

Italy: An all-party government against the working class

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President Sergio Mattarella swore in Italy's new Prime Minister Mario Draghi and his cabinet on Saturday. In the record time of one-and-a-half weeks, the former head of the European Central Bank has put together a government that includes all parties of national importance, in addition to eight so-called experts or technocrats, making a total of 15 ministers.

Beppe Grillo's Five-Star-Movement (M5S), Matteo Salvini's far-right Lega, former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the social democratic Democrats (PD) and their offshoots Liberi e Uguali and Italia Viva, which had been bitterly at loggerheads in recent years, are now united at the cabinet table.

The only exception is Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia. The party, which stands in the tradition of Benito Mussolini's fascist movement, now becomes the leading Italian opposition party. It had won only 4.4 percent of the vote in the last general election in 2018 but was already at 17 percent in the polls before the recent government crisis.

What brings the quarrelling parties together is their hostility to the working class. Italy is in a deep economic crisis and on the verge of a social explosion. The country's economic output has slumped by 9 percent in the past year, public debt has reached a new record of 160 percent of GDP, unemployment and poverty are on the rise and the coronavirus pandemic has killed over 93,000 people.

Under these conditions, all parties are uniting behind a head of government who embodies the interests of finance capital like no other. As head of the European Central Bank (2011–2019), Draghi was responsible for policies that flooded the financial markets with trillions of euros while decimating the living standards of the working class in Greece, Spain, Italy and other countries through austerity dictates.

Draghi's main task as head of government is now to "modernise" the Italian economy and administration—i.e., to grind down all the social rights, achievements and securities that his predecessors have not yet destroyed. The devastating consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and the €209 billion that the European Union has promised Italy as Coronavirus Aid serve as leverage.

The previous government of Giuseppe Conte had broken down over the dispute about these funds. Draghi now has 60 days to present an investment programme to the EU so that they can be disbursed. He has largely given himself a free hand to do so. He negotiated with the parties individually behind closed doors without informing the public of the outcome, appointing the ministers, including those from the parties, himself. According to media reports, party headquarters remained in the dark about Draghi's list of ministers until the very end. He filled key portfolios with non-party confidants from the business community.

For example, Daniele Franco, the director-general of the Italian Central Bank, will be the new finance minister. As chief accountant at the Ministry of Finance, Franco had ensured budgetary discipline from 2013 to 2018. At the head of a new "super-ministry for ecological change," which Draghi created at the request of the M5S, is the physicist Roberto Cingolani, who was previously head of the technological innovation department at the Italian aerospace group Leonardo. And the Ministry of Innovation went to former Vodafone boss Vittorio Colao.

Draghi filled the Justice Ministry with the former president of the Constitutional Court, Marta Cartabia, who is supposed to speed up the Italian justice system. The non-party Luciana Lamorgese, a former top official and prefect of several Italian provinces who already

held this post in the last government, remains interior minister.

Several other former ministers also remain in office. Roberto Speranza (Liberi e Uguali), for example, under whose responsibility 2.7 million Italians were infected with coronavirus, continues to lead the Health Ministry. Lorenzo Guerini (PD) remains defence minister and Luigi Di Maio (M5S) foreign minister.

Di Maio's retention in office is seen as a concession to M5S, which accounts for almost a third of MPs. The party had won the 2018 parliamentary election with a campaign against the political elites embodied by Draghi. In the meantime, however, it is only running at 15 percent in the polls. It only agreed to participate in government last Thursday in a membership referendum after internal disputes.

Forza Italia, which sat in opposition for 10 years, fills three ministerial posts in the new cabinet. An important role falls to Renato Brunetta, who is responsible for public administration and is to thoroughly restructure it by cutting jobs. He already held this post under Silvio Berlusconi.

Draghi's arrival in government has been welcomed by European governments. German Chancellor Angela Merkel wrote, "Italy and Germany are working together for a strong, united Europe and for multilateralism that offers a better future for our youth." France's leader Emmanuel Macron said on Twitter that France and Italy were now working together to build a stronger and more united Europe.

In Italy, it was mainly the supposedly left-wing parties that cheered. PD leader Nicola Zingaretti wrote on Facebook that his party supported the government "with loyalty and conviction."

That the PD is forming a joint government with the far-right and hysterically xenophobic Lega and the gangster Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia marks a new stage in the decline of this party, which emerged from the Stalinist Communist Party 30 years ago. It shows that there is no political line on the right that it will not cross.

The anti-working class policies of the Draghi government will inevitably lead to a further sharpening of social antagonisms. Given the right-wing policies of the PD and its pseudo-left satellites, there is a danger that right-wing demagogues and fascists will profit from the growing despair. Lega and Fratelli d'Italia are

already at 40 percent in the polls.

This danger can only be countered by building a new party that mobilises the working class for a socialist programme and unites it internationally—a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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