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Press Release

Strasbourg, November 16th, 2011

HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY SYSTEMS INCREASE PUBLIC DEBT AND PUT A BRAKE ON GROWTH SIGNALS THAT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IS RETHINKING THE STRATEGY

Cicconi reveals that the real relationship between debt and GDP in Italy is 135%, partly due to high-speed rail

Uncertainty that Italy is capable of defining a valid railway transport policy that is an alternative to mega-projects

Upon invitation by MEP's **Sonia Alfano** and **Gianni Vattimo** (Group Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) a debate on the future of the **proposed new Turin – Lyon railway line** was held today in Strasbourg's European Parliament **in light of popular opposition to the project and the economic crisis**.

Notwithstanding an invitation, the Special Commissioner of the Turin – Lyon project, **Mario Virano**, did not attend. Nor did Italian European parliamentarians from the PD and PDL parties; once again avoiding a face-to-face debate.

Sonia Alfano passionately and lucidly defended the rights of the local population to debate their future, which today is threatened by the militarization imposed by the outgoing government and reaffirmed in the Stability Decree passed by the current parliament.

The economic, energy-related and environmental reasons for opposing the project were comprehensively illustrated by invited speakers Ivan Cicconi, Marco Ponti and Sergio Ulgiati.[1]

Ivan Cicconi explained the obfuscation regarding public debt and its connection to the financial structure and the contracts upon which the TAV in Italy is based. According to the author of the work: "Black Book on High-Speed [Transport]" [2], the debt generated by the realization of this initiative is hidden in the balance sheets of private companies that are underwritten by the State, resulting in a relationship between the debt and GDP estimated at 135% instead of the official 120%.

Marco Ponti effectively called into question the economic profitability of investing in the Turin – Lyon project given the reduction in freight and passenger travel on the existing line, and also considering the fact that, due to the lack of a financial plan for the entire project, its realization would involve uncertain and long time frames. He also affirmed that the economic benefits obtained by the users represents a fraction of

the total investment, resulting in very uncertain guarantees on the return on investment.

Sergio Ulgiati highlighted that scientific literature regarding high-speed transportation reveals contrasting perspectives on the real contribution such a transport approach has in reducing CO2 emissions. He also reinforced that global warming isn't the only problem we must face, but that high-speed rail has numerous other impacts on a local and global scale (the toxicity and disposal of the material excavated, the "cementification" and fragmentation of the territory, elevated energy costs, loss of biodiversity, etc.). Finally, he called for an analysis of the life cycle of the entire project to be conducted by a panel of international experts before proceeding.

In light of the debate and new causes for reflection provided, as well as the economic factor, Euro-parliamentarian **Oreste Rossi** (Group Europe Freedom and Democracy, elected in Italy on the Lega Nord list) admitted the need to reconsider the TAV and identify alternative approaches for better use of the investment estimated by the European Union.

European parliamentarian **Eva Lichtenberger** (Green Party), intervened underlining the disappointment of those who hoped for a serious review of the TEN-T (trans-European network) programme. What emerges – she affirmed – seems like "the decanting of a badly aged wine into a new bottle". The funding of the first three projects on the improbable list of large-scale initiatives would, over the next twenty years, drain the dilapidated EU coffers leaving no funds for logistic streamlining, decongestion of metropolitan networks and modal conversion. Moreover, Lichtenberger asked with what credibility Italy, on the verge of bankruptcy, was nonchalantly signing bilateral agreements to realize tunnels, bridges, etc.

In conclusion, **Gianni Vattimo** spoke of democracy denied, affirming the importance of leading the European Parliament to reconsider its choices, especially given the current economic and financial situation.

The **No TAV movement representative** asserted that twenty-two years of popular resistance is the best guarantee that the struggle won't stop until the desired results are obtained, notwithstanding the fact that the new Mario Monti government seems to be considering large projects as an important component for overcoming the crisis.

[1] A file with a synopsis of the speeches is available at: <http://www.notavtorino.org/documenti-02/dossier-strasburgo-16-11-11.htm>

[2] Cicconi's book: <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2011/09/11/il-libro-nero-dellalta-velocitain-anteprima-su-ilfattoquotidiano-it/156781/>



1989 - 2011, 22 years of popular resistance to the proposed new Turin – Lyon railway line
