

The euro bailouts and the crisis of democracy in Europe

Peter Schwarz
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Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti said Monday that Europe would fall apart “if governments are completely bound by the decisions of their parliaments.” Every government has “a duty to educate the parliament,” he added in an interview with the news magazine *Der Spiegel*.

Monti’s statement amounts to an admission that the numerous bank bailouts organized to rescue the euro in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, and the austerity programs launched to make the working class pay for them, have strained European bourgeois democracy to the breaking point. The responsibility of the government to parliament, and parliament’s control over the government—which Monti is questioning—is a basic principle of parliamentary democracy.

Monti attacks parliament, but his real target is the working class. For the vast majority of the population, it has already become impossible to influence politics through the ballot box. Major political decisions are made by the financial markets and their henchmen in Brussels, Berlin and the other European capitals.

In the recent elections in Greece and France, parties that appeared to promise an end to, or at least a moderation of, brutal social cuts received broad popular support. In France, the Socialist Party won the presidential election for the first time since 1988. In Greece, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) emerged as the second largest party. But nothing has changed.

The new French president, François Hollande, is continuing the anti-working class policies of his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, offering no opposition to mass layoffs in the auto industry. In Greece, Syriza has assumed the role of loyal opposition, while the government coalition of the conservative New Democracy, social democratic PASOK and Democratic

Left is imposing even more brutal austerity measures.

Monti gave his interview after a week in which anti-worker austerity measures were intensified throughout Europe. The Greek government has decided on further cuts of €11.5 billion, which will deepen the suffering of already devastated workers and pensioners. The Spanish government has increased its previous deficit-reduction target by 60 percent and now aims to cut the massive sum of €102 billion from the budget, throwing the country back to the poverty of the Franco era.

The European Central Bank has decided to support countries—through the purchase of government bonds—only if they have previously made an application to the European emergency aid fund and submitted to EU-dictated austerity measures.

This is provoking widespread opposition. In Spain, hundreds of thousands took to the streets against the government's austerity measures. The trade unions are finding it increasingly difficult to keep this anger under control. Neither in Spain nor Greece, nor in any other European country, are the workers willing to accept the destruction of all their gains without a fight.

Under these circumstances, Monti’s comment underscores the basic class agenda of the European bourgeoisie: to press ahead with the policies of the banks, whatever the outcome of elections or the size of street protests and strikes against austerity measures.

Monti knows well that the social counterrevolution demanded by the international financial markets is incompatible with democratic methods. He leads a government of technocrats that has no democratic legitimacy. Monti—an economics professor, advisor to Goldman Sachs and member of several conservative think tanks (Bruegel, Bilderberg Conference, Trilateral Commission)—is a trusted representative of international finance capital. At its behest, he

succeeded the Berlusconi government last November without the holding of an election because Berlusconi had failed to cut the budget quickly and deeply enough.

Since then, the Monti government has systematically attacked the social gains and rights won by Italian workers since the fall of the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini at the end of World War II. It has reduced pensions, increased consumption taxes and eliminated legal protections against dismissal and other social rights.

Political conclusions must be drawn from Monti's statement that the break-up of Europe can be prevented only if governments repudiate democratic procedures. The working class cannot defend its rights and social gains within the reactionary framework of the European Union.

The views of Monti's immediate opponents on European financial policy—German politicians who have criticized his remarks as an attempt to “weaken democratic legitimation,” in the words of Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle—are equally hypocritical and reactionary. Berlin has consistently sought to impose devastating cuts, notably on the Greek government, in total defiance of popular opinion in Greece and other European countries. It has, moreover, led the campaign to establish a de facto EU dictatorship over the fiscal policies of euro zone governments.

This underscores that the EU, as a whole, is an instrument for the subjugation of Europe to the dictatorship of competing cliques of finance capital. It can be neither reformed nor pushed to change course by protests and negotiations.

Only the independent mobilization of the working class based on the perspective of the United Socialist States of Europe can halt these attacks. The *World Socialist Web Site* calls for the abolition of the European Union and its institutions, and links this demand with an international socialist programme.

We fight for the unity of the European and international working class. The workers in Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Britain must take up the struggle for the overthrow of Monti, Merkel, Hollande, Rajoy and Cameron and establish workers' governments to expropriate the wealth of the super-rich, the banks and big business and reorganize the economy to serve society as a whole, not the profit interests of the financial aristocracy.

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