

Fired Stellantis worker in Cassino, Italy: “The need to unite goes beyond national borders”

Marc Wells
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Stellantis recently announced its financial performance for 2023, with net revenues of €189.5 billion, up 6 percent compared to 2022, and a net profit up 11 percent to €18.6 billion. CEO Carlos Tavares celebrated a whopping 56 percent increase in compensation, reaching \$40 million.

The company’s 2023 financial report released two weeks ago boasted a “strong balance sheet, with industrial available liquidity at €61.1 billion.” Enriching its big investors even further, the company announced a share buyback program for 2024 of €3 billion. Tavares’ pay rise parallels an increase of 53 percent in cash returned to stockholders through dividends and buybacks for a total of €6.6 billion in 2023.

Against this backdrop, Tavares is proceeding with a restructuring plan that seeks to transition to electric vehicles (EVs) while boosting profits, translating into a disastrous campaign of mass layoffs that is affecting every country where Stellantis operates. Italy’s Mirafiori and Pomigliano d’Arco plants are in the crosshairs, while the Maserati lines are being ended and firings have begun, despite denials by Tavares in an attempt to maintain damage control.

Workers around the world know the threat is real. In the US, Stellantis has shut down the third shift at its Detroit Assembly Complex-Mack plant, with 2,455 layoffs. Hundreds of workers have also been laid off at the Toledo Jeep assembly complex in Ohio, while France’s Stellantis Mulhouse plant is set to slash 600 jobs.

In Italy, Stellantis has begun its hatchet campaign by eliminating those workers who are more militant and expose the complicity of the trade union bureaucracies that attempt to keep a lid on workers’ anger.

The WSWs spoke to Delio Fantasia, an autoworker at the Cassino plant in the southern part of Lazio, who was fired by Stellantis at the beginning of February. Production in Cassino was 48,800 units (-11.3 percent) last year. It is the plant with the most significant decline compared to 2022. The factory currently produces the new Maserati Grecale with 17,242 units, equal to more than one third of production, as well as two Alfa Romeos, Stelvio and Giulia.

WSWS: Can you tell us how and why you were fired?

Delio Fantasia: I am 58 years old, I have been working at the Cassino factory for 36 years, first Fiat, then FCA [Fiat Chrysler

Automotive], now Stellantis, so I have gone through all the phases from [CEO and then President] Cesare Romiti, subsequently [President] Paolo Fresco, then [Sergio] Marchionne, whom American workers know well, and today Tavares.

On February 7th I received the dismissal letter. This dismissal letter precedes another one received by Francesca Felice, a worker at SEVEL in Atessa [in the Abruzzo region]. They ordered me to go to work in Atessa, and I posed a legitimate impediment linked to subjective factors, as I am geographically displaced [Atessa is 80 miles from home]. Technically, according to them, I would have posed an impediment to my transfer. Obviously, this is a pretext and they would have taken me out in one way or another: punish one to educate a hundred.

WSWS: Why did Stellantis want to take you out?

DF: In 36 years of work, I have never had disciplinary action, I have never stolen, I have never killed, I have never cheated, there has been no poor performance. But in this particular moment Stellantis had to send a clear message to all the workers of those few factories that remain, namely that Francesca and I must leave because at this moment a great game is being played, that of incentives on EVs. But the game being played internally is on how to manage the structural redundancies that will have to be addressed between now and the end of 2024.

First, Stellantis wants to continue to demonstrate that it does not fire anyone, that it is “capitalism with a human face,” that it has a heart, and therefore it must manage this through the media, this style that Fiat has always had: a corporation that cares about so-called human resources. But the 850 structural redundancies in Cassino must be managed and obviously these things are not talked about openly.

And they are managed unilaterally, therefore without any confrontation, in an arbitrary way. And to do this we need to get some militants out of the way and teach 100 others how to behave if they get in the way. 2024 will be rough for all the factories of the Stellantis group, including Pomigliano, which today seems to be working at full speed, but we know that the Panda has moved to Serbia and therefore Pomigliano will also be short-lived. Today there are these human resources that must be disposed of in all factories and on this we need the utmost

silence, the utmost reverential dedication towards the bosses and there is no room for conflict within the factories.

That's why I got kicked out. On the SEVEL in Atessa we'll soon have the same problems, in Pomigliano there will be from June onwards, because Panda will be discontinued. Melfi is already paying first with a redundancy crisis.

Fiat in Cassino established itself and now the economy revolves around Fiat-FCA-Stellantis. It mortgaged the entire territory, it was an invasive industrialization that inhibited any other possibility of diversified development: agriculture, the tertiary sector, commerce, chemistry and so on. There is a political responsibility. The entire factory and the entire industrial heritage of Cassino was built with the money of the Cassa del Mezzogiorno, that is, with our money.

WSWS: What do you mean by political responsibility?

DF: The parties present in parliament are bourgeois bodies, we have no political support from them, we point to them as responsible for this invasive industry that has inhibited everything else. If Fiat wants to leave it must leave the swag where it is, it cannot do what it is doing, sell the factory piece by piece to third parties. The factory is ours.

There must be a reconversion of the social and public name of the industry, a nationalization, as for public health and education. There is no political force in Italy that can act as a political support for an initiative of this kind. This eventuality cannot possibly arise within the current national parliamentary political forces.

WSWS: How do you explain the role of unions?

DF: In the 90s the Base Committees (COBAS) exploded in terms of approval. The development is attributed to the 1992-93 inter-confederal trade union agreements on the abolition of the *Scala Mobile* [a Cost-of-Living Adjustment index] and a series of measures that repealed or worsened the Labor Statute. This caused an implosion in the confederal unions, rightly seen by workers as responsible for these defeats, and dozens of grassroots trade union organizations were born, but disunion developed within a fabric that was initially very unitary.

In 1992 after only four years of work, I was a kid, I joined COBAS then FLMU, in which I still play a role today, which then also subsequently had a period of crisis and was divided into many microorganisms.

In those years, the paradigm of "*concertation*" [cooperation] for overcoming social conflicts in the workplace developed in the auto industry. This meant co-management, that is, bosses and unions came together to overcome what they defined as critical issues within the workplace. This was immediately perceived as a deleterious fact by all workers. First of all, this was requested by the national political ruling class, it was not a request that came from below. Then, co-management translated into unions that were included in the boards of directors of private supplementary pension funds, and in this way they became managers of large-scale international finance.

WSWS: What will happen to your case? What strategy do

you plan?

DF: After about March 15 we will file an appeal. After 36 years of building cars, the speciousness against the historical context is so evident, so clear, that it is difficult for any judge, even the most reactionary, to fail to take it into account.

I also think, however, that the judiciary should not be the one to regulate social conflicts within the company. We cannot delegate to the judiciary. The ideal would have been for the factory to stop completely after my dismissal until I was reinstated in the factory. But delegating everything to the judiciary, considering the orientation that the judiciary has taken over the last 30 years, becomes a danger for workers in general.

WSWS: What feedback have you received from your coworkers?

DF: We set up demonstrations, I had maximum solidarity from all 2,700 Cassino workers. On March 8th we will go to the gates of the SEVEL plant in Atessa, March 8th is Women's Day and we also want to link it to Francesca Felice's dismissal, and an important delegation of workers from Cassino will be there with the intent to network between the various Stellantis factories because we can't do it alone and right now it's important.

WSWS: What would you like to say to your brothers and sisters in the auto industry around the world?

DF: The first appeal is to create basic bodies for the self-determination or rather self-organization of workers which are independent of the unions, recognized as such by the bourgeois state. The appeal is to self-organize independently of the existing trade unions, because they are colluding [with bosses], collaborationist, very often even created by the employers.

Secondly, protect the avant-gardes as much as possible because they are very precious not only in factories but also in all workplaces, in schools, in healthcare, in social security, in transport, in the construction field.

Thirdly, it is necessary to focus on the internationality of the struggles, as the workers' reasons and the need to unite through networks goes beyond national borders.



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