, is often made.





# The US elections, the rotten fruit of the advancing systemic crisis

## Rete dei Comunisti

On Saturday (November 7th) in the late afternoon, the US presidential elections "formally" had a winner who exceeded the 270 electoral vote threshold necessary to win the office.

The tortuous electoral process and Trump's failure to acknowledge Biden's victory opened an institutional crisis with uncertain outcomes, which shows the high level of political delegitimization of the US representation system.

In a smaller order of magnitude, this had already emerged in 2016 with the challenge to Bernie Sanders' democratic primaries, especially with Donald Trump's rise in the conservative arena.

At these elections, 20 million more voters than in 2016 voted, substantially 65%. Around 75 million and 300 thousand votes went to the Democratic challenger Joe Biden and vice president Kamala Harris, while around 71 million and 48 thousand went to the outgoing president and vice president candidate Mike Pence.

A difference of just over 4 million preferences between the two White House challengers – both received more votes than any other presidential candidate in U.S. history –, just over the 3 million votes Hillary Clinton obtained against Trump himself in the 2016 election.

This unprecedented participation is the result of ***the internal and structural contradictions that have been maturing for some time and that the pandemic has amplified***, with an increasingly divided and radicalized social body: from the health and social vulnerability of significant portions of the population – especially among "ethnic minorities" – to the racial issue; from the questioning of civil guarantees that were believed to have been acquired (especially for women) to the climate issue, which proved explosive with the recent fires in California.

In general, the voting map is quite clear, Biden wins in centres with more than 2 million inhabitants even in states that are historic republican electoral bastions. Trump wins in small towns and the countryside, as well as in peripheral areas (suburbs) or "per-urban" (exurbs), even in States where the Democrats win.

***On the one hand, a hundred or so democratic "metropolises", concentrated mainly but not exclusively in the states on the Atlantic and Pacific Coast, and on the other in Deep America, give the picture of a split nation that Biden is unlikely to be able to reassemble.***

This political polarization sanctioned by the elections, while it finds in Trump a worthy representation of the radicalization underway in the conservative camp, is not reflected in the same way in the winning party.

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*The democratic establishment and its innate centrism is incapable of giving an outlet to the claims that important parts of the population have expressed up to now, even in the motivations of the vote, according to the first research in the field*

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So much so that Ocasio-Cortez has come to denounce the hostility of the democrats towards progressives and the Black Lives Matter movement.

The radicalisation "on the left" took place first within the sectors of workers most exposed to health risks, then with the mobilizations for racial justice, which after the death of George Floyd at the end of May also involved important parts of "Euro-Americans", and then in the physical opposition between the supporters and detractors of Trump.

This inability on the part of Obama's former number two to represent the popular push that made him win, together with the compromises that Biden will have to make with the Republicans to continue his work of government, risk opening a conflict within the democrats with the more progressive part of the party – which, after losing the challenge in the primaries, had nevertheless supported Biden – as well as with the popular electoral base, overwhelmed by a crisis from which there is no way out.

Trump also broadened his electoral consensus, and – unless there could be "judicial" surprises – he will remain at the centre of the political scene probably until the next presidential elections.

He will continue to be the true *deus ex machina* of the Republican party and will use – even militarily – his broad social base of not insignificant subordinates. In any case,

***"trumpism", which has cleared the most unrepresentable reactionary drives, will continue to flow in the veins of the Amerika".***

But its "forcing" also upset its own camp, causing the first defections among the Republican ranks, not all of whom were willing to support the president in his crusade against alleged electoral fraud.

This faction is mainly concerned about the climate of permanent instability that risks opening up and that could harm its economic contacts; and it has probably been "well advised" by parts of the Deep State (Pentagon and FBI, among others) that have repeatedly entered into a collision course with the White House tenant.

It is not certain that both political bodies – Democrats and Republicans – driven by their own internal conflicts, fuelled by real social contradictions, do not know about the significant break-ups averted so far, despite the assertion of two outsiders like Sanders on one side and Trump on the other.

Biden's hands will be rather tied, however, if he succeeds in taking office on January 20th, net of legal appeals and the outgoing president's coups de manoeuvre; and not only because of the already mentioned Republican control of important US power centres (starting from the Supreme Court).

If the savoir-faire of the consolidated technocrats of the Obama era is not enough to resolve internal contradictions, the international situation appears even more uncertain. It will be difficult to reimpose a Yankee hegemony now in decline on different fronts; from the Latin American "backyard" to the Middle East, passing through the substantial ineffectiveness of the policy of pressure on China, already begun with Barack Obama and his *"pivot to Asia"*.

In foreign policy, Biden has announced that he wants to rebuild the North American leadership by reappropriating himself with the international forum – by falling under the Paris climate agreements, as well as UNESCO and the World Health Organization – by strengthening the role of NATO and generally re-establishing an Atlanticist policy, by trying to re-establish strong cooperation with the EU on different aspects, and finally by trying to revive the nuclear agreement with Iran.

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*But all the priorities that are obligatory on the agenda of the future White House tenant will produce non-secondary frictions within the clash between imperialisms, fuelled by the systemic crisis that the capitalist mode of production is going through. And slogans will not be enough to solve this structural competition between international macro-blocks – China first and foremost, but also the EU*

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This increasingly fierce competition cannot fail to have very substantial repercussions on the increasingly uncertain "privileges of position" of the US and its imperial capacity to vent its contradictions to the outside world, as recent events are demonstrating.

That the historical enemy of any hypothesis of transformation in the socialist sense of reality is at an evident impasse, in facing the combined arrangement of a "weakened" internal front

and an increasingly hostile external front, is excellent news for the Communists and for the conditions in which they act, even in our country.

It is also an additional ideological weapon to show how capitalism in its highest degree of development is a *giant with clay feet*.



## Americas: the line of conflict between Socialism and Barbary

Rete dei Comunisti Paris

The sense of this initiative is to attempt a recomposition of the parts in a unified and coherent general view, starting from the cycle promoted by the Rete dei Comunisti “The Americas between Socialism and Barbarism” and aiming to analyse the resistance and attack of imperialism and the context in which our class enemy is moving. After a broad focus on the American quadrant, we believe it is important to return to embrace our latitudes as well, focusing on the imperialist subjects with which we are directly confronted, the EU and NATO first and foremost.

During this long autumn, we have followed step by step, through a cycle of 9 initiatives throughout Italy, the South American popular mobilizations, trying to explore different aspects of a complex situation, that of an American continent hanging in the balance (or rather, struggling) between two different and irreconcilable models of the world. In the countries of Nuestra America, the clash – in these times more alive than ever – can never be



framed solely at the national level, but we believe it is necessary to read it with continental and global lenses.

We have stated that we are in the midst of the crisis of capital valorisation, a crisis that presents partially asymmetrical characteristics, strongly affecting the centre and its direct dependencies, but to a lesser extent those countries on the periphery that for years have undertaken and consolidated a path of building a different, alternative society. It is in this context that ***the Latin American continent can no longer be framed as just one of the many parts of the world, but rather seems to be the weak link of modern imperialism.*** Hosting both countries with an ultra-liberalist approach (Bolsonaro's Brazil, traditionally Chile, Bolivia's coup...) and countries in countertrend and cornerstones of the Socialism of the 21st century, Latin America is in fact today the battlefield between irreconcilable models of development, in an increasingly heated opposition between Socialism and Barbarism.

The Western elites, in particular the USA, hit hard by a devastating social disintegration that is a direct consequence of capitalism's inability to emerge from its systemic crisis, see their global hegemony reduced and thus the possibility of outsourcing the contradictions that develop within themselves. The abrupt decrease (in every field, except the military one) of a supremacy that one wanted to see as an irremovable datum, has two immediate consequences: first of all, the increase of aggressiveness in Yankee foreign policy, but above all ***the redefinition of international value chains and therefore the tendency to relocate production chains directly to America.*** An America that is to be understood both as American territory and as a continental "backyard", today once again on the front line, after a few decades in which big capital had identified more suitable and profitable environments for its valorization, first of all China – which today no longer has the exploitable characteristics found there in the 1990s, but emerges as a global adversary of the USA.

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*It is in the resumption of this imperialist project that we must read the renewed escalation of class conflict in Latin America*

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In this sense, even considering that we are no longer at a global level immersed in an expansive phase and that therefore the centre of the empire has greater and objective difficulties in imposing itself, the opposition of the peoples of Nuestra America cannot be tolerated, whether it takes the organised and state forms of the countries that gave birth to the ALBA, or whether it is rebellions, revolts, insurrections against supine governments at the will of the USA.

In the last few weeks, while we were recounting the events and listening to the protagonists, while trying to analyse the facts and their narrations, the opening of a new cycle of continental class struggle, or at least the explosion of a particularly intense battle within a long lasting war, has become apparent. The aspects are changeable, the conquests brought back to the field obviously provisional and the situations extremely different: they range from the consolidation of progressive and socialist state paths to squares with almost

insurrectional characteristics. This is a first fact that seems important to us: it is never just a matter of disputes – however radical they may be –, that is, we are not in the presence of a simple, albeit very strong, social conflict, but we are faced with one of an extremely and consciously political nature. This process, which we see taking place throughout Latin America but of which perhaps the most recent and important examples are to be found in Guatemala and Peru, is a phenomenon of ***politicisation of contradictions, so that even social issues take on a political value and a dimension of clash in radical forms.*** The maturing of the politicisation of contradictions, which is a phenomenon at work worldwide, in this specific quadrant does not present itself only as a need for representation of the subordinate classes or delegitimisation of the ruling elites, but finds the forms of a positive and active antagonism.

A second datum that we would like to underline, instead, is a consequence both of the systemic crisis and of the determination and maturity of the experiences of resistance to imperialism and counterattack already underway for some time in the continent, which have found in the experience of Cuba their natural strategic reference: the objective weakness of imperialism. Today there is no doubt that neoliberalism can (and must) be undermined, with the victory of the Bolivian people who, only a year after the coup, seem to prove it. The weakness and sometimes the inability of the 'masters of the world' to carry forward the imperialist agenda is part of a general change in the historical phase.

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*In the face of an overwhelming restart of the imperialist engine,  
the peoples of the continent are showing their reasons and  
sometimes their strength and ability to build a concrete  
alternative*

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Somehow, it seems to be the succession of events itself to indicate the correctness of what we have indicated as the choice between Socialism and Barbarism, in a particularly interesting world quadrant, which sees socialism concretely present in South America and barbarism equally concretely in the United States (and in its southern dependencies, like the inhuman Brazil of Bolsonaro).

What is the situation in the continent today? Aware that photographing a very fast moving process can only be a partial exercise, we believe that putting the latest events on the plate can help to frame the extreme mobility and partial interconnection of the ongoing political process. We are first of all in the presence of victorious electoral rounds for progressive and socialist forces in Bolivia and Venezuela, in which the defeat of a coup and the consolidation of a socialist system are highlighted; the referendum on constitutional change in Chile was also won, which indicated the popular will to proceed with the election of the constituent deputies to rewrite the Constitution.

Although we are aware that every advance is a temporary conquest, we cannot let the structural scope of these victorious electoral passages slip through our fingers. In Bolivia, for example, the indigenous-farming peasant movement has quickly regained its political

centrality, lost following a direct attack by imperialist forces, and now it will be crucial to support the new government, which has many changes on its agenda that are necessary to strengthen the progressive experience. It will not only be a matter of recovering the economy and boosting the reforms suspended by the coup in the fields of health, education or justice, but it will also be a matter of building a structure of political formation in defence of the process of change and of making a profound impact by strengthening the instruments of popular power, without forgetting a reform of the armed forces that will revolutionise the traditional role of the army in this part of the world. ***What is at stake in this sense is directly the construction of a system.***

In addition to experiences such as the Bolivian one, which are the bearers of building counter-attack of the popular classes of Nuestra America, in other corners of the continent heavy mobilizations have exploded: in Peru against the ultra-corrupt neo-liberal ruling class, which came to power with the coup of '92 and dressed in democratic clothes with the reactionary Constitution of '93; in Guatemala against the umpteenth cuts to health and education and against the gifts to the private sector, exploding in an anger that led the people to set Parliament on fire.

It is important to understand the approach with respect to these mobilizations, whether to privilege the narration of events or to search for deeper causes and future scenarios, integrating them with the continental movement. Let us look at the Peruvian case, in which beyond and beyond the mass mobilizations that impose sudden changes on an oligarchy committed only to trying to ensure a minimum of governability, in considering the current national political moment two central axes can be highlighted: on the one hand, we find the contours of a structural crisis, marked by the exhaustion of the neoliberal regime as a possible form of social order; on the other hand, with respect to the scenarios that are looming for the future, we can see possible outlets for radical transformation from a highly political point of view, contemplating a constitutional change in the Chilean wake. Peru and Chile are the two South American countries in which the government's coup-rigged elites chose to “constitutionalise” the neoliberal model, preventing the introduction of any kind of reform. In Chile, the people managed to impose the election of a new Constituent, leveraging a prolonged and generalised revolt and a broad militant fabric. In Peru, in addition to the necessary safeguarding of the political radicality expressed in the streets by a new generation of activists, the way in which progressive forces will manage the presidential elections in 2021 will also be crucial if they are able to put forward narratives and proposals connected with the whole process of continental class struggle. A bet that is common to the progressive forces of many countries, together with Peru, will be voted on in Ecuador and Chile itself: all countries where much more is at stake than a few seats in Parliament.

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*Moving to the other end of the continent, elections in the USA  
change the form but not the substance of American imperial  
power*

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The analysis of the vote gives us a map of the internal and structural contradictions that have long been maturing within the American beast, which especially the pandemic has

amplified, with an increasingly divided and radicalized social body: a split and polarized federation within it, which the democratic elites will hardly be able to reassemble in a few months back in Washington.

Even more problematic will be the foreign policy moves of the democrats: Biden announced that he wanted to rebuild the North American international leadership, strengthening the role of NATO and re-establishing an Atlanticist policy, trying to strengthen the cooperation relations with the EU undermined by the previous administration. But the road will be all uphill and slogans or changes of form will not be enough, because the resolution of the structural competition between international macro-blocks (where China is the main enemy for the USA, but also the EU has now come out of the orbit of the friends-suddites given for certain) clashes with the deep systemic crisis of the Capitalist Mode of Production and with a no longer certain annuity of US position.

The events of recent months are therefore excellent news for Communists around the world. We have said that, in the clash that pushes us to say that the choice is clearly between Socialism and Barbarism, today we have more ideological weapons to show that capitalism in its highest degree of development is a giant with feet of clay.

In the global context, in particular in the Latin American continent, an increasingly clear-cut frontal class clash with defined and antagonistic social interests is taking place. It is up to us to concentrate, from time to time, on the analysis of the organisation that is given to us, on the resistance of the class adversary or rather on the fault line, of clash.

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*In approaching the cycle that has just ended and this last initiative, the Rete dei Comunisti wanted to highlight the awareness that both class fronts – both the oligarchic and the popular one – show that they have respect for the harshness and importance of the current clash, in the forms and events in which it is manifested in Nuestra America: the victory of one or the other can mean losing everything one possessed or conquered*

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The South American continent therefore seems to be the weak link of modern imperialism and it is important not to look at this struggle as an inter-American history but with a global outlook. In this sense we recognise a strong role for the European Union, a subject which, for example, immediately recognised the Venezuelan and Bolivian coups, but which has decidedly more original sins. The coercive instruments used by the EU, when it does not directly deploy its national armies, are in any case instruments of war: how, in fact, should we consider the economic sanctions that rain down in every part of the world, or the use of a variable geometry democracy, which provides for the a priori disallowance of any electoral result that destabilises its own framework of political and economic interests? Whether it is the case of President Maduro or the criminal Trump, the substance does not seem to change much.

While the will and action of the European Union and NATO in keeping the oppressed peoples in check is now well known, so is the authoritarian escalation and social regression of the Old World: in both these directions of class struggle – internal and external – the role of the forming imperialist pole called the European Union is defined. Years ago, as Rete dei Comunisti, we launched a campaign that denounced in its **slogan "austerity at home and war outdoor"**, which among other things, highlighting the existence of a geopolitical clash in the various corners of the Mediterranean, began to propose a possible alternative, linked and borrowed from the experience that the progressive and socialist countries of Nuestra America have experienced in their own quadrant. **A Euro-Mediterranean ALBA, a necessary project against the violent capitalist barbarism**, in which first and always the popular, oppressed and exploited sectors are the losers.

The result of this class struggle taking place in many Latin American countries therefore speaks directly to us, communists and revolutionaries in Europe. That is why we want to talk about the post-election situation in Venezuela, which is undoubtedly the South American country in which the progressive cycle that opened up at the end of the 1990s has had a deeper impact, going so far as to create solid revolutionary mass bodies, and we want to try to talk about it also in relation to continental movements. But we also want to enter into the estate of the oligarchic front, into the North American reaction to this progressive push within their supposed backyard, no less than in the imperial activity acting in our quadrant. From a privileged point of view, i.e. the French context, which is particularly interesting for the military function that the country has always played in the European context, we cannot stop asking ourselves how the spearhead of our imperialism acts within its own framework of economic and military interests.

These are the guidelines that we have proposed to our interlocutors, knowing that they presuppose debates that are too broad to be completed in one evening. But this openness to debate stems from the awareness that we cannot limit ourselves to denunciation, to the telling of what is happening and to the expression of solidarity for the peoples in struggle. **We must be able to grasp the strategic scope of the class struggle taking place in Latin America**, try to tune in to it and take it back to us.

The international situation determined by growing global competition, in which conflicting and irreconcilable interests clash, by an unresolved systemic crisis of capitalism and by ever-increasing tensions, requires the communists and revolutionaries in Europe and Latin America to make a quantum leap in the field of a strategic alternative to a destructive capitalism made ferocious by fear. The Socialism of 21st century is not useless rhetoric, it is the perspective to be put into play within the political and social clash on every front. Especially where the imperialist chain reveals its weakest links.



# LA LINEA DELLO SCONTRO TRA IL SOCIALISMO E LA BARBARIE

introduce **Lorenzo Trapani** Rete dei Comunisti Parigi

intervengono:

**Mohamed Merabet**, membro di Annahj Addimocrati (Marocco), dell'Asamblea Internacional de los Pueblos e della Plateforme de Solidarite avec les Peuples du Mediterranee

**Romain Migus**, saggista e giornalista di Les 2 Rives, autore di numerosi articoli sulla Rivoluzione Bolivariana e sulla guerra mediatica contro il Venezuela

**Luciano Vasapollo**, Rete dei Comunisti

Collegamento video con **Ramon Labanino**, Vicepresidente dell'ANEC (Ass. Naz. Economisti Cubani), dei 5 eroi cubani

**venerdi 18/12 ore 18.30**

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## Covid, Youth, Class Struggle / Strike against Distance Education

Rete nazionale Noi Restiamo / Opposizione Studentesca d'Alternativa

Noi Restiamo is a national organization of students and young workers

OSA (Alternative Student Opposition) is a national organization of middle school students

### **COVID, YOUTH, CLASS STRUGGLE: A REPORT ON THE ROUND TABLE OF 19TH NOVEMBER 2020**

More than ten speeches have articulated the round table of 19th November 2020, depicting the experiences of struggle and resistance which, from Cosenza to Turin, are animating the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. This meeting showed that, beyond the silence of the Media, there are still valuable instances of resistance to this crisis.

Speaker's interventions were focused on the condition of our generation, both as students struggling with an increasingly classist University, and as precarious and unemployed workers. ***In a world where we young people are mentioned only when it is convenient, either to treat us as consumers, or to single us out as the main spreader of contagion***, this time we have taken the floor: to sketch out the moment we are going through, to voice our widespread malaise, to identify who is responsible for the mismanagement of the health crisis, and to understand how to affirm our claims in the political agenda of the country, claims which were completely ignored so far.

The first step to build an organized opposition to those who are making the present unlivable – and who are stealing the future from us – is to define who is responsible for a pandemic which, with an average of 700 dead per day, is now out of control. The Italian ruling class is not only completely unprepared – despite having had more than six months to define a strategy – but it also has blood on its hands for not taking measures towards a real lockdown, for sending workers and students to get infected on overcrowded transport and insecure workplaces, for dismantling public health in favor of private health.

Young people are among the segments of the population most touched by this crisis: we lost even those menial, undocumented jobs which enabled us to make ends meet and to pay for our studies. We still have heavy costs to bear: the raising cost of living, rent, university tuition fees, but we were completely excluded even from the few crumbs of welfare that the government has granted to other segments of population.

However, in this round table we have not only talked about a generation under attack, but also about a generation which raises its head.

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*Faced with the second wave of this pandemic, the failures of an entire socio-economic model have come to light. The mainstream narrative of "we are all in this together" no longer holds, whilst the criminal responsibilities of the Confederation of Italian Industry and Italian Government are blatant*

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For our generation, 2020 will be a milestone year: the cracks that have opened in this system have shown the need for an alternative. We have seen rules, which looked like sacred and inviolable laws until a few months ago, crumble down under the weight of the contradictions generated by a development model which no longer holds. It is up to us to organize and structure a strong answer. From this round table, we have learnt that experiences of class struggle and collective thinking exist, but they need to be effectively put in communication in order to take back what we are entitled to: health, income, and a student support welfare which must be effective and homogeneous throughout the Country. We know very well that no one is willing to give up anything, therefore struggle is our only option.

## **STUDENT STRIKE AGAINST DISTANCE EDUCATION ON NOVEMBER 25TH**

As was to be expected, the way pandemic was handled has only aggravated the health crisis, and it had inevitably affected all sectors of society, first and foremost high schools, which were closed and are still in a pitiful condition, given the lack of structural interventions to make them safe.

### ***Closing schools and resuming distance education resulted in the loss of an indispensable social space, thus jeopardizing the right to education:***

the ongoing public education crisis is getting worse, as students are experiencing a sense of abandonment for not being guaranteed quality education, aimed at maintaining the relationship with their teachers, their peers, and with their schools.

Meanwhile, we have witnessed proclamations towards a brighter future ironically coming from the very ones who are responsible for this situation, and who have endorsed the political choices which have plunged us into this limbo: such proclamations came from Minister of Education Lucia Azzolina, from the Confederation of Italian Industry, and even from the CGIL union and its youth, the same people who claim to represent the rights of weak and marginalized people.

In this context, the student strike protesting Distance Education on November 25th (in conjunction with the national strike of health care, school and transport workers promoted by USB union) is the result of a political work we have been carrying out since June, featuring a 2-day assembly on 24-25 September and a national assembly on 10 October to plead for safe schools. We must remember that in-school education has a key emancipatory function for students, today more than ever.

Following the online student assembly on 21 November, which involved radical political youth organizations throughout Italy, the student strike featured agitations in the whole country, including the symbolic occupation of the abandoned Parini school in Rome. The occupation was aimed at proving that there are indeed spaces which could be used to guarantee us students in-class education, but what is lacking is the government's political will to do so. Our current government, like previous ones, is not willing to make structural investments in public school.

The student strike of 25 November was one of the stages of a political path in which we plead for a different school: a public school whose main goal is social inclusion, emancipation, a school which assumes its social function, with real investment and funding to safely go back to in-school education. ***Finally, we are aware that school is only one piece in the bigger picture of our society, and that funding cannot be solely destined to schools:*** all key sectors such as health care and public transport need funding, as they are essential services to deal with the pandemic, and further measures must be taken to guarantee an income to all those who are struggling in this crisis.





## Social Federation: a bet on the struggle and the future

Interview with Guido Lutrario, National Executive of USB

QUESTION – The Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) who joins the WFTU was founded on May 10th, 2010. It was born from the need to build a confederal alternative to CGIL, CISL and UIL and to project the conflictual trade unionism beyond the perimeters of the then grassroots syndicalism.

To the two "traditional" pillars of intervention in the public and private sectors, the USB has combined the positive experience of the Social Federation

(<https://federazionedelsociale.usb.it>).

The Social Federation is the result of the choices made at the last USB congress, which made it possible to give concrete expression to the "metropolitan trade unionism" and/or "social confederation" that expresses the needs of a large proportion of the popular classes:

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*the widespread social precariousness to which traditional forms of trade unionism have had difficulty in giving concrete form to stable representation*

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The Social Federation is joined by ASIA (Association of Tenants and Inhabitants), the Federation of Pensioners and SLANG (New Generation Workers' Union).

Can you retrace the steps that have led to that choice that has proved to be a more than fair bet so far?

ANSWER – The incubation of the project has been long because we have had to mature the need to welcome into our organisation new forms and methods of management with respect to the trade union tradition of which we are part. Those who have a discontinuous relationship with work are unable to organise themselves with the system of company representatives, delegates and all the tools typical of 20th century trade unionism. And that's not all. ***We had to develop the idea that the protection of work could come, for different sectors, more from a plan of struggle that takes place mainly outside the workplace than through the classic conflict in the places of activity.***

For an organisation made up entirely of workers and delegates accustomed to the trade union struggle in a company, whether it be a warehouse, a factory, an office, a hospital, a school, an airport or a shopping centre, imagining that the trade union struggle should take place in environments other than the workplace was not at all easy.

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*Two objective factors gave us a boost to accelerate: a less and less intense conflict in the traditional world of work and a clear estrangement of young people from union activity*

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In recent years Italy has been crossed by a long sleepiness of the social conflict and when the conflict manifested itself it was mainly on other lands than those of work. Also, the movements that have been there have been promoted by a strongly precarious and youthful social composition that has not been able to measure itself against the problem of its own living and working conditions. The bet of the Social Federation is precisely to intercept this world and bring it to unionisation, naturally of a new kind.

Q – In mid-June this year, during the States General of the Conte Government, you intervened as a member of the USB National Executive addressing the Premier Conte and asking him *“to listen to the cry of anger”* that came from the most vulnerable parts of Italy – in this specific case that of the two dead migrant workers' comrades and family members – *“because it explains how this country has become”*. You harshly criticized the executive's recipes because they were prisoners of a vision that *“led us to this situation”* in which large private companies were and continue to be the recipients of the government's positive action. In that speech, you reiterated the fact that at the centre of political action had to be workers' rights and public enterprise, starting with the development of public health care reduced to the bone by *“balancing the budget”*, together with a *“robust recovery of public intervention in the economy, starting from strategic sectors”*. Do you think that your

exhortations have been a dead letter since then or has the government tried in some way to rectify the course?

A – ***This government is completely succumbing to the choices that are decided in Brussels in the EU Commission*** and the adjustments it has made to the lines of action of past years have simply been the product of a crisis of such magnitude that they have been forced to rectify their *modus operandi*. They were forced to allocate funds to support workers and families simply because otherwise they would have been faced with an unmanageable situation, both from the point of view of public order and consumption. But at the centre of this government's attention is always support for big business, as shown by the determination to keep factories and all production activities open, which remains the real cause of the lack of contagion control and the second phase of the pandemic we are still experiencing. Nor is there a serious rethink in terms of public policy, starting with health. There have been no new recruits and the staff employed are only part-time or have even been recalled to retired doctors.

I think that the most evident sign of the failure of this government are the total closures carried out in some regions – I am thinking for example of Calabria and Abruzzo – not because there had been a particular surge in contagions but because of the rapid filling of the intensive care wards, so limited as to exhaust their capacity with a few dozen sick people.

**We asked this government to reintroduce the idea of planning public action** and to do a few simple things: hire staff in health, school and transport, support public research, reactivate the facilities decommissioned in recent years in public health (hospitals, territorial clinics, etc.) and strengthen the whole field of services. The decision to devote the bulk of resources to large private companies strongly conditions the actions of this government and also jeopardises the safeguarding of the most basic rights of citizenship.

Q – In October this year, the USB made public an organic platform on how to tackle the crisis and make the best use of available resources in which the issue of the Recovery Fund is tackled head-on by rejecting the logic at its root, which is the true nature of the EU. What measures in the document are suggested for those who are most affected by the social and health crisis situation?

A – First of all, ***we call for a ban on layoffs and the continuation of social shock absorbers for as long as the crisis lasts***. The government, again under the urgent pressure of Confindustria (the Italian employers' federation) wants to stop these measures as soon as the contagions are back below guard level; in reality, the end of the contagions will not correspond to the end of the crisis. Secondly, ***we are calling for a real income support measure***, more effective than citizenship income, and without those odious conditionalities that serve to blame the unemployed and force them to accept low-wage jobs. Thirdly, a new shock absorber that covers those sectors that do not have the redundancy fund, not even the derogating one, and that have been reached by a simple one-off emergency bonus but instead need lasting intervention.

This is as far as interventions aimed at responding to the emergency are concerned. ***On a structural level, on the other hand, the USB proposes the creation of a public entity like the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction used to be (it was Italian public holding company which played a pivotal role in the Italian economic miracle of the '50s-'60s; it was dissolved in 2002), a body that can act a public industrial policy*** that has not existed in our country for several decades, since the centre-left dismantled state industry, selling all strategic industries to private individuals. In transport, energy and telecommunications there is a need for a strong return to public initiative, supported by the development of our research which is an excellence. It is a pity, however, that our scientists emigrate abroad to find work.

Finally, an extraordinary Working Plan in the whole service sector and public administration. We have entire regions where the structures of municipalities are collapsing due to a lack of staff and services are also completely absent. In order to rehabilitate the territory, to make it safe, to operate the services or to open them (such as kindergarten or full-time schools in the south, for example) there is a need for a revival of employment in the public sector. In this way, we would greatly reduce unemployment and get the country moving again, responding to the needs of the territories and the population.

Q – At the end of October-early November, a wave of mobilizations hit the country, seeing the USB Social Federation as one of the protagonists of the squares with the watchwords "the crisis is paid for by the rich, no blackmail between health and income". Initiatives were held in Grosseto, Naples, Livorno, Catania, Cosenza, Bologna, Reggio Calabria, Rome, Turin, Milan, where the USB was calling for an effective lockdown for the protection of health and at the same time a series of real safeguards for those involved, through the taxation of large assets and the reduction of military spending. Who are the subjects that have been most mobilised and how is the Social Federation able to dialogue also with these "impoverished middle class", a phenomenon – apart from the pandemic context – in some ways similar to the "yellow vests" in France in recent years?

A – First of all, it must be said that the protest has taken on a mass connotation only in Naples, where there was a spontaneous wave of protests against Governor De Luca for his request for lockdown in the absence of economic measures to protect the population. Elsewhere, however, we have witnessed more mobilizations of the trade, traders and workers in more exposed sectors, such as tourism, catering, taxis, sports and entertainment, and in several cases also protests supported by employers' associations.

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*We felt the need to stay inside the protests even if they were carrying out contradictory slogans: you have to know how to stay inside the contradictions and be inside reality if you want to try to encourage change*

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Of course, we never gave up proposing our platform and working to ensure that the interests of the workers were not confused with those of the employers, but the immediate objective at

that time was not to clash with the companies, but to make sure that the government put in place the economic resources for those who could not go to work and for the sectors forced to close down. Of course, there are areas of the country where the informal economy and undeclared work prevail and there are not enough or no social shock absorbers, but we need measures that actually reach this segment of the population. However, the protests have imposed 4 different decrees on the government and a considerable number of billions that were not foreseen.

Q – On November 25th there was a national strike in four sectors: Healthcare, School, Transport and Nurseries. A courageous choice, in which apart from some sectors (logistics and workers of the gig economy, in particular), the class conflict between subordinates and collective action seems to be at physiologically low levels. It is expressly stated in the platform:

*“The 25th November strikes Health, School, Educational Services and Local Transport: investments, stable hiring and security to build the future.*

***Since the beginning of the pandemic, Healthcare, School, Educational Services and Local Public Transport, already disrupted by decades of cutbacks, closures and privatisation, have been functioning only thanks to the inhumane efforts of workers and women workers.***

*Since the beginning of the pandemic, no sign of a reversal of the trend has come from politics, administrations and companies. The pandemic is continuing to wear itself out, with the usual violent recipes for savings, job and service cuts, and precarious employment.*

***Since the beginning of the pandemic, no development plan has been set up, taking advantage of the exceptionality of the moment and the situation, to guarantee citizens and workers the basic constitutional rights: health, education, mobility, safety, work. Life, in short”.***

Can you make a provisional assessment?

A – The strike in our country is subject, in essential public services, to restrictions by law that many other European countries do not have. It must be proclaimed well in advance, it cannot be done concomitantly in contiguous sectors (for example the railways cannot strike with local or air transport), it can be done for only one day and never for several days, and so on. This has strongly undermined this instrument of struggle for decades now (the law limiting the right to strike has been in force since the early 1990s), so we must not look at the strike in services in Italy as something that can paralyse the country. For this to happen, it will require an exponential growth of conflictual trade unionism and a large protest movement that does not yet exist. Therefore, our strike did not have the ambition to stop the services, but to send out protest signals, to feed the outbreaks of resistance and to give voice to all those workers who are suffering very heavy conditions, because there is a lack of personnel, work shifts are exhausting and activities are carried out continuously running the risk of contagion. We built a live broadcast from squares all over Italy that we animated on the day of the strike and the response was encouraging: both from large cities and metropolitan areas such as Rome, Naples, Milan and Bologna and from smaller centres such as

Catanzaro, Pescara, Taranto, Trieste, etc. there were mobilizations of workers, a sign that the message circulated.

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*However, we are all aware that the game is not played today, but in the medium term, when the heavy and dramatic effects of the crisis will be felt violently: it will be then that the USB will have to be ready for the resumption of social conflict*

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# Contacts

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