

Wall Street Protests Spread Globally as Rome Turns Violent

Tuesday 18 October 2011, by [CINELLI Francesca](#), [DEPREZ Esme' E.](#) (Date first published: 15 October 2011).

Oct. 15 (Bloomberg) — The Occupy Wall Street protest against income disparity spread across Western Europe, Asia, the U.S. and Canada today. Rome's demonstration turned violent, contrasting with peaceful events elsewhere.

As many as 500 marchers in Rome wielding clubs attacked police, two banks and a supermarket, Sky TG24 reported. Authorities used tear gas and water cannon. Londoners were barred from Paternoster Square, home of the London Stock Exchange, and Tokyo protesters demanded an end to nuclear power. New York police arrested 24 at a Citigroup Inc. bank branch and 6,000 gathered in Times Square.

The rallies started last month in New York's financial district, where people have been staying in lower Manhattan's Zuccotti Park. They widened to 1,500 cities today, including Sydney and Toronto, the organizers said, in a "global day of action against Wall Street greed."

"The world will rise up as one and say, 'We have had enough,'" Patrick Bruner, an Occupy Wall Street spokesman, said in an e-mail.

Protesters say they represent "the 99 percent," a nod to a study by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz showing the top 1 percent of Americans control 40 percent of U.S. wealth.

March on Banks

In New York, demonstrators marched past a JPMorgan Chase & Co. branch urging clients to transfer accounts to "a financial institution that supports the 99 percent." They distributed fliers with a list of community banks and credit unions.

"I'm interested in sending a message to support banks that actually support the community as opposed to those like Chase that took government money and fired workers anyway," said Penny Lewis, 40, a City University of New York labor professor. She said she planned to close her Chase account.

Twenty-four were arrested later for refusing to leave a Citibank branch, the police said, and about 6,000 marched to Times Square as night fell, the organizers said. There were also protests in Boston, Philadelphia, Miami, Denver, San Francisco and other U.S. cities.

About 1,000 people gathered in Toronto's financial district carrying signs saying "Nationalize the Banks," "CEO Pay Up 444 Percent in 12 years. How About You?" and "We're All in the Same Boat." Others opposed war, serial killers and hydro- electric costs.

Protests were planned in at least 15 Canadian cities, including Montreal, Calgary, Vancouver, Edmonton and Winnipeg, according to the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.'s website.

Violence in Italy

Demonstrations turned violent in Italy, where the unemployment rate for 15-to-24-year-olds was 27.6 percent in August. Thirty police and 20 protesters were injured in Rome, Sky TG24 reported. Firecrackers were thrown at the Ministry of Defense and windows of Cassa di Risparmio di Rimini and Poste Italiane SpA shattered, according to the report.

“Something like this is clearly not spontaneous,” James Walston, who teaches politics at the American University in Rome, said in a telephone interview. “We have been in a risky situation for months with expectations — above all of young people — falling lower and lower. The potential for violence today, with so large a number of demonstrators, was high.”

Mayor Giovanni Alemanno told Sky TG24 that “the worst of Europe planned to meet in Rome.”

“Now, the citizens of Rome are those who have become angry,” he said.

London Banners

The Occupy London Stock Exchange protest drew about 4,000 people, according to organizers. Police didn’t provide a number. In the shadow of St. Paul’s Cathedral, banners had slogans that read “No Bulls, No Bears, Just Pigs” and “Bankers Are the Real Looters.”

“The financial system benefits a handful of banks at the expense of everyday people, the taxpayers,” said Spyro Van Leemmen, a 27-year-old public-relations agent. “The same people who are responsible for the recession are getting away with massive bonuses.”

In Berlin, 6,000 took to the streets and 1,500 gathered in Cologne, ZDF television said. In Frankfurt, 5,000 marched by the European Central Bank headquarters with toy pistols firing soap bubbles and planned to camp out, ZDF reported.

“A few hundred” met at the Paris city hall, according to BFM TV. Thousands marched in Madrid with placards criticizing bank bailouts. In Zurich, about 200 coalesced on Paradeplatz, playing Monopoly and sipping free coffee from a stand.

In Taiwan, several hundred demonstrators sat mostly quietly outside the Taipei World Financial Center, known as Taipei 101.

Communist Anthem

Levin Jiang, 22, an English major at Taipei’s Fu Jen Catholic University, joined others singing the communist anthem L’Internationale in front of a Hermes watch shop.

“I’m angry about the unjust capitalist society,” he said. “I’m anti-capitalism.”

In Seoul, 600 converged on the city hall after changing the location of the protest as police banned the rally today, Yonhap News reported. They urged rules for speculative investments and demanded lower college tuition.

In Hong Kong, about 200 people gathered at the Exchange Square Podium in the central shopping and business district, according to Napo Wong, an organizer.

“Hong Kong is heaven for capitalists,” said Lee Chun Wing, 29, a community college social sciences lecturer in Hong Kong. “Wealth is created by workers and so should be shared with the workers as well. Capitalism is not a just system.”

In Tokyo, morning rain may have deterred some from joining three planned protests. More than 120 people demanding an end to nuclear power marched from Hibiya Park to the offices of Tokyo Electric Power Co., owner of the Fukushima atomic plant crippled by a March 11 earthquake.

Francesca Cinelli, Esme' E. Deprez and Maria Kolesnikova, Bloomberg, October 15, 2011

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To contact the reporters on this story: Francesca Cinelli in Milan at fcinelli@bloomberg.net Maria Kolesnikova in London at mcolesnikova@bloomberg.net Esme' E. Deprez in New York at edeprez@bloomberg.net

To contact the editors responsible for this story: Mark Tannenbaum at mtannen@bloomberg.net Claudia Carpenter at ccarpenter2@bloomberg.net