

G20 Protests in Italy: “You are the illness, We are the cure”

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Dave Kellaway reports from Italy on the G20 protests

“Voi la malattia, noi la cura”, “Voi il G20, noi il future.” These were the key slogans heard in Rome on 30 October. “You are the illness, We are the cure. You are the G20. We are the future.” Militant eco-activists joined with class struggle trade unionists and the radical left to protest the G20 meeting of world leaders, Saturday 30th October. About 10,000 people were reported by **Il Manifesto**, the daily left paper, to have turned out.

Workers fighting to save their jobs at Alitalia, Whirlpool, Piaggio, Genovese dockers and GKN were all there alongside the rank and file Cobas trade unions. Campaigns like the one for justice for the victims of the explosion of Viareggio were also present. A lively component was made up of thousands of young students mobilised by Fridays for the Future as well as the university Student left network. This group had organised some school occupations this week. Radical left groups like Potere al Popolo (Power to the People), Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation), Sinistra Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left) and Communia (Commons) were present. The small Partito Comunista (Communist Party) organised their own sit-in.

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The Italian press is a bit less exclusionary of any activity on the left and several ran live video feeds of the demonstrations. You could see there were a lot of creative, musical colourful actions. One group of young people put on a football game of world leaders kicking the globe around.

Prior to the demonstration, a three-hour mass meeting of activists was held in the Puccini theatre. Speakers were heard from the ongoing workers and ecological struggles. Workplace safety is a

particularly important issue in Italy with deaths well above the EU average. Daniela Rombi, the mother of Emanuela, spoke about how lax, criminal standards had led to the loss of her daughter at work. As Riccardo Chiari, Manifesto journalist commented in his article of 30th October:

"This terrible loss shows the ever greater distance between the lives of people everyday going to work to earn enough to get by and the cold competence of a government 'of the best minds you can find'. Those politicians and technocrats don't worry or do not understand how much working conditions, dignity and wages need to be looked after properly. They talk about labour creating 'value-added' for the country but the reality is quite different."

A woman married to one of the GKN workers said how the strike has meant she has had to go back to work in another factory to help them survive. She reported how she had to take a temporary contract, renewed on a 3 monthly basis. Her co-workers were in an even worst position because as migrants they were subject to rough treatment including sexual abuse but were constrained to try and hold their jobs to send vital money home. When she finished speaking a women eco-activist got up and went up onto the stage and embraced her.



All these struggles are of brave, resilient minorities receiving little or no support from the unions or the party that historically claims to speak for working people – the PD (Democratic Party), who is happy in government with Draghi, the banker. They decide together on the share out of recovery funds mostly to businesses and corporations. Saturday's action at least allows these fragments of struggle to come together and point towards the possibility of forging a fighting alternative that can mobilise on a bigger level.

Elsewhere in Italy on Saturday, there were other protests. The Brazilian president, Bolsonaro, has distant family links with a small town of 4000 people in the Padova area near Venice. The local right-wing mayor from Salvini's Lega (League) had invited him on the occasion of the G20 meeting to come 'home' so the town could honour him. Fortunately, some other local people had other ideas and the town hall and surrounding area were smothered with slogans saying Fora Bolsonaro (Bolsonaro Out) before his arrival. The local Franciscan monks had a much better position than the Lega on the Bolsonaro question. He wanted to pray in their famous church in Padova. They let him but said on no account would they be giving him any sort of recognition or official welcome.

In Milan, there was a demonstration condemning the dumping of the proposed Zan law (named after a gay PD senator) outlawing discrimination against gay or trans people. It had passed the lower house but lost by a few dozen votes in the Senate. Some PD senators whose party officially supported it actually voted against it in a secret ballot, as well as ex-premier Renzi's group. The latter likes to pose as an alternative to the right-wing. Renzi and the right had used the false argument that the bill would allow propaganda in favour of trans or gay lifestyles – similar to the Polish or Hungarian narrative. A side effect of this is that it gives hope to the right that they could capture the presidency in the vote in a few months time.

Let's hope the Cop 26 demonstrators take up the baton from their Rome comrades and bring even more people together.

At least the efforts of the demonstrators have meant the media has not just spent hours admiring the security or relaying a series of photo opportunities with the G20 leaders: meeting the Pope, throwing coins in the Trevi fountain, going to a sumptuous banquet with Matterella in the Quirinale palace or posing demagogically with essential workers.

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P.S.

- Anti*Capitalist Resistance. 31 October 2021:

<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/you-are-the-illness-we-are-the-cure/>

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