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Italy

# Is there a fascist danger in Italy?

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**What's happening in Italy? This is the question that many are asking after the shocking images filmed in Rome, at the rally on Acca Larenzia street, on 7 January 2024, with hundreds of arms of Casa Pound activists outstretched for the Roman salute and the collective fascist cry “Present”!**

This commemoration, which has been recurring every year but has so far been circumscribed, today takes on a particularly negative meaning because it takes place in the context of many similar and converging events and in a very different political and institutional context, which is that of the Meloni government and the extreme right of Fratelli d'Italia [FdI] and Salvini's Lega. [\[1\]](#)

## The risk of a new fascism

Is there a fascist danger in Italy? If we stick to the 1930s, of course not; But if we understand that fascism can also manifest itself in new forms, such as deep authoritarian involutions, the question is relevant. The danger of authoritarian excesses is real and, so far, the social and political forces of the moderate left have underestimated the Meloni government, which they interpret as a “normal” right-wing executive. The mistake is not to consider the qualitative leap represented by the heirs of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), itself heir to fascism, who came to rule the country, and by Ignazio La Russa who, while displaying a bust of Mussolini in his office, occupies the second position of the state, that of President of the Senate.

The dangers are great because they are part of anti-democratic and reactionary processes that are sweeping through several European countries, produced by the contradictions of the capitalist system and decades of anti-popular neoliberal policies.

On the day she took office, Meloni made it very clear that her government would be the government of “God, Fatherland, Family and Business” and that the latter would enjoy maximum freedom of action.

## The poisonous cocktail of neoliberalism and the far right

This is why it has had no difficulty in continuing the work of the previous Draghi government in managing Brussels' neoliberal policies; today, the acceptance of the new European Stability Pact marks a complete return to austerity policies, total alignment with the choices of the United States and participation in the arms race. Alongside other Western powers, Meloni's government fully supports the Israeli government and the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza. It has also produced a series of economic measures for the benefit of big capital while defending tooth and nail tax evasion and the privileges of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, which constitutes its main electoral base.

At the same time, it has pursued a policy of persecution and criminalization of the weakest sectors of society (the poor, the migrant, the unemployed), encouraging divisions and opposition among workers, well aware that the greatest danger could come not from the weak institutional opposition of the PD (Democratic Party) and the M5S (Five Star Movement), incapable of being in touch with the social forces, but of the workers' movement. To do this,

Meloni had to rehabilitate all kinds of reactionary thinking, which has opened up a new space of action for the most extreme and violent forces of the right, increasingly covered and protected by the new political personnel who have arrived in government.

## **Destruction of the gains of the Resistance**

This government has a specific mission: to destroy what has been a veritable “civil religion” in Italy, that is to say, that democratic, anti-fascist and progressive consciousness that permeated the history of the country after the victory of the Resistance against fascism, nourished at the time by the workers' struggles constituting a fortress for democracy. Greatly weakened by the pressure of the defeats suffered by the workers' movement, this "civil religion" is still present in large sections of society. For the heirs of the MSI, a motley band of unlikely but menacing leaders, this democratic ideology must be destroyed and replaced by the revaluation of all reactionary ideologies, patriotic myths, the false sacredness of the family and the rewriting of history. It is an action that is being carried out step by step, but with extreme determination, which is expressed in propaganda, in the media, but also in work in schools through Minister Valditara, who intends to make a clean sweep of the past in search of total revenge. The final objective, embodied in the plans for institutional upheaval, is the total overthrow of the Constitution that emerged from the Resistance. The old partisan and intellectual Gastone Cottino, in his last testimony, evokes: “the establishment, in a more or less authoritarian way, of what Gramsci called a mass reactionary regime. However, this reference is the same as that of the right wing of government today. You can see it in the characters, in what they say, in their desire to radically change the Constitution, in the climate that is being created. A climate in which we are not obliged to remain silent, but we remain silent because we no longer have knowledge, we no longer understand things, we no longer grasp them, we no longer have a sense of history. And at the same time, we are indoctrinated.”

## **A dual strategy: institutionalization and links with fascist groups**

Giorgia Meloni and the staff she brought with her to the government didn't come out of nowhere; they are all people who have been trained in the MSI and its fascist ideology; Their appearance as quiet right-wing leaders is not new. Former MSI leaders also portrayed themselves as “fascists in suits and ties;” On the one hand, they sought institutional respectability, on the other hand, they maintained close relations with fascist thugs. Their history is intertwined with that of the terrible events of the time of the strategy of tension and the fascist massacres of the 1970s aimed at blocking the strength of the workers' movement.

Relations between the heirs of the MSI and the gangs that openly declare themselves to be fascists have never completely ceased. The latter now feel sure that they can act, that they are protected and that they can openly emerge from the sewers into which they have been pushed for decades by the workers' movement and its democratic momentum. This is why the gloomy commemoration of Acca Larenzia is a terrible warning for the future about how these forces could be used against workers' and social struggles, already weakened by the government's repressive laws.

## **The passivity of social democracy**

In this context, the calls of the opposition forces and the newspapers of the liberal bourgeoisie inviting Meloni and other ministers to make anti-fascist statements appear completely ridiculous. They have no possibility of acting as a

brake on the authoritarian design of the FdI and the Lega, which are engaged in a violent competition within the coalition to see who will make the most noise to win or defend the reactionary and/or right-wing electorate. It is equally ridiculous to propose a figure like Draghi and European neoliberal policies as an alternative to Meloni, when it is precisely the latter that have paved the way for the right. Finally, what is surprising is the passive and disoriented attitude of the intelligentsia, who had nevertheless played a key role in the past in terms of defending democracy and solidarity with the workers' movement.

The ultimate goal is the total overthrow of the Constitution. The plague – the differentiated autonomy of the League, which will lead to a total differentiation of wages and working conditions in the different regions, as will be the case for public health and schools – and cholera – the authoritarian presidentialism of the FdI – are linked and constitute a qualitative leap in the degeneration of bourgeois democracy itself that has been going on in Europe for some years. [[2\]](#)

## Against the “divide and rule” of fascist forces, unity and struggle of the working class

Against this government, against the fascist political forces that compose it and that manage the interests of the bosses and poison society, the only effective antidote is working for a mass social mobilization defending wages, pensions, jobs and social and political rights, to unite that social class that the capitalists and rulers want to divide and fragment.

This is the task of all the political and social forces of the left, especially the big trade union organizations, starting with the CGIL, the largest mass organization in the country with more than five million members.

However, this was not the path followed by their leadership, who for months pursued a policy of passively waiting for the government's action, when from day one they should have sounded the alarm to warn workers of the danger that awaited them.

In recent days, the “cries” against the law on differentiated autonomy have multiplied, with Landini (secretary of the CGIL) in the lead: “More gaps and inequalities, fewer rights for workers and pensioners.... We will oppose this with all the tools that democracy puts at our disposal, to prevent the government from dividing the country and jeopardizing its future.” The secretary of the CGIL, in an interview with the daily *La Repubblica*, lists all the misdeeds of the government, on social security contributions, employment contracts, inflation, employment and poverty, industrial policies and privatizations, peremptorily inviting the government to “stop”... but once again renouncing the idea of proposing a real and coherent plan of struggle.

These uncertainties manifested themselves in the National Assembly of the CGIL, which mainly discussed the possible choices of a referendum for the repeal of a series of anti-social and neoliberal laws, including those on precarious work, but postponed to another meeting the choice of a path for the mobilization of workers. This would be all the more necessary since it is only in a climate of social effervescence and struggle that it will be possible to win a possible referendum to repeal the law on differentiated autonomy, thus avoiding a social disaster unprecedented in the post-war period.

The wage problems of millions of workers, struggling with inflation that has been close to 20% for the past two years, are enormous. At the same time, the employment problems caused by the restructuring and relocation of companies, which are very disturbing, do not provoke public intervention on the part of the government to solve them. On the

contrary, it is reviving privatizations, starting with the post office, to make cash. The major industrial crises culminate in the steel group (Mittal) and in the cars sector, i.e. Stellantis and the large related industries involved, affecting hundreds of other plants. Some 300,000 workers and their families are affected.

The combative and militant struggle of a factory in Florence, GKN, led by a very determined factory collective against relocation and to open a new phase of public intervention by planning productive reconversions aimed at the green transition, could have been an opportunity for the union leaderships to link all the companies involved in the restructuring, going beyond management of the crisis on a case-by-case basis with the explicit objective of relaunching action related to workers' participation and control. That is not the choice that has been made.

## Building an alternative project to fascism

On the political level, the construction of an anti-fascist movement has so far been the prerogative of the forces of the radical left, the most militant trade union currents and minority intellectual sectors. There is much to be done to build a mass social and democratic mobilization to fight against the dangers that threaten the future of the subaltern classes.

In the words of the old departed partisan: "We must also look at the present. A true anti-fascism must extend its commitment to the realization of a society opposed to the one that the new fascism – in continuity with the old one – proposes to us: a society that promotes participation and not the cult of the leader, that places common interests at the centre and not private ones, that concentrates its efforts on health and education, which seeks equality and acceptable living conditions for all "without distinction as to sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social condition" (as required by Article 3 of the Constitution). An open and supportive society, capable of welcoming and rejecting anti-migrant policies, which are the racial frontier of the new millennium."

In other words, the only way to counter democratic involutions, social disasters and the fragmentation of the working class with real effectiveness and mass participation is the ability to combine the democratic battle with the social battle, wages and employment, within an alternative anti-capitalist project.

19 February 2024

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

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[1] This Roman street where the then MSI headquarters were located was the scene of an MSI demonstration in 1978 after the assassination of two activists by "red terrorists" and a third by a carabinieri. During the transition from the MSI to AN - National Alliance - this headquarters remained occupied by the most extremist wing of the fascist galaxy.

[2] 23 January 2024 was an inglorious day for the Republic and its Constitution: the far-right majority in the Senate approved in the first reading the infamous bill on differentiated autonomy, a direct attack on the 1948 Constitutional Charter, which had already been heavily manipulated in recent

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decades. The senators of the PD and M5S sang the national anthem and launched virulent attacks on the right, but it would also have been necessary to take a few arrows at the centre-left senators who, in 2001, amended Title V of the Constitution, thus opening the breach used today by the fascists and the Lega for the final assault on the democratic Constitution of the Resistance.