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Italy

# Berlusconi causes concern

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**The introduction of the euro has generated its first political crisis. Italy's foreign minister Renato Ruggiero, has resigned following anti-euro pronouncements by several ministers in the Berlusconi government.**

The populist leader of the reactionary Northern League, Umberto Bossi, minister for reforms and decentralization, had said: "I don't give a damn for the euro and I think the people don't give a damn either."

Saying he was "saddened" by these declarations, Ruggiero appealed to Berlusconi. The latter not only did not support him but obliged him to resign, saying publicly that he alone was in charge of Italy's foreign policy and that Ruggiero was only a "technocrat".

Former World Trade Organization director Ruggiero was seen as the only really "europhile" minister in the Berlusconi government. He had the support of the big Italian employers, in particular Fiat boss Agnelli. Economy minister Tremonti, who has said that the single currency is "a machine organized by previous governments", is for his part supported by the small and medium employers.

Since the resignation, a number of European leaders are expressing concern at the evolution of the Berlusconi government's European policy. Since coming to power Berlusconi has adopted an attitude which is in sharp contrast to a previous era when Italy was considered as the model pupil of European construction: withdrawal from the Airbus A400M military transport plane programme, the threat to block the introduction of a European arrest warrant, demands about the location of future specialized EU agencies.

Since Ruggiero's resignation, Berlusconi has made lots of declarations saying he is favourable to Europe, while championing Italian national interests. Writing in *Le Monde* he said that: "It is then normal that the Italian government wishes to ensure that... our fundamental economic interests are taken into account in an adequate fashion in the great undertaking of the elaboration of a constitution for Europe, exactly as other European countries, like France, do".

In the context of the single currency, each defends the interests of their own bourgeoisie, or fraction of the bourgeoisie, or their own political personnel. The crises on the horizon could present an opportunity for workers, inasmuch as they constitute a handicap for their adversaries.