

## ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH ALARM

### Warning to the people of Campania

The “Assise of the City of Naples and Southern Italy”, the Observatory on Environmental and Territorial policies and the Toxic Refuse Alarm Committee appeal to the people of Campania and the relevant authorities to become aware of the environmental and health disaster which is devastating what was once “Campania felix”.

Judicial proceedings, reports on the Eco-Mafia, studies by the World Health Organization, articles published by prestigious international scientific magazines and daily newspapers all reveal the truth about what has been happening since the end of the Seventies: millions of tons of toxic refuse keep on being discharged into our countryside, into irrigation wells, in quarries, into illegal dumps or even into the sea, not far from our coasts.

To cap it all, a “refuse emergency” has been added to the “environmental massacre”, as our ruling class is not able to manage their routine duties, to the point that central Government imposes a Commissioner with special powers, to manage the refuse crisis in Campania. And despite the fact that this commissioning should be “extraordinary” i.e. temporary, it becomes permanent, so creating the total paradox of a “permanent extraordinary commission”.

Thirteen years of commissioner management are clearly in contrast with the principles of the State founded on the law, as the State Council has stated repeatedly.

This pathological situation has allowed a multiplication of “deregulated spaces”, in which there is freedom of movement for a “social bloc” made up of an illicit business alliance between corrupt businessmen, crooked sectors of the public administration, of the political representatives and organized crime; this manages a thick net of financial interests, which have in common the management of dumps in quarries and in the open, and toxic and urban waste disposal.

One of the terrible consequences of this environmental disaster is the notable increase in tumor pathology and miscarriage due to congenital abnormality in our region.

In the last few years in Campania the increase in the incidence of tumoral diseases – documented by the tumor register - has been such as to alert the World Health Organization, as well as the oncologists of Naples’ “Istituto Pascale” and the most important national and international magazines, such as “Newsweek” and “L’Espresso”, and scientific journals like “Epidemiology and Prevention” and “The Lancet”.

In the past in Campania, as well as in the rest of Southern Italy, the incidence of tumors used to be lower than in Northern Italy; nowadays the gap is rapidly closing, and this is made even worse by the fact that our region is not highly

industrialized and that in Campania young people are a larger proportion of the population than in the North.

The general rate of tumoral diseases, in fact, has almost reached the national average, while for particular kinds of cancer such as lung, liver, bladder and pancreas cancer, once extremely rare, we can sadly boast that we have not only equalled the national rate but indeed overtaken it.

The Commission management has completely ignored this true emergency. The Plan for the management of the integrated waste cycle has completely betrayed European norms, disregarding the serious social, environmental and health situation in Campania.

Current legislation centres on waste recovery, with particular reference to re-use of the materials recovered by source separation, in accordance with the mandatory environmental protection obtained by reducing the residual waste amount to be disposed of.

In our region instead source separation on the one hand only amounts to a ridiculously low percentage, while on the other three big incinerators are planned, which, to be financially profitable, would need a bigger quantity of waste than the one that already invades our territory.

These plants are designed to incinerate an amount of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) that will not even be available in the future when source separation runs at the maximum, opening up the scenario of having to import refuse from other regions to be disposed of in Campania. The contradiction between the source separation principle, together with the material recovery imposed by the Law and the incineration system planned by the Commission clearly emerges.

The legislation lays down another fundamental principle: to utilize the “most refined technology” in refuse disposal in order to protect public health. Incinerators instead emit dioxin, known without doubt from 1997 to be carcinogenic for humans, as stated by the International Agency for Cancer Research, so that talking about a tolerability threshold is a contradiction in itself. Furthermore, a third of the refuse amount put into an incinerator, turns into toxic ashes, which are treated and dumped in special sites. The paradoxical consequence is that a system devised to dispose of ordinary refuse ends up producing dangerous waste.

Meanwhile seven RDF plants were built and put into operation, despite their not respecting the norms. As a result of this flagrant violation the judiciary intervened and blocked their functioning.

After careful source separation, these had been meant to produce biologically stabilized organic (Fos), inert material and RDF, so called “ecoballe”. These plants instead produced undifferentiated refuse, partly discarded in several dumps in Campania, so causing phreatic layer pollution and damaging vast areas of high environmental value; such refuse is now partly packed into false “ecoballe” of the same undifferentiated refuse – about five million tons of them – which, if incinerated, would produce another ecological disaster.

In order to confront this disaster, the “Assise” of Palazzo Marigliano, the Toxic Refuse Alarm Committee and the Observatory for Environmental and Territory policies consider it urgent and essential:

- 1) to temporarily forbid access to the territory of Campania to any kind of toxic refuse, until a satellite control system is ready to permanently monitor the territory, this being an essential measure to stop traffic in dangerous refuse;
- 2) that the territory poisoned by toxic substances and polluting dumps must be reclaimed;
- 3) to finally start a toxicological laboratory to monitor toxic environmental substances, especially dioxin, on humans;
- 4) that all the necessary measures must be taken to overcome as soon as possible the commission management of the waste emergency, bringing back into force the jurisdiction of democratically elected bodies;
- 5) that a new regional refuse plan must be written, centred on source separation and re-use, recycling and recovery of the materials – as European legislation makes provision for – planning in the last stage for a technological solution like bio-oxidation which are not based on high temperature and are totally respectful of public health;
- 6) that a plan must be written to locate areas suitable for the dumps, a plan which takes into consideration the morphological and hydrogeological characteristics, in observance of the environmental balance and restrictions on the modification of the landscape;
- 7) that should the responsible authorities remain idle, the Minister for the Environment must exercise power in their place, devising a new - although temporary - plan in Campania, which follows European Community norms;
- 8) that any kind of financial support from the State in favour of incinerators must be repealed. Today a part of the taxes we pay go in contributions for incinerators, as if they were a renewable source of energy, which of course they are not;
- 9) that the construction of the incinerator which is being built at Acerra must stop immediately;
- 10) that the false “ecoballe”, product of RDF plants must not be incinerated;
- 11) that the Regional Agency for Environmental Protection in Campania (ARPAC), which monitors, prevents, controls and protects the territory, must no longer be under the control of the Campania regional administration: it must become a body with a legal status, a local board, with technical, legal, financial and accounting independence, like all the other agencies (ARPA) in the country;
- 12) that local public administrations that have not reached the minimum percentage in source separation, according to the law, must be put under the control of the Commission authority;

13) that the Judiciary must assess and sanction responsibility for and negligence regarding criminal, civil, administrative and accounting matters, due to the Commission's mismanagement;

14) that all the concerned bodies and associations must promote action against FIBE and its affiliated companies, and against any other subcontracting company, directly or indirectly responsible for the huge environmental disaster which has taken place in Campania. Legal action, both in civil and criminal law, must be undertaken against those responsible for the disaster, in order to punish them. They must be sentenced to pay administrations and citizens damages, and pay the expenses needed to reclaim the territory and restore the phreatic layers which until now have been so highly polluted with such impunity;

15) that the Judicial Authority must sentence all the people responsible for the waste of European Funds in refuse mismanagement, in order for the resources to be recovered and spent on the plans they were meant for. FIBE and its affiliated companies must be sentenced to pay for all the necessary expenses and operations, should the population be forced to evacuate the polluted territory.

We appeal above all to all mothers in Campania, to students, their teachers and professors, to judges and journalists, to doctors and scientists, to technicians, peasants and workers, to honest politicians, to local authority employees and civil servants, and to all citizens, to become aware of the environmental disaster and for them to struggle to save the generations of the future.