

# Former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer urges dictatorial powers for the EU

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As the class struggle in Europe intensifies, the character of the European Union as an instrument of the ruling elite becomes ever more evident. This is also shown in the ideology of its defenders. Last week, former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer (Green Party) published a column in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* arguing for authoritarian forms of rule by the EU.

Under the headline, "Exploiting the crisis", he greets the crisis—referring to Heraclitus—as “the mother of all things” and an opportunity “for changes” that “otherwise would be hardly possible”.

“The compulsion to overcome the crisis demands actions that would be barely imaginable, let alone realizable”, Fischer writes.

What he means is German domination of Europe and the removal of all democratic constraints over budget policy. Under the pressure of the crisis, the euro zone as the vanguard of the EU and Germany as the “leading EU power” have demonstrated their mettle. According to Fischer, this vanguard is to be praised for undertaking numerous measures to undermine national sovereignty and create a true all-European economic government.

Fischer expressly hails this as a step towards political union in Europe. He calls on Berlin to use its leading role to drive this forward. Above all, this means dictating brutal austerity measures to individual euro zone countries—as is already the case in Greece, Portugal and Ireland.

It is here especially that Fischer sees the opportunities offered by the crisis: he wants to strengthen the EU to crush popular opposition and create Greek conditions throughout Europe. To do this, according to his plan, national parliaments should relinquish their decision-making powers—above all the power of setting a

budget—to a second chamber of the European Parliament.

Fischer is demanding nothing other than the direct dictatorship of the financial elite—and especially the German bourgeoisie, which plays a leading role in the EU—over the budget policy of euro zone states. His talk of “exploiting the crisis” and “political integration” aims to gain the support of affluent layers of the middle class for this reactionary programme. Such plans have been developed over a considerable period of time in Brussels.

EU Council president Herman Van Rompuy has prepared a paper for the mid-October EU summit which would enable the EU to prescribe the restructuring of the labour market and social welfare system for all the members of the euro zone. The “reforms” would be adapted specifically to each country and be determined by the unelected EU Commission.

In this way, EU bureaucrats can directly determine the economic and social policy of the member states, thus circumventing national parliaments and avoiding any democratic control. Austerity diktats, similar to those ordered for Greece, Portugal or Ireland, are to be extended throughout the euro zone without any popular input over the legislation.

Fischer’s approval for these dictatorial measures arises from the undemocratic character of the EU.

When Fischer delivered his highly regarded speech in May 2000 at Berlin’s Humboldt University on “the finality of European integration”, he already advocated the political integration of the EU under German leadership. At that time, however, he decorated his comments with humanitarian phrases, describing the EU as a bastion of democracy.

Twelve years later, Fischer’s rhetoric has merged with the essence of the EU, which has become ever more

apparent ever since the finance crisis of 2008.

As a bulwark against the Soviet Union, the predecessors of the EU already had reactionary roots. From the very beginning, propaganda about a humanitarian unification of Europe and the overcoming of national conflicts on a capitalist basis was a myth.

After the collapse of the Eastern bloc, the EU's goal became the creation of a stronger position for European capital on the world market, to enable it to stand up to the US. However, this not only led to the growth of national tensions within the EU, but also intensified the struggle against European workers.

The EU has become the ruling elite's main instrument to impose social counter-revolution in Europe. What began in Eastern Europe in the 1990s—the destruction of the social safety net, the privatisation of state-owned industry, and wage cuts—has been extended throughout Europe in recent years, with the EU institutions operating as the direct tool of the financial elite.

The plunder taking place in southern countries, which is to be extended throughout Europe, is incompatible with democracy. Under the pressure of the EU, elected governments have been changed in Italy and Greece and replaced with regimes headed by technocrats.

In Greece, the government is openly collaborating with fascists to make a brutal example of the immigrants living in the country. Strikes and demonstrations are dispersed and suppressed by the police.

As the spokesman of the German elite, Fischer wants to provide ideological backing for this agenda, consciously appealing to the better-off layers of the middle class, who find their representatives in his party, the Greens. As foreign minister he regarded his most important task as winning these layers for German militarism and the devastating social policies of the SPD-Green coalition government under Gerhard Schröder.

In this endeavour, he rests on the anti-democratic traditions that are widespread in this milieu. Even when Fischer had been active with the so-called "Spontis" alternative movement, writing for its organ *Pflasterstrand*, he distinguished himself, like his fellow campaigners, by his disdain for the working class, which he denigrated as stupefied and consumer-oriented. Today he uses the same ideology to justify the

dictatorship of the EU.

In 2008, in the political weekly *Die Zeit*, Fischer had already described allowing the populace to decide on questions in Europe as "opportunistic" and "cowardly".



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