

TARANTO. TALKING ABOUT RIGHTS IN THE “TAMBURI” NEIGHBOURHOOD

By Alessandro Leogrande

Erupted as a media, political and judicial case in the summer of 2012 and yet far from having been settled, the Ilva affair is an extremely interesting case when considering the state of human rights in Italy. Besides being a very important and crucial case concerning industrial processes and our development model, the long-term story of the construction, running and development of one of the largest and most important steelworks in Europe is also the story of major and repeated distortions of and derogations from the proper assessment of priorities concerning respect for fundamental human rights, and not just the right to health and the right to work.

The Ilva affair is clear and tragic evidence of the devastating effects produced by a system of social and economic relations where rules and practices concerning respect for and protection of the fundamental rights of citizens and future generations are considered unessential and superfluous, or even counterproductive.

The results of the “Sentieri” study on the mortality and diseases contracted by the inhabitants of Taranto and the nearby town of Statte, as a result of exposure to industrial pollution were presented in October 2012. The data relating to the 2003-2009 period are alarming: +14% all-cause mortality among men and +8% among women, compared to the mean value in Puglia. Among men, in particular: +14% for all malignancies, +14% for circulatory diseases, +17% for respiratory diseases, +33% for lung cancer and +419% for pleural mesotheliomas. Among women: +13% for all malignancies, +4% for circulatory diseases, +30% for lung cancer and +211% for pleural mesothelioma. In the case of children, there was a 20% rise in mortality in the first year of life compared to the mean rate in Puglia and a 30-50% increase in perinatal diseases occurring beyond the first year of life.

Moreover, the “Sentieri” report also states that: “The steel mill – especially the blast furnace, the coking and the sintering plants – is the chief emitter in the area for over 99% of the total and thus potentially accountable for benzopyrene-related effects”.

The stakes

The divide cutting Taranto in two is not the choice between health and work, as the media have been reporting for over a year. This is surely an appealing interpretation which is seemingly clear in its self-evident dichotomy. Yet, putting it in these terms means oversimplifying the matter. It is as if in Taranto (in Italy or in Europe) there were “last-of-the-Mohican” workers willing to develop any form of sarcoma, just to keep on founding cast iron. Or, on the opposite front, it is as if there were anti-industrialist fanatics who fail to take into account the social costs of the possible shutdown of Ilva, the largest steelworks in Europe which is still the largest industrial plant in the country, even larger than what remains of the Mirafiori plant. Now, of course, there are extremist positions on both sides.

However, the city is marked by another “variable-geometry divide” centred on a crucial question: under these conditions, is it possible to revamp *these* facilities? This is the dilemma that divides the public in various positions (and not necessarily two). And it is a dilemma we need to think about, if we want understand something about Taranto.

The Ilva affair is not merely an “environmental” dispute, nor a legal case. But rather an economic, social and political tangle that has its roots in the 20th century industrialization process and its failure and which, as it continues today, has become a test bed for future decisions: which ideas of democracy, participation in decision-making and industry can coexist in this part of Europe in the 21st century? *What* to produce, *how much* to produce, *how* to produce... and above all *who* can and should provide arguments in favour of such decisions?

However in order to discuss all this, we need to once again consider

the question on which everything depends: can those facilities be revamped?

So far, I have always believed they could, for at least two reasons. The first is that from the best tradition of the workers' movement we can recover the idea that the work we do not like should not be rejected from a Luddite viewpoint, but rather changed (and therefore liberated), by modifying labour relations and places. The woes of Taranto have been determined mostly by the uncritical acceptance not of steel, but rather of *that way* of producing steel, especially during the fifteen years under the management of the Riva family. In Germany, Austria, and South Korea steel is produced in a very different way, for example... The second - and I firmly believe it - is that if the Ilva plant were shut down today, the most likely ensuing scenario - aside from the job crisis that would open up as a chasm - is not clean-up, but rather the spectre of Bagnoli: a vast post-industrial wasteland, without clean-up, without jobs, without alternatives.

So, since this status quo is unacceptable, the question cannot be avoided: is it possible to convert the Ilva plant? Will the necessary works to modernise the plant be carried out? Will the ore stockyards and conveyor belts be covered? Will the batteries of the coking plant, the blast furnaces and steelworks be redone? Will this process (as called for in the Ilva decrees converted into law and the industrial-environmental plan which is gradually being drawn up) be put in place?

This is the actual test bed. If change proves to be impossible, then the city will be torn by its contrasts again, the argument that the plant cannot be revamped will prove to be true and everything will be caught up in a huge maelstrom. It is not said that this scenario is unrealistic. On the contrary: the economic crisis and the uncertainty on the steel market, the lack of a local and national ruling class worthy of the name and the strange limbo created by the political stalemate are all powerful indicators of a possible catastrophic scenario.

The city and its workers keep on living within the realm of the key question (is it possible to change the plant?). Paradoxically, they are the ones we talk about the least, i.e. the largest concentration

of workers in an increasingly deindustrialized Italy. This exclusion explains a great deal about our inability to look at ourselves in the mirror. Not just in Taranto, but throughout Italy: the exclusion of the workers' issue is a far-reaching process that has taken place over the past twenty years in Italy – a period as long as the Berlusconi era. Yet, if we observe the “Ilva workshop”, many things can be understood. The devastating pollution has been the product of devastating labour relations. Those, who like me, started to talk about the new workers hired by the privatized giant towards the end of the nineties, while concomitantly in the notorious Laf building the scandal of the setting up of a “forced confinement” department for the more reluctant among “senior” workers was brought to light (involving: on-the-job training contracts, impact with the facilities, excessive overtime, virulent de-unionization, repeated accidents, an astonishing number of deaths due to accidents, even higher than cancer deaths...) found themselves describing a plant on the verge of chaos, amid fumes and failure to perform maintenance, with a profoundly different generation of workers compared to the previous ones, regimented in a ultra-modern disciplinary “cage”.

Who are the young workers at Ilva (average age thirty, hired when they were more or less twenty)? What do they think of politics or trade unions? How do they live? Where do they live: in the city or the towns in the province? What do they dream of? What diseases do they get when they are taken ill? Why do they get pissed off when they get pissed off? Why don't they speak up? Why do they generally think that this job is better than others?

Every time these questions have not been asked, the huge glass bell jar surrounding the entire Ilva affair has fortified its walls. And this is not just a political or union-related issue. In a well-known reportage written in 1979, Walter Tobagi talked about “steelworker-sharecroppers” to describe this group of workers established within Italsider in Taranto: although they had not broken away from their rural backgrounds entirely, these workers had been employed in a production cycle imposed from above. The conditions had therefore been set for their future alienation. Nevertheless, that State-run

plant, despite the squandering, had produced workmen, a culture of work and related rights. It had also produced a very high rate of unionization: approximately 90% of staff.

Today only 40% of workers have a trade union card. Ilva is by and large a non-unionized plant, not only due to the mistakes and delays of trade unions, but above all because this is what the Riva management wanted: massively favouring recruitments in exchange for not joining the Union and therefore building a direct relationship between top management and individual employees. Even the group of “steelworker-sharecroppers” should be reviewed since, given the changed scenario, many steps backwards have been made.

Although it may seem a little *retro*, I would like to once again reiterate that pollution is only the external expression of relations and ways of working inside the plant. And in order to abate pollution, even these ways need to be abated. Will it be possible to do it?

States of exception

I discovered by chance what Alessandro Leccese, a healthcare officer during the years in which Italsider was constructed on the shores of the Ionian sea, wrote in June 1965. Mimmo Nume, chairman of the Association of Physicians of Taranto, gave me some pages from his diary (written in total solitude, in remote times, in the remote South, when the dream of State-run industrialization was dawning). Doctor Leccese passed away years ago, unheeded, but at the time he had understood everything. Not only the tragedy of environmental impact, but also the existence of a thick web shrouding it. This is what he wrote in his private diary: “Following the deterioration of the situation, when I intervened, in my capacity of Healthcare Officer, with an order addressed to the Manager of the Steelworks Centre and the Chairman of the Industrial Development area, there was a bedlam, since the latter, who, among other things, is provincial secretary of the Christian Democratic party, felt that his unquestionable sovereignty had been challenged. He thinks he is so powerful as to be able to influence even the decisions of the Prefect, as was the case at the time of the ‘notorious regime’, between the

Provincial Party Secretary and the Prefect. For him, protecting the city from severe environmental damage is not as important as protecting personal prestige and the interests of some politicians who believe they can decide the fate of our land at will, as if it were an African colony to be exploited.”

The foundations for the environmental disaster (and the concomitant local political devastation) had already been laid at the time. What we are dealing with today are only the long-term effects. And, at any rate, following the privatization of Italsider and the advent of the Riva management, the ‘African colony’ traits only increased further. Now, of course, in order to understand the unresolved health-employment issue and the silence throughout all these years, it is necessary to analyze – as many have done in the press over the past weeks – the plot hatched through the relations between politicians, institutions and company top management, to jot down on a piece of paper the names of those who have given in to pressure, blackmail and flattery and those who, instead, remained upright. Yet, I keep on thinking – perhaps bucking the trend – that it is even more useful to examine this new universe of industrial relations created by the Riva family within the plant. In my view, this has been the key mechanism of the state of exception in Taranto: a disciplinary “cage”, both archaic and highly modern, that has regimented an entire community of workers, by granting rewards to those who obeyed and inflicting punishments to those who dissented.

Since its privatization in 1995, Ilva, the largest Italian steelworks, was transformed in a regulatory and disciplinary “state of exception”. This is what emerges from the more interesting pages of the inquiry of the judiciary that in the past year and a half has scrutinized the Riva-system and has led to the requests for committal for trial.

From what we have learned, over the years, Ilva was not run by the top managers who officially held the top-ranking positions within the company, but rather by the members of a parallel structure, unknown to the majority, placed above them. A sort of pyramid of “trustees”, in its own way, efficient and “innervated” in the life of the plant, which had the task of achieving the highest profits, reducing production

costs, regimenting workers, rewarding obedient “middle-ranking managers”, burning polluting materials in furnaces, spilling slurry in the sea and failing to comply with the most basic environmental standards.

This sort of “shadow government” or “internal Gladio” as a trade unions official put it, is unprecedented, at least in this form, in the history of industrial relations in this country. And since it does not date back to the past few years, but rather was established as the backbone of the steelworks throughout the privatization process until the decision was taken to resort to the compulsory administration of the company, it deserves serious scrutiny.

The pollution of Taranto, as has been said time and again, is the external expression of the balance of power inside the plant: the disciplinary “cage” to reward “model workers” and punish and exclude the dissidents, the significant drop in trade union membership, the daily non-safety of workers... Today, the features of this disciplinary “cage”, aimed at militarizing a large plant in the 21st century, seem to emerge more clearly. The fact that at Ilva there were “trustees” was well known, or at any rate many had understood it, but what was not so obvious was the existence of a full-fledged system.

The parallel structure of “trustees” was a three-tier one: a first, basic one to control work in its utmost detail, its timing and regulation; an intermediate one, acting as a sort of link and a third one placed at the top, even above the plant top management.

Based on what you read in the ordinance, names unknown to the city of Taranto and the vast majority of staff members were – with the approval of the Riva family who had masterminded the system – the actual “viceroys” of the plant: Lanfranco Legnani, “shadow manger” of the plant; Alfredo Ceriani, manager of the entire hot working area, with the task of maximising production; Giovanni Raioli, manager of the ore stockyard area and the maritime facility area; Agostino Pastorino, manager of the cast iron area; and Enrico Bessone, in charge of maintenance.

The Riva family never intended to question its shadow-structure. On the contrary, they lubricated it well over the years, thus favouring

the total overturning of relations inside the plant. Running a huge plant taken over from the State through an occult structure would have made it possible, at least in their intentions, to relieve the actual company top management from responsibility (paid with production bonuses, in addition to their normal salary), attributing the adopted illegal behaviour to others and, above all, creating a hierarchy that was even more top-down, because it was not codified and its boundaries were uncertain. It goes without saying that an occult structure, conceived in this way, would have shirked (and did shirk) discussions with the other side, be it the workers, the unions of the entire city.

In addition to the environmental devastation, what is really disquieting is the setting up of this “shadow government”. This reminds me of 1971, when a network of internal espionage was discovered within Fiat. It was discovered that in twenty years, this network had produced over 300,000 “personal records” of workers within the group. This structure too, aimed at scientifically assuring control over staff, was occult and involved, in addition to the company’s top management, secret services, police officers and the carabinieri... Although such forms of control were not in place at Ilva, in some respects, something even worse was achieved, since this structure planned plant production entirely, in order to achieve the maximum profits and exploit the facilities without modernizing them.

And so the Ilva bottomless pit spills out once again into the extreme frontier of capitalism, importing in Italy and Europe, “Martian,” rules perhaps already in use in similar forms in the neo-colonial offshoots of the large industrial groups of the northern hemisphere in Asia or Africa.

Running an industrial-environmental exception, becoming in turn a disciplinary state of exception: this is the lesson of ultramodern capitalism that we can learn from Ilva. Like the pollution caused, the diseases and tumours, the “internal Gladio” should be studied in its utmost details in order to be better overturned. Ilva can survive, accomplishing the highly intricate task of converting its facilities, only if it expels the “slag” of these working ways and relations,

encysted in the dragon's skin for twenty years.

Politics behind the scenes

A failure and a bankruptcy have tainted the recent history of Taranto, making the city plunge into disruption from which for the time being no way out is in sight. First and foremost, the failure of the privatization of Italsider, the large steelworks, the major “sell-off” of 1994 from which the Riva model originates. Over the past two decades, Ilva has been an extraordinary “workshop” for post-modern employment. However, it is worth recalling (in times in which the ambiguous slogan “right and left are the same thing to me” prevails) that Taranto was one of the main “workshops” of the worst right-wing government in southern Italy during the same years in which the Riva model was put in place. Initially, with the victory by popular acclaim of televangelist-fascist-racist-and-colluded-with-the-mafia Giancarlo Cito; then later with the explosion of the worst financial crash in the history of our local governments (caused by the administration of Berlusconi's party, which followed Cito's administrations): a deficit of 900 million Euros, a bankruptcy from which the city has not recovered fully. These events did not occur seventy or eighty years ago, but rather over the past fifteen years. This political “workshop” of public disaster was hardly an island of folly separated from the rest of the world: on the one hand, it had strong ties with the top-ranking right-wing party officials for protection and exchange of favours, while on the other, its representatives grovelled, without lifting a figure, on the sidelines of the steelworks giant.

A brief digression. As Lorenzo Fanoli pointed out in his recent essay (*“Butter or cannons”. A debate on Ilva and the Public Prosecutor's Office in Taranto*, 28 March 2014, published in “Eco della città”) it is odd that when the Prosecutor's Office in Taranto decided to carry out investigations on the possible involvement of politicians, it limited itself - besides the top-ranking officials of the Province of Taranto - to the president of the Puglia Region, Nichi Vendola, and the mayor of the city, Ippazio Stefano, that is to say the only ones who

had passed an anti-dioxin law and a decision against the steelworks giant and were then stopped by the Berlusconi government or the Regional Administrative Court, without a single word being said about that government and the softer attitude adopted towards the Riva group, or about the political context which, more generally, had laid the foundations for the disastrous relations with the large plant. For the record, the Prosecutor's Office in Taranto had never conducted investigations to this regard before Vendola became governor and Stefano mayor. Let's just say that judicial activism towards politicians reached its peak only in more recent times...

However, going back to what I mentioned earlier, from a more general point of view, the two sides of the failure/bankruptcy that I was describing (Italian-style privatization on the one hand; political ruins of the Second Republic on the other) are hardly an isolated case, but rather the direct consequence of another failure: the implosion of the first republic and of extraordinary measures in the South. The Riva model and the Cito model are the disjointed and consubstantial response to the concomitant collapse of State-run businesses and the five-party government coalition. More deeply, they are the worst response that could have been given to the crisis of the South in the 20th century and the depletion of related incentive-based measures. The extraordinary measures in their early stages or the idea of setting up steelworks in a city of the South, such as Taranto, where there were other manufacturing industries too and which at the time – towards the end of the fifties – was faced with massive unemployment, were not at all wrong. Their spread has been fatal (especially given the local apathetic, incapable, lazy, murky and narrow-minded bourgeoisie and entrepreneurial class which surely could not be a valid alternative to State intervention). Their spread beyond any (even State-run) business rationale and the ensuing avalanche of debts has been fatal.

There are therefore two failures behind this environmental disaster and these deteriorated employment relations: the public one of the eighties and the private one of the nineties-noughties. The gloomy transition from one to the other is the 1992-94 two-year period. This

is also why Taranto has been for a long time a deformed mirror of the unresolved Italian crisis.

It will be important to remember this when dealing with the outcomes of the compulsory administration of the large plant. Of course, separating the fate of the plant and plant-city from that of the corporate top management under investigation for very grave offences and incapable, for the time being, of even implementing the preliminary measures included in the AIA (integrated environmental authorization), was absolutely necessary. Yet, from now onwards, it is important to bear in mind a few things.

a) We are walking along a very narrow ridge. On the one hand, we need to overcome the failed privatization. On the other, we need to avoid slipping back into the previous failure. The only way to achieve this is to devise (from a cultural, political and not only technical viewpoint) a new idea of State, of measures and public policy for the 21st century.

b) Compulsory administration will never be effective if it does not fall within the framework of a renewed industrial policy for the South and for Italy. It is not a question of the umpteenth, last-minute bail-out, but rather of reconsidering – in an extreme moment – what for twenty years has been neglected: the economic and industrial planning of an entire country (deindustrialized and in recession) within the framework of an increasingly complex European scenario.

c) Once again we need to break loose from the clutches of this system of mutual accusations. You cannot accuse those raising the dramatic environmental issue of favouring deindustrialization and unemployment. At the same time, you cannot accuse those who want to defend employment of polluting an entire province. We can break loose from this struggle between opposite extremisms (both revolving around the pre-modern myth that factory work cannot be changed) by calling for, demanding and implementing the radical conversion of facilities, a radical change in labour relations inside the plant and a radical change in the relationship between plant and city (not two separate, but rather two closely connected entities). However difficult to achieve this may be, for the time being there is

no other solution.

Taranto and the Land of Fire

The inquiry conducted by “Espresso” and published on 13th November 2013, which quoted the results of an in-depth study commissioned by the U.S. Navy to protect the health of the U.S. military stationed in Campania, caused a stir. The interview granted by the head of the Environmental Protection Agency of the Puglia Region, Giorgio Assennato, to the same weekly and published in the following issue also caused a stir. “Our law would not have allowed us to discover what the Americans did”, stated Assennato. “This is unacceptable. And this is not something abstract: look at what is going on in Taranto.”

There is an underlying paradox in the whole Campania affair. The results of the U.S. inquiry were known to environmentalist groups monitoring the Land of Fire since 2011. At the cost of US\$30 million (a sum that would make any epidemiological research carried out in Italy turn pale) the U.S. navy has cross-checked different reports written by experts and investigated food safety, especially the presence of toxic substances in the water used in the areas where “their boys” live, based on EPA (the U.S. environmental agency) parameters, certainly stricter than ours. The measures devised as a result, such as purifying the water provided by the water supply network for the entire military base using an independent system, have conveyed the image of a contaminated territory comparable to Middle-Eastern provinces. One might criticize the excessive alarmism used to disseminate this inquiry. However, it underscores the gap between the most advanced parameters in the world and health and environmental self-protection capabilities in Italy, especially in the South.

Once again, Assennato stresses that in the new integrated environmental authorization (which should set out the process for the conversion of the steelworks in Taranto), the assessment of the health damage carried out by the Puglia Region has been downplayed. Hence the acknowledgement: we cannot always wait

for the Marines to be sent over. Moreover, one of life's little ironies, when the Sixth Fleet left Gaeta in 2004, there were rumours that it might be transferred to Taranto. Later, those rumours proved to be groundless and the fleet was moved to Naples. However, if things had gone differently, Taranto and Ilva would have received a nice report from the U.S. Navy, and maybe the recent story of the steelworks would have had a different outcome.

In addition to underscoring once again that Naples and Taranto are the epicentre of the new southern issue, on the borderline between industrial crisis and post-industrial devastation, the affair brings to the fore something quite evident. As clarified by Assennato, shutting down Ilva would never, never mean clean-up. On the contrary it would produce a new Bagnoli: polluted, without jobs and without many tertiary-related prospects for the future. However, the environmentalization process needs to be monitored on the basis of health damage parameters, currently contemplated only in part in the decrees concerning Ilva and the Land of Fire. Perhaps, the solution might be to dust off the old Realacci-Bratti bill, which provides for the creation of an independent and third-party national environmental protection system, to avoid also resorting systematically to new decrees. Besides being divided on a regional basis, the present-day Regional environmental protection agencies run the risk of depending too heavily on the same Regions.

Not only is it necessary to put the Regional environmental protection agencies and Ispra (Higher Institute for Environmental Protection and Research) in a condition to perform their monitoring tasks independently, by enhancing their synergy and assessing the effects of the announced plant conversion on the territory, but a more far-reaching plan needs to be devised to involve universities and research centres in an ongoing and non-sporadic study of the consequences of this environmental disaster on men, women and children. As things stand today, the air, water and soil pollution "already" produced implies that the next generations – regardless of what will be done – will be faced with an increased incidence of cancer, with the link between dioxin and infertility (both female

and male) and the increased incidence of diseases that apparently are not related to pollution, but which medical studies claim may be ascribed to it: autism and schizophrenia. And this applies regardless of what is done with the plant.

There was a time, in Italy, when in the field of social medicine and epidemiology thorough analyses were carried out on production cycles, aimed not only at criticizing them but also at changing them under the control of workers who are more exposed to the risks. Giulio Maccacaro and Renzo Tomatis (persons forgotten too soon today) left a storehouse of writings to this regard challenging economic organization. In Taranto, as in Campania, similar initiatives have been hindered, although not all physicians have kept quiet and there were some, like Alessandro Leccese, the healthcare officer stationed in Taranto during the years in which Italsider was being constructed, who had understood early on that it was necessary to shed light.

What sort of State?

In 1920, Gaetano Salvemini wrote in “l’Unità”, the weekly he was editor-in-chief of, that the steel industry, owing to its size and complexity, could not be placed under the direct “control of workers” (these were the years of the short-lived season of works committees), could not be allowed to “die” as a result of one of the many crises and nor could it become a bottomless pit for banks and taxpayers. Under the circumstances, in times of steel industry protectionism, and not only of works committees, State intervention would have left the problems to be overcome intact and made the coffers of the privates running the companies swell. The only solution, wrote Salvemini, who was actually against major forms of State intervention, was to “nationalize”.

This brings back to my mind the old political controversy raised in the days when the Ilva affair seemed to reach the umpteenth peak, following the completion of investigations and the requests for committal for trial of the top-ranking officials of the Region too. And since the agony of Taranto (of which the Ilva crisis is a key, but not the sole part) is far too important to be left to the mere, albeit

important, action of the Prosecutor's Office, it will be necessary to ponder what Salvemini stated about a century ago.

Gad Lerner wrote in "La Repubblica" that Nichi Vendola's mistake (and here I am clearly talking about political mistakes, the proceedings, yet at a preliminary stage, will have their course) was to believe that the Region had the power to force the Riva family to accept a binding compromise in order to convert the facilities; that is to say, to believe that the Ilva management represented a form of capitalism with which you can negotiate, while all around a more radical protest was rising which by and large created a huge divide with the municipal, regional and national centre-left. To this regard, it is sufficient to acknowledge, among other things, the victory of the Five-star movement in the city at the last elections.

Lerner's observation is acute, yet there is an objection that can be raised. What should a rather isolated regional government have done, before August 2012, before 2011, when the national government had certainly not been hard on and unbending with the Riva Group (and it is quite surprising that the Prosecutor's Office overlooked any ministerial liability in the granting of the first integrated environmental authorization, the extremely soft one of 2011)? Call for the nationalization of the most important industrial plant in Puglia or try and adopt more stringent legislation?

The affair will be subjected to historical and political and not just court judgements (unless, one really believes that the latter should subsume the other two). The analysis should not focus only on the last two years in the city's economic and political life, but rather at least the past thirty years. However, there is yet another observation that can be made. Saying that the type of capitalism that has taken root on the shores of the Ionian sea, following privatization, cannot be reformed is one thing. Saying instead, that the plant overall cannot be converted and therefore needs to be shut down (i.e. quite the opposite of the possible remediation and clean-up process that has just been initiated) is quite another.

The future of the steel industry

Behind the Ilva affair, an intricate match is being played between Italy and Germany concerning the future of the steel industry in Europe.

A treatise by Emiliano Brancaccio and Salvatore Romeo, published in issue no. 3/2014 of “Limes”, *Steel plate*, takes stock of the situation.

In the divide between the key manufacturing countries in Europe, the differences between respective steel industries are self-evident. It is not true - the authors write - that in the coming years Europe will be invaded by Chinese low-cost steel manufactured without taking environmental norms into account. Figures suggest that over the past few years, “the Germans have succeeded in strengthening their presence on the domestic and on other EU markets, giving evidence of their extraordinary ability to penetrate markets, to the detriment of non-EU exporters and EU competitors”. This basically contradicts the argument that it is no longer cost-effective to produce steel in Europe. The issue is “how” to manufacture it: the German model has succeeded in blending competitiveness criteria, respect for the environment and job retention.

In Italy, instead, we are facing a system-wide crisis of which Ilva is the core. Converting the facilities of the steelworks in Taranto is not enough (in itself all uphill), a strategy is needed for the years following compulsory administration. In other words, what should we do with what remains of the key Italian production site in Europe, while other sites across the country are faced with a ravaging crisis?

The impression is that, given the lack of strategies, the conversion and clean-up processes run the risk of falling through. A plan for the city is surely need, in addition the decrees passed, but a general plan for industry and steel working is necessary in a country, like ours, which has witnessed the collapse of many of its traditional sectors.

The Ilva crisis is the mirror of that part of the entrepreneurial system that has failed to renew itself. This is why the future of the steelworks in Taranto can be organized only on the basis of specific

goals, within the framework of a European market that will keep on being increasingly competitive, if we want to abide by all the necessary environmental parameters.

The litmus test does not only consist in submitting the next industrial plan which should include the environmental plan too, but also its financial coverage. Sub-commissioner Ronchi has stated that 3 billion Euros are needed. The pathway seems uncertain. On the one hand, there is the trial, on the other hand negotiation of loans with banks. In the middle the capital increase request, since it is not entirely certain whether the approximately 2 billion Euros seized by the Prosecutor's office in Milan from the Riva family on charges of tax fraud may be used or not to convert the facilities. And here future prospects open up: who will be able to invest in Ilva under the circumstances, since it is highly unlikely that the Riva family will? The question pins down Italy as a whole, not only its government. Yet it should be recalled that in the heart of Europe, steel continues to be produced by respecting the environment and workers' rights, and that market shares are actually on the rise.

The real question hovering in the background of the Ilva crisis is once again: what form of public planning, public policy or mere governance are we willing to support concretely in the 21st century, without relapsing into the mistakes of 20th century State holdings? It is not just the fate of Taranto, in itself already highly complicated, that is at stake, but rather the possibility of keeping together what should always be guaranteed: the right to health and the right to work, for everyone.

In submitting the future works of the Integrated Environmental Authorization, sub-commissioner Edo Ronchi has announced radical works on the steel production cycle in order to abate pollution: "we will use direct reduced iron pellets and methane instead of carbon coke. Testing has already started at the steelworks and will be extended to the blast furnaces; we intend to manufacture two million tons of steel per year with this system". Two million tons out

of an overall production that should not exceed eight million tons per annum are a considerable share. If this will be assured at least for part of the production (even though, as Fanoli pointed out in his previously mentioned treatise, the gas supply conditions have not yet been established), besides, of course, the coverage of stockyards and other structural changes to the current production cycle, nobody will be able to say that the new Integrated Environmental Authorization is just a bluff: the hot working area would drastically reduce its impact. And the overheated climate in Taranto might be cooled.