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Italy - Dossier

The Prodi II Government, the Radical and Pacifist Left, and the War

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Although the centre-left government, formed on April 20, 2006 by Romano Prodi, decided to withdraw Italian troops from Iraq - a demand which was put forward by the anti-war movement, which was particularly strong under the preceding government of Silvio Berlusconi and which the centre-left had promised to carry out - it did not at all intend to withdraw Italy from the "war against terrorism" conducted by US imperialism in various parts of the world. Forced by Italian legislation to put to a vote the financing of military "missions abroad", the Prodi government enacted a decree which, while putting an end to its military presence in Iraq, increased the budget of the Italian forces engaged in the war in Afghanistan. It counted on taking advantage of the demobilization of the pacifist movement, a big majority of which was now counting on the newly elected government to carry out its demands, and on the support of the leaderships of the principal left parties who are part of the government, to begin to undermine, in the confusion of the situation, the legitimacy that had been acquired by the pacifist demands. To do this it could count on the support of the Berlusconi right, which was obviously favourable to the continuation of the war.

However this seemingly perfect mechanism seized up. The small radical Left - only a minority of the militants of the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) and of the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) - and the pacifists (part of the Greens) were capable of blocking it. First of all, some days before the vote, a significant pacifist assembly met in Rome on July 15 to demand an end to all the wars, "with no ifs or buts". The presence of senators of the radical Left at this assembly indicated a possible failure of the vote in the Senate, where the centre-left only has a majority of two... while several senators had announced their refusal to support the Italian military presence in Afghanistan. The media leapt at the possible governmental crisis and in so doing enabled those who were opposed to the war to make their position known on a mass scale. As a result the pacifist movement re-mobilized, which was reflected in the opinion polls which showed the growth of the aspiration to withdraw troops from Afghanistan: finally, it was 62% of those polled who came out against the financing of the "mission" in Afghanistan.

Although the vote in the Lower House on July 18 was almost unanimous - only 4 deputies voted against - the Prodi government appeared as having been victorious with the support of Berlusconi and therefore in continuity with the man that the electors had just rejected. Trying to repair the damage, the Prodi government decided to make the vote in the Senate on this decree a vote of confidence, in other words to resign if it did not have a majority. The radical and pacifist Left - which paradoxically has more weight in the Senate than in the Lower House - was subjected to strong pressure: to bring down a government that had been established only two months previously, which still enjoyed great legitimacy and which had not really begun to govern, to risk by so doing so to bring on new elections or the formation of a right-wing government, carried the risk of marginalizing those who did it, and especially of putting the brakes on the new rise in the mobilization of the anti-war movement. But to vote for war credits... So it was decided to vote, to take the government's representatives at their word - representatives who, panicked by the risk of the government falling, announced a "change of perspective for the mission" - and to allow Prodi six months more, because the financing of the "mission" will have to be put to the vote again in Parliament in December. But the vote of confidence was accompanied by virulent criticism of the choices that had been made up to then by the Prodi government, criticisms which were widely reported by the media.

The Prodi government therefore came out of the clash weakened, even though it managed to win time. The debate that was conducted by the radical and pacifist Left scored some points, because even though its representatives in the Senate voted for the motion of confidence... and the financing of the war in Afghanistan, they showed that even a small minority can stand up to the government's policy, something which gave fresh confidence in themselves to the militants and the movements. And it is that, more than the vote, which will count in the coming confrontations, which are already being prepared.

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We reproduce the main documents which enable us to better understand the fight that is being conducted by the Italian radical left.

[Draft Resolution on Afghanistan](#) - *Essere Comunisti and Sinistra Critica*

[In the Chamber of Deputies: four against all!](#) - *Salvatore Cannavo*

[A parliament of just "giving the green light" is not a normal parliament](#) - *Salvatore Cannavo*

[A Vote of Confidence with a Time Limit](#) - *Gigi Malabarba and 15 Senators*

[No Blank Cheque, Ours is a Clockwork "Yes"](#) - *Gigi Malabarba*