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Italy

“Fascism is likely to return under the most innocent appearances”

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The succession of laws and declarations of Giorgia Meloni's government, five months after its formation, shows the political and moral abyss of the extreme right, its reactionary and racist projects and conceptions, its inhumanity and its irrepressible instinct to dominate the weakest in the conduct of government as well as its role as a servant of the bosses, with a conception of society based on class inequalities and exploitation.

The Italian far right acts with a certain tactical skill, so much so that some, even on the left, have not yet fully understood the dangers, because they interpret fascist phenomena from old representations of the past, forgetting what an intellectual like Umberto Eco had lucidly pointed out: "Fascism is likely to return under the most innocent appearances. Our duty is to unmask it, to point the finger at each of its new forms – every day in every part of the world." [1].

The brutality of anti-migrant measures

The most brutal behaviour of Meloni, Salvini and the Minister of the Interior Piantedosi was demonstrated in the tragedy of the migrants on the beach of Cutro in Calabria: they allowed, even wanted, the massacre of migrants to happen, they used it to further strengthen the measures against the migrants themselves and the rescue ships of NGOs; they blamed victims for the deaths of their children, abused survivors, denigrated the dead, and turned their backs on the grief and the legitimate demands of the victims' relatives. And as if that were not enough, a few days later, they participated in the unbridled birthday party of the leader of the League (Salvini).

Economic and anti-social measures

Added to this is a long list of economic and social measures: the cancellation of the so-called citizenship income that will starve hundreds of thousands of families, laws that will increasingly guarantee precarious work, a tax "reform" that reduces the progressive dimension of personal taxes, to the benefit of the rich. The aim is to achieve a flat tax, a reduction in corporate taxes and ultimately the cancellation of the tax used to finance public health. The government has withdrawn the crazy project of a bridge over the Strait of Messina, a seismic zone par excellence. It is, of course, participating in the race for imperialist rearmament. Finally, the parliamentary right rejected the European Certificate of Filiation, i.e. the European Union's proposal to guarantee the recognition of children's rights throughout the Union. It is clear that a strong mobilization against these government policies should have already been put in place by the unions. That did not happen.

The CGIL and its contradictions

The national congress of the CGIL, Italy's largest trade union (with over 5 million members) and a history of being a class-struggle union, could have been a good opportunity. To everyone's surprise, CGIL Secretary Landini invited Meloni to the congress, believing it necessary to listen to what the President of the Council of Ministers had to say and thus giving her a certain authority and credibility in the eyes of the workers. She vigorously defended her ultra-liberal programme, which gives the central role to the capitalist enterprise, the only one capable of producing the

country's wealth. Meloni acted skilfully, aware that the greatest danger to her neo-conservative project comes from the working class and its ability to engage in large-scale social struggles, as is currently the case in France and Britain.

At the end of the congress, Secretary Landini had to highlight the deep divergences between the positions of the CGIL and those of the government, and he proposed a strategy of social mobilization to defeat government policies. This is not the first time he has made these promises of struggle, without the capacity or the real will to build effective strikes and demonstrations, and not just symbolic actions.

In any case, we will soon have the opportunity to verify it. Indeed, the leadership of the CGIL seems to be unable or unwilling to understand the qualitative change in the political and institutional framework determined by the arrival of the extreme right in power. Meloni is not a right-wing bourgeois government like the others; It is something more and different, even if it works in the continuity of the liberal choices of the bourgeoisie while pushing them to the extreme and preparing an even stronger offensive against the workers' movement. We are therefore faced with a great and difficult contradiction between the objective and potential strength of a large trade union organization which, even in the most recent social mobilizations, has proved decisive in guaranteeing their mass dimension, and its political and trade union orientations which, subordinated to capitalist logics, have so far weakened the possibilities and availability for the widest possible mobilization. as would have been necessary.

Elly Schlein at the head of the PD: a false alternative

On the political front, all the attention of recent weeks has focused on the PD (Democratic Party) congress with the surprise election of the young Elly Schlein as party leader. Schlein defeated the traditional candidate of the apparatus, Bonaccini, president of the Emilia-Romagna region, who has a liberal orientation and is strongly linked to the business world. Bonaccini won the members' vote but was defeated in the second round on the broad public vote that includes the preferences of supporters.

The vote for Schlein, victorious especially in the big cities, expresses the demand of an electorate and a political sensibility for a more combative and more left-wing PD on the themes of civil rights as well as social rights. However, her victory can in no way be compared to what happened with Corbyn in the Labour Party. Schlein was Bonaccini's deputy in the government of the Emilia-Romagna region. Her success is now widely used by some media and by the same historical leaders of the PD to revive the role of a party presented as renewed and capable of leading the opposition to the government.

This operation to revitalize the PD creates a lot of hopes and even illusions among so-called leftists that will probably not materialize because, in a party that was born as a manager of the capitalist system, the room for manoeuvre of the secretary, beyond propaganda, is quite narrow. Schlein is certainly strong on the question of civil rights and on certain social issues, but she is very weak on the substantive economic issues and, of course, on the crucial question of the management of the capitalist system and the country's military alliances. She is unlikely to play a significant political role in the evolution of class confrontation in the workplaces. In other words, Schlein's PD will not be the one to build the alternative to the current social and political system.

Contradictory dynamics

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This context produces two partially contradictory political dynamics: on the one hand, it facilitates collaboration between the PD and Conte's M5S (Five Star Movement) and increases the possibilities of carrying out a unitary policy but, on the other hand, it accentuates the competition between the two parties to embody and be at the head of the opposition to the government.

For its part, the alternative left does not find itself in an easy situation either: the social context is very complicated and, despite a few positive social demonstrations, the reconstruction of strong movements of struggle remains somewhat uncertain. The radical left is therefore likely to have less political space, given the credibility and illusions of certain social sectors for the project of the new alliance between the PD, the M5S and the satellite party Sinistra Italiana (Italian Left).

A major national mobilization in support of the GKN factory, which has returned as a symbol of the struggle against capitalist relocations, is planned for Saturday, March 25 in Florence. Good news to boost morale and continue the fight!

March 2023

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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[1] Umberto Eco, *How to Spot a Fascist*, London, 2020.