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Italy

**We are against the
Government's austerity
budget: We must stop them,
fight back now, they should
pay their deficit!**

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The Berlusconi government's decision to bring forward their austerity measures [1], in response to the diktat of the ECB (European Central Bank) and the 'international markets' shows up the hypocrisy and platitudes of recent months – the economic crisis reveals its true face as yet another massacre of people's living standards. It is caused by the unfettered drive for profits of a blocked capitalism that is neither able to guarantee our well being nor give us a dignified future.

Over the last two decades capitalism, thanks to government policies carried out by both the centre right and the centre left – including Obama – has tried to save itself from its weak growth and profitability by accumulating an avalanche of debts. In order to avoid the collapse of the system governments have taken over the bulk of this debt by transferring it onto the public finances. Today the bill is being given to workers, young people, temporary workers, women and pensioners. It is significant that the bringing forward of the budget essentially involves changing the tax rates for the less well-off and 'reforming' the welfare system. This toughest budget yet now threatens to throw millions into poverty while at the same time not a euro will be taken from the pockets of the richest.

The majority of the population has to be a guarantor both for profit accumulated over many years and the profits to be made in the future.

The parliamentary opposition, in response to this decision 'ordered' by the ECB and its controllers, does not know what to say, it bleats incomprehensibly, oscillating between the sense of responsibility demanded by president Napolitano and the need to indicate differences that do not really exist. There is no alternative in parliament and therefore it is an illusion to expect anything positive to come out of it. The Italian parliament is de facto controlled by the central and private banks.

Worrying signs are also coming from the trade unions where the CGIL has managed to 'put itself into administration' under the Confindustria [main employers association] in the race to put on the cloak of 'national responsibility'. [2] National responsibility in this case means accepting: balancing the budget to be written into the constitution; a reform of labour market agreements and laws; privatisation and liberalisation. The government has decided to go forward in this direction - among other things implementing the constitutionally consecrated balanced budget and thereby tying the fate of the country to the will of the 'markets', of big finance and the speculators. So how will now the CGIL be able to justify taking a position against it?

The situation is really serious but for reasons that are the opposite of those proclaimed on the TV and in the press. The brutality of the impending measures – 30 billion euro cuts in 2012 but around 100 billion to be made between now and 2014 – will mean poverty, unemployment and exploitation for millions of workers, young people and pensioners. A response is both necessary and very urgent.

If a class struggle and alternative left existed that was really independent of the Democratic Party's (PD) complicity with the system then it should meet and decide on a mobilisation required by the situation – including an effective general strike with real mass involvement.

Sinistra Critica is fully committed to building the 'We must stop them' initiative – the appeal that is supported by representatives from the trade unions, the CGIL, the rank and file unions, students, community activists, political militants and personalities. [3] It already has 1000 supporters. The appeal calls on activists to come to Rome on the first of October to build for a big national demonstration on the 15th October.

The central demands of the appeal are: 'don't pay their deficit', cut military spending, defend and win back the

gains of the working class, look after publicly owned resources and extend democracy. If we really want to achieve healthy state finances we should get the money from where it has never been taken – from profits and rent with a comprehensive wealth and property tax on the open and secret riches that we know are there.

But we must start the mobilisation before then, at the end of August with mass meetings, smaller meetings, sit-ins, symbolic actions and anything else that manages to express a broad, people's opposition to the establishment's latest austerity measures. To this end we also invite everybody to come to the national seminar we are holding at Trevi (Foligno, Umbria) from the 15th to 18th September.

[1] Previously these budget measures were not due to be implemented until the following year [trans].

[2] This is a reference to the fact that the press widely reported the Berlusconi government to be 'commissariato' [taken over/ put into administration] by the ECB, IMF and Merkel/Sarkozy when a letter was sent to Tremonti, the finance minister outlining the 4 key demands listed here which were the conditions for the EU to give financial support.

[3] See website: appello.dobbiamofermarli@gmail.com – they now are at 1206 supporters.