

# As EU commissioner, former Socialist Party minister demands more austerity in France

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In a March 11 radio interview with *France Info*, former Socialist Party (PS) finance minister Pierre Moscovici, now European commissioner for economic and monetary affairs and taxation, demanded that France's PS government implement deep new cuts. He also defended the European Union's (EU's) demands for stepped-up austerity by the new Syriza government in Greece.

President François Hollande, having already imposed €50 billion in cuts, has failed to fulfill his pledge to bring the budget deficit down to 3.0 percent of GDP by 2015. It stands at 4.1 percent of GDP, so Paris will be required to find at least €26 billion more to add to the supplementary budget cut of €4 billion already decided for this year.

Moscovici reminded Paris that, in return for the two years' grace that the Commission has granted it, France must, by the end of April, provide the Commission with detailed proposals for structural reforms—making it easier for employers to fire workers and cut their wages and benefits. By the end of June, Paris must detail where budget cuts will fall.

These policies head towards the type of economic and social catastrophe that EU strictures have wrought in Greece. Unemployment in France is officially more than 10.0 percent—in fact, at 19.2 percent, affecting 5.5 million people out of a total of a 28.6 million work force. Local government spending cuts are expected to cost tens of thousands of jobs in both health care and construction.

When his interviewer, Jean-François Achilli, observed France had had relatively favourable treatment compared to Greece, which had been granted no reprieve whatsoever from the EU, Moscovici said, "I absolutely reject this comparison, which I find completely disparaging." He said France was the EU's

second largest economy and fifth largest in the world, while Greece was only 2 percent of the EU economy and had a national debt of 175 percent of its GDP.

When Achilli said that the Troika (the EU Commission, the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the European Central Bank) were back in Athens and "sticking their noses in Greek affairs," Moscovici leapt to their defence. Troika officials, he said, were just checking technical details. Echoing Syriza's pseudo-left apologists internationally, Moscovici said of Syriza's capitulation to the EU's demand for austerity, "They haven't betrayed."

This is not only a travesty of Syriza's record, but a lying defence of the policy of EU officials, including Moscovici, of demanding ruthless austerity from the devastated Greek economy.

He said, "Were we to forbid the Greek government to carry out its programme, that would be a denial of democracy.... National sovereignty does exist in Europe." He said the EU combined "respect for two necessary things—the voters' vote, yes, the need for social changes, yes.... On the other hand, they must understand that they have made commitments to their partners, that a debt is there to be repaid."

In fact, Moscovici and the EU participated in a direct denial of democracy to the Greek people. Syriza and the EU signed agreements last month abandoning Syriza's campaign pledges to write down Greece's debts and halt austerity measures. As Moscovici's comment that "a debt is there to be repaid" shows, he himself supported Syriza's abject capitulation to the EU's austerity diktat.

Moscovici epitomises the reactionary role of the PS. In the lead-up to the election of Hollande in 2012, it cynically postured as critical of German-led EU austerity policies, while it prepared to implement its

austerity agenda in France. Once PS officials like Moscovici are rewarded with positions of influence in Brussels, however, they effortlessly turn to enforcing the EU's austerity demands in France and Greece, and across Europe.

This reflects the politically corrupt character of the petty-bourgeois social layers from which the PS drew its members. Moscovici was a student member of the pseudo-left Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the forerunner of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), until 1984.

Upon graduating from the elite National School of Administration (ENA) in 1984, Moscovici left the LCR for the PS under the guidance of one of his teachers, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who later would head the IMF. He became the secretary of the PS's "group of experts," working for President François Mitterrand. After holding ministerial office under Lionel Jospin's Plural Left government, he was director of François Hollande's presidential campaign in 2012.

Moscovici helped to draw up the European Constitution, which was rejected in France in the 2005 referendum. He was involved in formulating the EU bailout of Greece with its brutal austerity conditions that have led to a 25 percent shrinkage of the Greek economy, an official jobless rate of over 26.1 percent—60 percent for youth—and a decline in wages of more than 30 percent.



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