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Gas, gas, gas, tovarishch Gazprom!

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

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In the tragic and bloody framework of the wars (both geopolitical wars and wars for the sake of war) for the strategic control of raw materials, which from the Middle East to Central Asia sees a clash of imperialist interests for the control of energy resources and of the various corridors needed to bring oil, gas and water out of the area, the stakes have been raised by Putin's (and Gazprom's) Russia on the very eve of Putin taking over the presidency of the G8 and Gazprom placing 49% of its juicy shares on the market. It is well known that in that part of the world, the various oligarchies (governmental or not, Islamic or not), the capitalist elites and national bourgeoisies can no longer do without the close link between their armies and the oil or gas pipelines: without the former, how can they protect the corridor? And without rights over the latter, how can they carve a role, even a small one, for themselves in the clash between imperialist powers?

But Gazprom does no favours for the ex-soviet republics who look westwards, Putin is re-taking control of military bases and corridors to the east and around the Caspian Sea and is resuscitat-

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ing the national-protectionist barbarousness of the golden share in Gazprom!

Something which certainly intimidates the European Union, an imperialist nonentity in the field of energy!

Gazprom knows that gas is increasingly being used in the production of electricity. It knows that with prices of gas being linked to oil, tariffs are shooting up, making waves on the stock exchanges, causing even FIAT to invest in methane engines, and in many countries (including Italy) pushing the demand for gas beyond GDP levels!

Ah yes... Italy.

The Italian energy authority is very clear about the future: after the liberalization of the gas market in 2003, it believes that it is necessary to overcome monopolist or oligopolist forms for the supply and stocking of gas at every level of the system, and “uncork” the gas Russia/Austria and the Algeria/Tunisia pipelines which both arrive in Italy under the control of SNAM Rete Gas. It is therefore necessary to build new gas pipelines, new processing plants (where natural gas is treated in liquid form) in order to increase supplies and lower prices (sic!). And launch Italy as the leading gas exporter in Europe. It is estimated that by 2010, 60% of energy production will be gas-fuelled in the latest generation of power stations. But where will Italy get the gas to export even to Northern Europe (even counting on gas deposits in the North Sea running out)? There is no shortage of projects for gas pipelines and processing plants to import gas even from the Caspian area (the Edison project for a pipeline linking Italy, Greece, Turkey and Azerbaijan), from Qatar (an offshore terminal near Rovigo) and from Algeria to Sardinia to Livorno.

There is no shortage either of the usual vultures taking advantage of the supposed energy emergency to re-launch nuclear energy as a possible alternative source of immediate energy, proposing the construction of new nuclear plants without even bothering to be credible. And there is even the prospect of a nuclear waste

dump, or something very similar, in an area which does not even have the minimum safety requirements. Where? In Piedmont, where at least it will provide a useful diversion from the tough struggle against the TAV (high-speed train links) which has all the hallmarks of a mass struggle.

And while Italian energy capitalists (from giants like ENI to the newly-privatized local authority energy companies) are aiming at pharaonic projects and making piles of profit and gains on the stock exchange, while Gazprom threatens to shut off supplies leaving half of Europe quaking in their boots, prices and tariffs are rising for Europe’s workers, new projects which will devastate the environment are being planned in order to join the network of corridors along which runs profit, surplus value and public financing to private individuals without there being any wealth or benefit to the communities affected, other than militarization and impoverishment. Just as the case is with water, privatization and capitalist exploitation of gas is yet another theft being carried out against the public good, yet another expropriation of a natural resource for the profit of the few and the exploitation of the many.

That’s capitalism, my dear! And the struggle to win back water, gas and all raw materials can only be an anti-capitalist struggle, a struggle which must be fought openly, a mass struggle, a struggle which cannot be delegated to institutions and local authorities. And it is inextricably linked to the awareness that the environment and health cannot be monetized, that they cannot be treated as goods with which capitalism can continue to rob.