

## Beyond Anti-Fascism



The CWO presents a (shortened) translation of reflections by a comrade of Battaglia Comunista on the anti-fascist demonstration in Rome on February 28. Nothing surprising, since we regularly translate our Italian comrades' thoughts. However, on this occasion the Rome demonstration took place on the same day as CWO comrades were at the anti-PEGIDA demonstration in Newcastle so its message is particularly apt. The anti-PEGIDA demonstration was organised under the banner of Newcastle Unites, a collection of Labour and social democratic organisations (such as Counterfire) in complete cooperation with the police. On this occasion the organisers worked hard to ensure that the demonstration was confined to a couple of hundred yards stroll and was about "fighting Islamophobia" and absolutely nothing else. They were largely successful and ensured it was a great day for capitalist democracy. Indeed the CWO leaflet[1] given out on the demonstration was the only one which linked the fight against racism and fascism to the wider fight against the system that produced it. And this is the point of the commentary. Anti-fascists are mainly living in the past. Their daft analogies with the 1930s miss the point. Nowadays capitalism does not need a distinct fascist force to defeat the working class. It has a perfectly good instrument to do this already. It is called parliamentary democracy. Alongside it the fascists play a useful role in taking up the mainstream "democratic" press agenda of hatred towards anyone of a different colour or religion or whatever. It's all grist to the mill of dividing workers. This game can

go on and on unless we take a conscious step which is not only “anti” this or that horror but is **for** the one programme that can free us from all of them – internationalist communism.

## **Thoughts on the Anti-fascist Demonstration of 28 February**

### **Anti-fascism is the only thing holding a rudderless movement together**

Plenty of partying in the streets. Lots of people of all ages and persuasions. It’s good that there’s so much enjoyment but we ask ourselves what is there to celebrate. On the one hand we have the devastating consequences of one of the worst economic crises ever seen both here and abroad ... On the other hand, as a direct consequence of the economic and social situation, we see the spread of the most poisonous racist and nationalist ideology within our own working class. The fascists of Salvini’s Lega Nord (Northern League), I Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy) and Casapound[2] take advantage of this to incite war between the worst-off, the downtrodden and exploited in favour of the well-off, the exploiters.

It’s absolutely right to oppose those who want to spread this ideological garbage, who seize on the social consequences of the crisis of the system not to overcome it, but, on the contrary to

defend it, undermining the unity of the one force that can overthrow it: the class unity of the exploited, regardless of national, language, gender, and any other differences.

Here is our first political point: the failure to highlight the part class plays in fascism and related movements (such as the Lega) means to misunderstand the role it plays, and its danger. Furthermore it seriously reveals a lack of understanding of the forces on the ground and consequently a failure to propose any policy to match the seriousness of the situation.

It’s no surprise that the only political issue raised on the march was antifascism: antifascism defined in the democratic sense, with references to the gold medal of the Resistance, to the partisan movement, with a noticeable pro-Stalinist nostalgia[3]. In the 1930’s it was no accident that antifascism was the battle cry of Soviet imperialism and the parties linked to it. In fact after the Russian

revolution of 1917, due to political encirclement and economic backwardness, from 1921 onwards it was state capitalism – not socialism – that developed – both cause and effect of the defeat of the revolutionary process and the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party. So this kind of anti-fascism, is the political expression of the counter-revolutionary process which swept through Russia, the country that had seen the proletarian revolution, and which fell like a waterfall on the Communist International and its parties. No longer did the Russian regime put forward the revolutionary alternative of communism, but rather the policy of the united front with reformist, even openly bourgeois organisations, with the aim of establishing democratic governments that were not hostile to the government in Moscow. The slogan of antifascism was ideal for this purpose.

In this light, it is clear that these political positions are a direct expression of the counter-revolution and opportunism. It is the same opportunism that still says the number one priority is to defend (bourgeois) democracy before fighting for socialism.

We Internationalists think differently. We believe that fascism and democracy are two sides of the same coin, Sure, there are certain differences in terms of the level of political freedom and legal organisation but both are still expressions of the class dictatorship of the bosses over the workers.

This analysis was not apparent in the demonstration.

*"Never with Salvini! Rome is mixed race and anti-fascist"* ... But where is the political aim? What is the perspective of our struggles? Is that all we have to say?

The "movement" lacks a broader perspective ... Instead of referring to its own proposals and demands, the fact that "the movement" does not have its own political programme and goals reduces it to being an opposition to something else: in this case the fascists. The "movement" is not for something but against something: the movement is only anti-fascist.

Yet historically the "antis" were the fascists not our class comrades. In the '20s, when proletarian uprisings threatened the establishment, the bourgeoisie organised their armed strength: gangs, organised around a confused ideology,

based only on hatred of the working class and the use of clubs; groups of thugs who later acquired more clearly defined politics, but were still anti-working class. Historically it is the fascists who are "anti". But "anti" what? Anticomunist! Since the communists are the only ones who question this system: from its economic and social foundations, its political institutions right up to its "cultural" aspects.

Today the fascists are first a practical problem and then a political problem. We can only fight them with the weapons of criticism and a revolutionary perspective. Only by opposing our revolutionary political project to their ultra-reactionary politics can we clarify and build an alternative, and at the same time put a stop to the spreading of so much ideological garbage amongst the masses.

The fascists will continue to exist so long as the capitalist social system does. They are useful to it and they help it to survive. Only by sweeping away capitalism and its barbarity can we get rid of all the ideological shit (racism, sexism, homophobia, nationalism) that those criminals spread among us.

The point is this.

Either we include each battle – from the struggles over jobs to the fight for housing, from those against prisons and the CIE[4] to battles over the environment, and also fascism – in the general fight against this system, for a world of free and equal people living in harmony with nature, for socialism as the only alternative to the barbarism of today, or we will not do that and pretend to believe in the illusion that capitalism can be improved and that a bit of shit can be wiped out even today.

Today more than ever we need to explain the need for socialism, a classless society with neither borders nor wars, neither prisons nor fascists and police. It is **only** from within this perspective that the fight against all manifestations of capitalist barbarism, from the political to the "physical" can be fought. It is right to oppose restrictions on our ability to spread our ideas: whether the restrictions are imposed by bourgeois-democrats or fascists does not matter. But

the antifascists are trying to confine us to fighting only one of the weapons of our class enemy. Knowing the enemy is vital in order to defeat him. The fascists

are not the real enemy, but the tool of the democratic capitalist class! And they should be treated as such.

Putting forward the possibility of revolution and the need for socialism is the task of revolutionaries, at all times and in all places. We encourage the revolutionary alternative and at the same time oppose fascist reaction, in whatever form, including the nationalist Lega variety. But in order to put this into practice the building of a class party, the bearer of the communist programme, is an urgent necessity. It has yet to be created, but we believe we already possess solid foundations for its construction.

JB

*Wednesday, 4 March, 2015*

[1] [leftcom.org](http://leftcom.org)

[2] Matteo **Salvini** is the new leader of the **Lega** Nord (Northern League) following the arrest of its founder Umberto Bossi for corrupt diversion of party funds to his own coffers. Previously the party directed its racism at Southern Italians but Salvini has now aligned it with the Front National in France in attacking migrants and the euro. This has led to gains at the expense of an increasingly fractured Fascist movement. One of the splits from the former Alleanza Nazionale (the National Alliance) is the **Fratelli d'Italia** (Brothers of Italy – despite the name their leader is female) which has 9 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. **Casapound** is a “social movement” (a traditional Italian fascist title) which started as a squat in Rome taking the US Fascist poet Ezra Pound’s name (they like his attacks on “usury” (i.e. his anti-semitism)). It has spread throughout Italy and become more violent and political. It plans to stand in the next elections

[3] It is often forgotten elsewhere that after the fall of Mussolini in 1943 Northern Italy was convulsed with an anti-fascist movement (the partisans) against both Mussolini and his Nazi masters. More people died as a result of this than the British Army lost in six years of war. Once the Italian Republic was installed they decided to honour not just individuals but cities and provinces with medals (gold, silver etc) to acknowledge the level of suffering they had gone

through and to build loyalty to the new democratic Republic. This is what is referred to here. The partisans were made up of both Stalinists and right wing political forces who were agreed on a common wartime alliance based around "antifascism" for the restoration of capitalist democracy.

[4] "Centres of identification and expulsion" of immigrants refused leave to stay. These are veritable prisons and are even worse than the inhuman institution at Yarl's Wood in the UK. There have been several prison riots in them.

Monday, March 9, 2015