

Stellantis job cuts in Italy spreading to other employers

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As additional Italian Stellantis plants are being added to the list of those where thousands of workers are being offered “voluntary incentivized exits,” or glorified layoff packages, the extent of the jobs massacre is quickly expanding to other sectors and related industries.

As of Friday, the latest was at VM Motori, a subsidiary of Stellantis that manufactures diesel engines. VM let 30 additional workers go at its plant in Cento, in northern Italy, following 300 redundancies last December. In a few years, the VM Cento plant alone has lost 60 percent of its workforce, dropping from 1,000 to only 400 workers left on the job.

The damage is not limited to Stellantis. A number of related industries are suffering sharp job losses as a ripple effect.

At the Stellantis Cassino plant, where 870 job cuts were recently announced, firms which contract with the company have announced their own layoffs, including 25 layoffs at a security contractor, 35 at Atlas, 35 at Iscot Italia, and about 50 layoffs at the plant’s food dispensary. There are also 33 layoffs at De Vizia, which provides janitorial services, as that company’s contract has been terminated and tasks will be internalized, i.e., deferred to the remaining workers.

The number of job losses in all related industries in the small area of Cassino is an estimated 1,500, a devastating blow to a community that has been suffering for decades from intense exploitation. By that proportion, the recent Stellantis layoffs across Italy will involve as many as 8,000 families when related industries are included.

Anger and opposition among workers is growing in response, including strike and protest actions planned for the first and second week of April. The trade union confederations CISL and UIL have signed off on the job cuts, while CGIL is turning to the fascist government of Giorgia Meloni to control the situation, if necessary by force.

It is significant that hopeless appeals by a number of trade unions, including some of the so-called “base” (i.e., nominally “grassroots”) unions, are being directed toward

state institutions, politicians and even local lobbyists who defend the privileges of the capitalist class and are primarily responsible for the attacks on workers.

Italian Stellantis worker: “The struggle of the exploited and the marginalized must be carried out internationally”

The WSWS recently spoke to Rita Di Fazio, a worker at the Cassino plant, where since 1972 more than 7 million vehicles have been produced for Fiat, Lancia and Alfa Romeo. Currently, the Alfa Romeo Giulia and Stelvio, as well as the Maserati Grecale, are still in production.

WSWS: Can you please tell us about your experience at the plant?

Rita Di Fazio: I was hired as a temp when I was about 30. Less than a year later I was fired after I participated in the first large strike. It was a firing intended to make an example. I sued the company and was reintegrated after a nearly three-year-long lawsuit. At the time, there was a provision in the law that I was able to use. Now the Biagi law has eliminated that differentiation. Back in 2002, there was already talk about downsizing the plant.

Repression always existed, but back then the level of sociopolitical consciousness was higher and as a consequence of the strength of the class struggle you could find a judge who would be sympathetic to your grievances. I consider myself a communist, a Marxist. Although I have contempt for the repressive regime in the former USSR, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union contributed to a different situation where great traitors like Rifondazione Comunista sold out. I never became a member and I will never forget its treacherous role.

WSWS: What allowed the current layoffs to take place?

RDF: Nobody would quit voluntarily. There’s an atmosphere of terror, accelerated by the wars [Ukraine,

Gaza] that are felt strongly.

It's easy to understand that today trade unions are utilized to facilitate conditions leading to layoffs. Certain [bureaucratic] positions are like functionaries; that's the truth, there's so much corruption. A political role is no longer an aspiration to militancy, but a career.

When CGIL bureaucrats came to my plant, they confirmed what I thought of them. When the boss was not around, they'd brag about militancy and when the boss arrived, they would act like his servants. Capitalism has corrupted leaders, or they infiltrated to suppress and divide us.

Imagine that the confederal unions manage our pension funds. How can I trust someone who instead of representing me is now a banker? They even manage healthcare, so that now my boss decides where I should go for healthcare.

Politically, there is an enormous legislative void. A large percentage of the population doesn't feel represented. How can you call this democracy? And it wouldn't have been any different with [Italian Democratic Party politician] Elly Schlein. For one, the war in Gaza would have taken place the same. And it is a genocide indeed.

The US is not any different: Workers are given Biden and Trump as "choices." These are just politicians with big finance behind them.

WSWS: Do you think that the struggle must be international?

RDF: Obviously, with the discontent of an entire class, the struggle of the exploited and the marginalized must be carried out internationally. There was a time when communism was anti-Stalinist of the international type, without that we would have never had the social conquests we won on many fronts in Europe. These gains were due precisely because of the international thread.

At the same time, I see capitalism waging a great fight as it has the money to buy out those political prostitutes without dignity and tell them to slaughter workers everywhere. I am very favorable to an international initiative, obviously we must combine forces.

I read some of the WSWS interviews with actors and writers who were rebelling. It was like reading our stories in Italy when it comes to important topics like healthcare, pensions, etc. In the US, they have the same grievances as we do, and we all have our proposals, we already are connected, but we are not organized. Therefore, I think that rank-and-file workers like me must start discussing with other rank-and-file workers so that we are not isolated, divided. But we are missing that intellectual leadership.

In a WSWS article I read of that actress in Los Angeles who lost her home and she may never be able to buy it back. She must not feel alone, and not just economically, but also in the ideas, in the planning of political tasks. I would have

wanted to express all my solidarity. We need soldiers for our struggles and that actress and myself are those soldiers.

So, of course internationalism is fundamental, especially with globalization. Whoever engages in politics and doesn't think about internationalism is an opportunist.

WSWS: Do you see a relation between the wars and what is happening at Stellantis?

RDF: Behind Stellantis there is Exor [Stellantis' mothership, a holding company with \$42 billion in revenue in 2022], with an international financial policy that involves governments. Now they are seeking North Africa, Poland, the Balkan states. These will be the new margins of the new wars. They were aware since at least 2014 that a war between Russia and Ukraine would have broken out. And they knew about Gaza for more than 70 years.

Twenty or 30 years ago we had already foreseen a reduction in automotive production, as vehicles were no longer interesting as a source of profit. Other investments were more attractive, from arms to oil to finance. The wars have accelerated this process. Or perhaps it is more correct to say the opposite: The financial interests behind Exor seek wars. As an autoworker, of course I must know about the cars I build, but there is a lot more behind this.

WSWS: What will happen to those laid off? What about your own future?

RDF: Age is a factor. I am concerned that at my age you are tired and somewhat impatient, after 20, 30 or 40 years of sacrifice, at the end of which you should be able to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Instead, you have to start over, you have to be competitive, a word I hate because competition is not constructive. I am for collaboration. But imagine a mother age 50 having to start again, or a father without a job. On one hand there's resignation, on the other the terror of having to get back in the game.

And what work is there? There's no work in Italy. There's only a world of exploitation. In my plant I have to request permission to go to the restroom, or to have some coffee. Work is socialization, interaction, contributing your professionalism and skills. And you don't give this to the capitalist, but to society.



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