

Millions of Greeks against the IMF and the European Union

Hundreds of thousands of workers in the private and public sector, unemployed, youth, pensioners, migrants, and small owners flooded the streets all over Greece, on Wednesday May 5th, general strike day. The country hasn't witnessed such large and angry demonstrations for decades. The rally in Athens was huge and lasted for many hours despite the successive police and riot police attacks. Mass demonstrations also took place in Thessaloniki, Patra, Ioannina, Larisa, Volos, in the Aegean islands and the big cities of Crete island. It became obvious that the overwhelming majority of the Greek people are against the measures that the government took in collaboration with the IMF, the European Union and the European Central Bank, and they are determined to struggle and overthrow these measures.

The package of measures agreed by the social-democrat government and the IMF and the EU include: for public sector workers, big salary cuts and thousands of layoffs and pension cuts; in private sector, layoffs, reduction of severance pay, abolition of collective contracts, significant increase in indirect taxes (VAT increase to 23%), big cuts in public funding for health care, education and social welfare, privatizations etc. In fact it is a horrible policy of social barbarity that returns Greece to previous times of widespread poverty, unemployment and misery. The objective of these measures is to save the speculators and creditors of the country; to make the workforce very cheap in order to attract foreign rapacious investments; to sell out natural resources and protect the immeasurable riches of the local elite-bourgeoisie. With these measures Greece is being totally handed over to the foreign imperialist capital and its institutions. Greece has been turned—officially--into an economic colony of foreign robbers and its people are subjugated to foreign economic bail out and the directives of IMF and the European imperialists.

This development required many years to take place. Through the participation of Greece in the European Union (former EEC) since the early '80s, its economy was increasingly subjugated to the directives of the European monopolies and captured by the multinational corporations and the European capital to a greater extent than earlier. Gradually the agrarian sector was devastated along with manufacturing, light industry and the entire industrial productive structure. Greek export sectors collapsed, and internal production was replaced with the increase of importations. The situation significantly worsened after the country joined the Euro-zone and could no longer exercise an autonomous monetary and exchange policy. Greece, like other countries on the European periphery, became the best customers of the German-French export goods, which were subsidized through government loaning and credit expansion in private households. The plans of the local elite-bourgeoisie to turn Greece into a country of services and tourism resulted in bankruptcy. The country became completely subject to predatory foreign capital, and faced the full onslaught of the international economic capitalist crisis.

The debt crisis in Greece is part and a prologue of a more general crisis that has already erupted in the economies of the European South as a result of the war of capitals, currency, parities and policies among the imperialist powers. This rivalry is raging due to the deep capitalist crisis and the subsequent attempt from each one to put its heavy burden to the other. The attack of predatory speculation on Greek bankrupt sectors took place with main objective to undermine the euro and to test the coherence of the euro-zone. Greece was selected as the weak and defenseless link of this chain and this attack will continue. For it was proved that the euro-zone is a peculiar case with serious problems, contradictions and national rivalries that aggravate and prevent the coordination of policies.

Regardless of the course of the euro and the international economic crisis, what matters is that only the struggle of the workers to overthrow these brutal measures can bring hope. These days, the Greek workers are in the streets against the police repression and the provocations organized by centers that wish to intimidate the demonstrators. They try to safeguard their demonstrations from the police attacks and from the blind violence of those who are responsible for the death of the three bank workers. They convey an international and class solidarity message and particularly call on the workers in Europe to rise up and struggle against the austerity measures decided by the commanders of the European Union.

The Greek workers, unemployed, migrants, youth and elder people are fighting to oust the IMF and the European Central Bank and to overthrow the measures that were succumbed to by the Papandreou government. They fight to get the country out of the European Union. They must fight for an independent and socialist Greece, the only way out against the local capitalist class that has brought the economy and the society to this situation.

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