

Greece in the grip of the EU

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On Tuesday, EU finance ministers again delayed payment of the next tranche of financial aid to Greece, which is due since this summer. The decision is now supposed to be reached next Monday.

The delay is a result of serious differences between the major powers involved, including the European governments and the International Monetary Fund. In particular, the German government is refusing to agree to a relaxation of harsh loan conditions. Although Greece has now imposed five rounds of austerity measures, resulting in budget surpluses, overall debt continues to rise since gigantic sums are flowing to the creditors.

While the finance ministers and IMF are arguing about the exact form of the debt regime, they are agreed that the southern European country must be subordinated to the direct diktat of the EU so that the last cent can be squeezed out of the Greek working class. They are no longer satisfied with dictating the austerity measures to be implemented to the Greek government, but like the colonial powers of old are installing their own officials at all levels of the state and administration and even in the private banks.

Greece serves as a model for the whole continent. The redistribution of wealth from those at the bottom to those at the top cannot be reconciled with democratic rights or parliamentary forms of rule.

The latest draft of the credit agreement between the Troika—comprising the EU, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank—and the Greek government envisages the virtual abrogation of all the legal powers of parliament. It lays down in detail the timetable for legislation. Parliament is instructed to implement 259 “reforms”, which contain further

devastating social cuts, the erosion of workers’ rights and the liberalization of markets.

If Greece refuses to implement these instructions to the letter, the troika is threatening to withhold further tranches of the financial aid already agreed. Greece would then be bankrupt within weeks and could no longer pay wages, pensions and social benefits.

The supposedly autonomous municipal administrations, like the individual ministries and state corporations, have already been robbed of any room for manoeuvre. They are obliged to reach definite austerity targets, and failure to do so results in cuts being automatically imposed. Austerity commissioners have been installed in every ministry, charged with ensuring that the cuts go through. The country's banks are also subject to commissioners, named directly by the troika in consultation with the government, responsible for the allocation of credits.

On Monday, a government spokesperson announced that Greece would deposit all the proceeds from the privatisation of profitable state enterprises into a special account that would be used exclusively for the repayment of debts and interest and is directly controlled by the troika. The German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble has proposed that the financial aid could also be parked in such an account. In this way, the Greek state would lose the final remnants of its financial independence.

The dictatorship of the EU over all levels of the state administration is a direct reaction to the continuing mass protests, strikes and factory occupations with which the workers throughout Greece are resisting the brutal social attacks.

In order to impose new cuts and to further plunder Greek society, the financial elite is resorting to increasingly authoritarian means. While they subject the state administration to their diktats, the fascist gangs of *Chrysi Avgi* (Golden Dawn) are being mobilised and encouraged by the police to act against political opponents and workers.

The aim of these measures is not lowering the state debt, which continues to rise, but to lowering the living conditions of the working class to Third World levels. Social rights and the welfare system are being destroyed, wages cut and hundreds of thousands sacked. Many workers have already paid with their lives, being no longer able to pay for medical treatment or medicines in a health system ruined by the cuts.

The financial elite wants to impose this programme throughout Europe. Following Spain, Portugal and Italy, now France is in the firing line. On Monday, the rating agency Moody's

reduced the country's credit rating, complaining of the high level of state spending, "structural deficit" and "rigid labour market". In the weeks before, various sides had called for measures to be imposed along the lines of the Greek model in order to make the French economy "competitive".

That the ruling class can mount such a barbaric campaign against the entire European working class is the responsibility of the trade unions and pseudo-left tendencies that cover for them.

The unions are collaborating closely with the governments and the EU to impose the cuts against the working class and to isolate and diffuse their struggles. They categorically refuse to organise any solidarity action and defend the Greek working class.

Organisations such as the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) in France, the Left Party in Germany or the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) in Greece support the institutions of the EU and their austerity plans. They are all doing everything possible to politically paralyse the working class and prevent a struggle against the financial elite and its lackeys in the EU.

The chair of SYRIZA Alex Tsipras has announced that he will meet with the ambassadors of all 27 EU states next Tuesday to strengthen relations and "build confidence," he says. For weeks, he has been preparing to take over the government from the crisis-ridden coalition under conservative Prime Minister Andonis Samaras and to impose the EU diktats himself.

To defend their rights against the dictatorship of the EU, workers must break with these organisations and take up a common struggle against the financial elite, their states and EU institutions. Only the independent mobilisation of the working class can prevent the ruling class from plunging the continent into dictatorship and poverty once more.

This requires the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) as the revolutionary party of the working class, uniting workers across all national borders in the fight for a socialist society, nationalising the banks and corporations and placing them under democratic control.

The first step is the defence of the Greek working class by their European brothers and sisters. The attacks of the troika must be opposed by a common offensive; otherwise workers face the same fate across the continent.

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