

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1285>



Italy

# The Watershed of June 9

- IV Online magazine - 2007 - IV390 - June 2007 -

Publication date: Monday 18 June 2007

---

**Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved**

---

**On April 15, during an assembly of a thousand activists in Rome, in the presence of many representatives of different social movements, Sinistra Critica (the Critical Left) took the decision to organize on June 9 a demonstration in Rome against the war, on the occasion of the visit of US President George Bush. The governmental Left – the majority of the leadership of the Party of Communist Refounding (PRC), the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI), the Greens, etc. - instead of joining this demonstration took a decision to hold on the same day a rally-cum-concert.**

[[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/confronto\\_2.jpg](https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/confronto_2.jpg)]

This is how the correspondent of the radio station RFI described the two initiatives: “‘Bush! Bush! Bush! Out!’ – ‘No Bush-No War!’”. Thousands of global justice activists and sympathizers of the far left, from all over Italy, shouted these slogans throughout the anti-Bush demonstration which started at Esedra Square, close to the Termini central station, and ended at Navone Square in the heart of the Eternal City, not far from the Square of the People where there took place, without much of a crowd present, a real musical happening in favour of peace, organized by the radical wing of the left parties who are in the government”. The two photographs which we reproduce here give a better idea than long speeches of the impact of the two initiatives.

For the Italian social movements and for the Left, a watershed clearly appeared on Saturday June 9, 2007. Several undeniable facts make it possible to affirm this. First of all, the large demonstration which went from Esedra Square to Navona Square; the figure of 12 000 demonstrators given out by the Prefecture of Police makes no sense, because in order to contradict it, it is enough just to know that when the head of the demonstration was in Venezia Square, the tail was only turning into Via Cavour, which means that there were between 80,000 and 100,000 demonstrators, if not more. And on the other hand the flop, in every sense of the term, of what took place in the Square of the People.

Then there were the confrontations with the police, whose scale was excessively inflated, well beyond their modest dimensions, whereas nobody wanted to remark the ability of the demonstration to defend itself and to continue as planned to Navona Square in spite of the clouds of teargas, the clashes and the "revolutionary aestheticism". From this day there emerge three fundamental aspects.

First of all, we succeeded in the objective that we fixed at the assembly of the Critical Left on April 15 in Rome, when we decided to build a social opposition and to do it in total opposition to the government. The demonstration really opened up a space of action for the movement and re-launched the process of mobilization against the war. There is a continuity in ideas and in on the ground with the mobilization of February 17 in Vicenza . [1] and it is not an accident that in the demonstration you could not fail to see the compact and active presence of the "No Dal Molin" committees. The dynamic of the movement was confirmed, even "excessively" by the massive presence of participants outside of the organized forces which had sponsored the demonstration and which made up the core of it. Their presence around the organised contingents was important, they were not afraid, and they gave confidence to the demonstration, to its platform, without even imagining or intending to try and link the two squares or to go from one to the other. It was a demonstration against the war, "with no 'ifs' and no 'buts'", so it was a demonstration against Prodi and against those who were so few to assemble in the Square of the People.

The Critical Left played an important part in this dynamic, just as it did at the time of the events of February 21, when it voted against the Prodi government, provoking the "Turigliatto case" [2] This choice, which seemed at the time to be isolated, contributed to reopening the debate, made it possible to build a polarization and thus to offer everyone a space for action, a space that was gradually occupied, leading to the success of the June 9 demonstration. It is

difficult to foresee how this space will be occupied in the future. For the moment we can only note that an energy has been awakened, after a year of torpor, and that choices will have to be made such as, for example, going back to Vicenza in order to block the construction of the base there. And that will have to be the first national initiative after June 9.

We then move on, obviously, to more political elements. First of all, it is the first time that the left opposition to the Prodi government has been visible. An opposition linked to a precise content - the war - very direct and which cannot be generalised, but in any event an opposition which, and it is no accident, was situated outside - if not against - the governmental Left. Precisely, the governmental Left! This element helps to counterbalance, even though it is still in an insufficient and limited way, the offensive of the Right, which has important repercussions in the front of the Centre-left.

[[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/sinsitra\\_critica\\_flags-2.jpg](https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/sinsitra_critica_flags-2.jpg)]

The reasons for the demonstration were, besides, absolutely confirmed at the end of the meeting between Prodi and Bush. We saw the full and complete confirmation of the alliance with the United States, the confirmation of the engagement in Afghanistan, Lebanon and in Kosovo, the reaffirmation of the continuity of the foreign policy conducted by Berlusconi and, as Prodi affirmed at the press conference, "a shared conception of the future destinies of the world". The government committed itself even more to the war and the immediate decision in favour of the US base in Vicenza represents the first concrete expression of this. On this terrain, the contradictions will continue to develop.

The third aspect is the relationship between the different lefts, the comparison between the two squares and the developments which result from this. On this terrain no ambiguity is possible. There was a united mass demonstration. And then there was a Square of the People without the people. An operation from on high in which, unfortunately, important organizations allowed themselves to be involved, in the first place the FIOM [3]. These organisations wanted to maintain a protest without causing any problems for the government. The bankruptcy of the Square of the People is the bankruptcy of the line of the "party of struggles and of government" and the more general bankruptcy of the position that came out of Venice congress concerning the Party of Communist Refounding (PRC) [4], a position which has reached the end of the road. There is no mediation possible between the struggles and the government, nor any possibility of building "bridges" between these two dynamics. It is this reality which is feeding the whole crisis of the PRC and the other parties to the left of the Democratic Party, who have chosen to come together in order to mask the state of weakness in which they find themselves.

The absence of the PRC from Navona Square demonstrates where this party has ended up. It has reached a point from which there is no longer any possible return. This is combined with a ruinous line and a blind and incapable leading group, which has led it into this dead-end, which it is now so difficult to get out of.

We cannot foresee what will come out of this 9 June, but it is certain that we have created the necessary conditions for a less fragmented course for the alternative Left, for the opposition Left. The networks, associations and organizations that represent this Left have started to define both what makes their unity and what contrasts there are - and whoever says that the project that unites them is that of a "small party against the PRC", has quite simply not understood anything: there is a social base to be developed (but the parties of the governmental left do not do any better). It is certain that if all that produced in return an effect on social questions, such as pensions or job insecurity for example, we would see a real modification of the relationship of forces between the movements and the government, between the movements and the institutions, in other words, in the society.

As far as we are concerned, this political year has been dense in events and successive key dates. We set up the Critical Left Association, then we determinedly turned ourselves towards the movement by proposing the Forum for Social Opposition, which we are re-launching. Something has appeared. And even, for the first time really in the June

9 demonstration, you could see the capacity of the Critical Left to provide organization and initiative, to present itself as a means of resisting the crisis of the PRC and the "radical" left in general. There is no doubt that this is the road on which we have to continue, with even greater determination and speed.

The first National Conference of the Critical Left, which we will hold after the summer, will represent an important moment in this process.

---

[1] On February 17 in Vicenza, tens of thousands of people demonstrated against the construction of a new US military base in the suburb of Dal Molin, which had been decided on by the centre-left government of Romano Prodi.

[2] Franco Turigliatto was expelled from the PRC for having voted in the Senate against the war in Afghanistan. A massive movement of solidarity against his expulsion developed in Italy. See the articles in *International Viewpoint* 387 and 388, March and April 2007.

[3] The FIOM, the strongest union in Italy, is the Federation of the Metal Industry of the General Confederation of Italian Labour (CGIL). Its leadership is more to the left than the CGIL's.

[4] The PRC held its Fifth Congress in Venice in March 2005. See Salvatore Cannavo, "The challenge of the anti-capitalist Left", *International Viewpoint* 366, April 2005.