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Pandemic in Italy

Towards social crisis in Italy

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The Italian health crisis, after three weeks of lockdown, is taking on even more dramatic aspects and, so far, there are no convincing signs of limitation of the epidemic: it has now affected [as of 29 March 2020] 80,000 people and claimed more than 10,000 victims. At least, these are the official figures. On all sides, including international scientific communities, such as Nextstrain, there is the hypothesis of much higher figures. In any case, the entire national health system is no longer able to guarantee adequate care for all patients and even less to keep the other services running: one million "normal" operations have been postponed.

"Hunger problem"

Not only is it evident that a series of measures - such as stopping unnecessary production - were taken late, but even today too many non-essential businesses continue to produce, endangering the lives of workers and promoting the spread of the epidemic. In Lombardy alone, 12,300 companies - which should be closed - have asked the Prefect (this is a provision provided for by the decree being implemented) to be able to continue production; this is possible, unless the latter gives the order to stop.

The condition of caregivers, forced to face the disaster without appropriate equipment or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), remains dramatic and they are paying a high price, with more than 6,000 infected and dozens dead. But other workers, employed in essential services, are also in a very difficult situation: those in supermarkets, for example, and also those who do not have suitable PPE and without any regular closures that would allow disinfection of their workplace.

If workers in closed enterprises suffer a sharp drop in wages, since they can only benefit from unemployment benefits, the condition of all those who work - or worked - in the informal economy, and who are now deprived of any income, is totally disastrous. In the South, where 13% of the population lives in families without employees, we are talking about 4 million people who are at risk of starving right now. So much so that requests for help from the Food Bank are exploding. Not to mention the hundreds of thousands of migrants, essential for raising and harvesting seasonal fruits and vegetables, piled up in shantytowns, earning a few euros a day for 12-14 hours of work, and for whom we demand regularization, in vain until now.

The government is implementing a series of measures to deal with the "hunger problem"; we are told of an emergency income for 10 million people but, for the moment, the measures in preparation are derisory and concern especially the deployment of the police and the army, to avoid revolts.

Europe: who will pay?

Then there are those at the top. There is the war of the Confindustria and the bosses to make workers pay for the entire crisis and there is the war between the different capitalisms within the European Union, a war which, through their political representatives, has triggered verbal conflicts so far unthinkable.

Italy is proposing joint action by all EU countries: it maintains that the crisis is not of a national nature but that it

comes from an exogenous element, the epidemic, which requires a unified response leaving aside the old unusable financial instruments and defining new ones. It proposes a bond issue ("European Corona Bonds"), that is to say a pooling of this new debt that all states should take responsibility for.

Holland and Germany firmly reject this proposal, on the contrary considering the use of the tool that constitutes the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), that is to say the supply of the famous financial credits to countries in difficulty , subject to the acceptance of the no less famous memoranda of blood and tears (see Greece).

What is obvious is how each of these brigands thinks they can take advantage of the misfortunes of others. Furthermore, even the solution proposed by the Italian government remains within the financial logic of debt of the capitalist system, so much so that a leader of the Democratic Party has proposed to pledge to those who subscribe to the new bonds - of course capitalists - the Palace of the Parliament and that of the government (and why not Pompeii or Venice)!

On the contrary, we continue to repeat that, to face the crisis, emergency monetary financing of fiscal deficit policies is needed.

30 March 2020

PS:

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