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Why Mario Monti Is the Most Important Man in Europe. TIME's Interview With Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti *(Guarda l'intervista)*

At first glance, it seems impossible that the fate of the world economy rests in Mario Monti's hands. The Prime Minister of Italy has the aura of a gentlemanly grandfather — the polite demeanor, the soft voice, the smiling eyes — not the tough taskmaster Italy so desperately needs to escape its dangerous and protracted debt crisis. Monti, 68, speaks in the long, precise, jargon-laden sentences of an academic economist, which he was only four months ago. He does not employ the emotional flourishes or rousing rhetoric of a typical politician.

