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Italy

Health crisis continues in Italy, reactionaries on the offensive

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The Italian situation is characterized by the persistence of the pandemic (and its management by the government) and by the offensive of the employers' forces against the working classes on employment and wages to concretize the industrial restructuring projects of the "Recovery Plan".

On the pandemic, the balance sheet of the two governments (Conte and Draghi) of the last two years is totally negative, because the "red zones" were not set up in time, or lockdowns were abandoned too early and all productive activities were gradually put back into service to guarantee the recovery of profits, but also because the necessary measures have not been taken to restore health, school and transport, which had been largely destroyed by the budget cuts of previous years.

The government leads on "No Vax"

Now, the establishment and management of the "Green Pass" is being used by the government to try to offload individual responsibility to each of us for the disaster produced by its policies and allow the capitalists new means of blackmail against workers.

The rhetoric of the government and the media on "safety" is pure hypocrisy because due to precariousness, the uninterrupted increase in work rhythms and the suppression by the bosses of safety measures, workers are losing their lives, every day, in the workplace.

The leader of the "No Vax" movement is the government and its contradictory actions, with the impossibility for a million migrants of obtaining the vaccine, and the choice shared with other European governments to save the profits of Big Pharma by preventing the lifting of patents and therefore access to vaccines for the majority of the world's population. Meanwhile, almost all health and education personnel have been vaccinated and the percentage of the entire population who have already received the second dose is very high.

Reactionaries in the streets

In this situation, there must be no equivocation with regard to the "No Vax" demonstrations: they are demonstrations in which reactionary ideologies are expressed, defending false individual freedoms, while collective freedoms and a vision of solidarity of society are radically denied, including, therefore, individual rights and, first of all, the right to life; they are organized by far-right or directly fascist forces, with the more or less masked support of other right-wing forces; the participants come mainly from the social sectors of the small or middle bourgeoisie, in particular the trade and catering sector, characterized by a deep individualism. The presence of far-left forces deluding themselves about the benefits they could derive from these protests is quite marginal.

On the contrary, the main forces of the radical left are leading both a campaign to denounce government policies and a campaign to guarantee access to vaccines for all, including migrants; they are also actively participating in the European campaign "No profit on the pandemic" which calls for the lifting of patents on vaccines.

Struggles in the workplace

Let us come to our second point: on 30 June, the government ended the freeze on redundancies (which had not prevented a million people from losing their jobs), shamefully accepted by the leaderships of the major trade union federations, and we are witnessing a strengthening of the employers' offensive against labour: many companies have decided to close and relocate their production. Among them, GKN Florence – which employs more than 500 workers in car components and whose productions supply the Stellantis group (created from the merger of the PSA Group and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles.)

This company is owned by Melrose, a British investment fund that has decided to close it even though it is technologically advanced and is absolutely not in crisis. The workers, demonstrating an exceptionally high level of union consciousness, did not give in, demanded social guarantees and occupied the factory calling for the holding of a permanent general assembly; they demanded the reopening of the establishment – saying immediately that they were able to restart production – the rejection of any dismissals and the maintenance of all acquired rights. By confronting the government and the employers' organisation Confindustria, they are fighting for a genuine law against relocations and have drafted their own bill. They have been able to attract strong solidarity throughout Tuscany, and also at the national level. Their call, "Insorgiamo!" ("Let's rebel!") which takes up the slogan of the insurrection of the Florence Resistance, is addressed to all the workers of Italy: let us all rebel, to defend the rights of labour, to recover the rights they are taking away from us. This struggle has become a national political fact and on Saturday 18 September, it will experience a new decisive moment with the national demonstration in Florence.

The rank and file trade unions are preparing a national strike for 11 October on a platform of defence of employment, wages and social rights. The hoped-for victory at GKN and success on 11 October could make a positive change in the relationship of forces between the classes, in a situation which, overall, remains very difficult for the working classes.

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