

# Proletarian

Organ of the International Communist Party

## Down with French military intervention in Mali! Down with French imperialism!

Commencing on January 11, the French government launched a military intervention in Mali under the pretext of “saving” the country against an alleged imminent terrorist threat and in “response” to a request for aid by the “interim president” of the country.

But for several months the present left government, in continuity with the previous Sarkozy government, has multiplied its diplomatic maneuvering, its pressuring on the Government of Mali and the material preparation of military forces to organize a military attack against insurgents in northern Mali.

Not wanting to be seen as the main or the sole fighter, and to avoid the risk of a stalemate on the ground, the Hollande government has tried to establish an African military force, which it would “lead from behind” and to which it would only provide logistics to compensate for the weakness of the Malian army.

The French government has not shrunk from putting pressure on the interim president of Mali, Dioncounda Traoré (who was wounded by protesters in the Malian capital Bamako and recuperated in Paris, and was not really warm to a return to Mali), to request official aid; Traoré could not withstand the demands of his French supporter since he faced daily protests demanding his departure. From the beginning of the French military intervention, a state of emergency was declared in Bamako forbidding demonstrations, while the military devoted itself to abuses and operations of nocturnal intimidation against inhabitants of who had arrived from the North.

On the diplomatic front, a French military intervention met the more or less overt hostility of Algeria and the United States, and of other European countries. Special Envoy to the UN, former Italian Prime Minister Prodi (Italy has interests in Mali), declared himself a supporter of negotiations and excluded any military action for one year. The Algerian government was opposed to military operations, for fear its territory would be affected by the fighting, the borderlands between Mali and Algeria being not easily controllable, and probably because it had economic interests in the North of Mali. The Americans who trained part of the Malian military including Tuaregs who subsequently joined the rebellion (1), had publicly stated that a political solution was desirable and that the French plan for military intervention was «scrap». As a matter of fact, they had no desire to rescue a pro-French regime in Bamako: statements of unanimity and solidarity in the “war against terrorism” – to be understood as: the war against anything that threatens to disrupt the international capitalist order – cannot conceal sordid inter-imperialist rivalries!

The French imperialist vultures have defended their Africa “preserve” (to use the term of former Socialist President Mitterrand to designate the former colonies which became independent but remained dominated by France) for decades including wars and military interventions because it is the source of juicy profits for large and small neo-colonial companies. But the inexorable economic but also political pressure of competing imperialisms increasingly threatens the situation of French imperialism, forcing it to use force to maintain itself.

Finally, the “unilateral” French decision to unleash military intervention received the verbal support of all the imperialist powers, Americans, Russians and Chinese and even states in the region. Algeria, willingly or unwillingly, has agreed to open

its airspace to French bombers and close its border to the Mali rebels, while the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) began sending promised military forces into Mali.

But it is not certain that the current imperialist military intervention will be a cakewalk, the Government says that will last “as long as it takes,” while the amount of troops and resources mobilized increases daily: we are now talking about more than 3000 French soldiers from both the Ivory Coast and other African countries where they are stationed, and from the imperialist metropole while the military “experts” say the war will be long ...

Mali, twice as large as France but populated by only 15 million inhabitants, is a predominantly agricultural country (more than 70% of its population lives in the countryside). A former French colony, it includes within its borders populations diverse in language, customs and history which the weakness of the economic and social development has failed to unify, as evidenced by the recurrent insurrections of the Tuareg populations in the north. The international economic crisis, which has had a destabilizing effect in the countries of the region (see the case of neighboring Côte d'Ivoire) has inevitably aggravated the internal contradictions of Mali, where behind the façade of the “Malian democratic model” the racketeering ruling class is partnered with imperialism to plunder the country’s resources regardless of the fate of population; strikes have taken place in various companies, including gold mines, while unemployment and rising prices have aggravated discontent among the population.

In March last year, a few weeks before the elections, following a mutiny by soldiers after the military defeat against the rebels, a military junta overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré, suspected of trying to negotiate with the separatist Tuaregs, and took power. But under pressure from African countries and French imperialism, the junta was forced to give way to a “transitional government”; imposed from abroad, this government has no legitimacy in the eyes of the population, more sensitized to the declamations of the former putschists against political corruption. Meanwhile, the north of the country came under the control of Tuareg rebels and Islamist organizations that had been armed in Libya: the fall of the Gaddafi regime under the NATO bombardment had the unintended effect of eliminating one of the pillars of the imperialist order in the region ...

Sixty French companies are present in Mali. During the liberalization of the 90s, large state-owned companies (banks, telecommunications, textile, etc.) were privatized in favor of large French companies such as Bouygues, Vinci, Vivendi, etc..

Ahead of traditional exports of cotton and livestock, Mali’s main export, in recent years, is gold (70% of export earnings) whose highly profitable mines are the property of large British and South African corporations associated with the Malian government and of a subsidiary of Bouygues which ensures production (2). Lack of capital has prevented the exploitation of other natural resources in Mali, and the semi-desert North probably contains oil fields (with the Italian oil giant ENI, the Algerian Sonatrach and other smaller companies prospecting the region) and uranium.

However, the importance of Mali for the French capitalists

resides more in the strategic position of this country: in opposing the Malian rebels French soldiers protect the uranium deposits exploited by Areva in neighboring Niger (Areva has already found itself enmeshed in difficulties with the Tuaregs). But more generally it speaks of the necessity for French imperialism, faced with its competitors as well as being faced with the revolts of the people, to safeguard its dominance in the region: "In Mali, France is also struggling for the future of its presence in Africa" explains the editorialist of a bosses daily newspaper "Les Echos" to his readers (3).

But it is not only in Mali where French imperialism has entered into action in recent weeks. The same day that French planes began to attack the rebels in Mali, a major military operation was launched in Somalia to try to recover a secret service agent imprisoned by local Islamists; the French military did not bother to warn the Somali government about their action on its territory: the Hollande government that gushes about respect for "international law" in relation to Mali has demonstrated anew that all this puffery is only a scrap of paper that the imperialists gangsters invoke only when it suits them...

In the **Central African Republic**, the Hollande Government had sworn loud and long that there was no question of sending French soldiers to save the regime, which when faced with a sudden rebellion, called for help from Paris (actually there had already been a French military presence since 2002 within the framework of the operation "Boali" for the "consolidation of peace"! ). Having come to power in a military coup endorsed (or caused?) by Paris, the President Bozizé had finally tired of the imperialists who characterized his regime as "autistic" because he refused to follow their "advice". By late December, in spite of the declarations of Hollande there were hundreds of French soldiers (they are now about 600) sent to the capital Bangui, but it was just, it seems, to "protect" French nationals! In fact, with Chadian soldiers already in the country, these soldiers were tasked to deter a rebel thrust towards Bangui, while putting pressure on the regime. The "message" of the French imperialists has registered, it seems: Bozizé has accepted the formation of a government acceptable to the opposition as well as his scheduled departure from power. This is how the Socialist/Green French government views non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries ...

The military interventions and wars waged for decades by French imperialism in Africa (the latest being in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire), are in no way motivated by "humanitarian" or "democratic" concerns as claimed by official propaganda; they are exclusively caused by the need to defend the interests of companies that continue to fleece its former colonies and amplify their business affairs elsewhere.

If despite the economic constraints which force it to cut expenditures, and even "resize" its military, French imperialism made the effort to maintain a network of military bases that grid a portion of Africa, it is because it extracts hard cash benefits from its role as gendarme of the region!

French imperialism thus represents a **direct menace** to all possible liberation struggles of the proletarians and oppressed and exploited peoples of these countries; and more generally a menace to the fate of civilian populations which are always the victims in clashes between bourgeois states and forces.

But the bourgeoisie and their political stooges will also make the workers of France pay for their war: first by increasing police pressure particularly to migrant workers from these regions (the police and military "Vigipirate" plan was reinforced and, according to press reports, police are seeking to increase surveillance of the many tens of thousands of workers from Mali in France), and secondly by worsening capitalist exploitation of all workers.

If at the same time as the war in Mali was triggered, an "historic" agreement was signed between the employers and the more collaborationist trade unions to more fully bind the workers to the capitalists' requirements, and Renault announced the elimination of thousands of jobs, this is obviously just a sheer coincidence of the calendar.

But fundamentally the imperialist war externally and the social war internally are only two aspects of the same **attack by capitalism** to restore its rate of profit by increasing exploitation, misery and oppression. And it is no coincidence that this capitalist attack which was met by the unanimous approval of all French political parties, from the National Front to the PCF, is led by a leftist government: a right-wing Government could never deal such blows without provoking much more reaction! As always, the reformist lackeys of the bourgeoisie – the large political and trade union apparatuses and their far left followers) – are the only ones able to paralyze the working class when it is hit by the class enemy.

The outbreak of the war in Mali, which caused the backlash of the bloody attack in the In Amenas gas field in Algeria, must be understood by the proletariat as an illustration of what capitalism in crisis reserves for them: not a future of gradual improvement of their conditions after a difficult period, but a **future of blood and tears**, which can only be escaped through struggle. Because capitalism only exists due to their exploitation, the proletarians of the imperialist countries have the opportunity to put an end to the capitalist system that has covered the globe in blood; they must fight without hesitation against all bourgeois attacks with the perspective of the revival of the revolutionary class struggle which in the past allowed them to hurl themselves into the attack against capitalism: **the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains, they have a world to win!**

- **Down with the imperialist intervention in Mali!**
- **No to the union sacrée in support of the imperialist war!**
- **Down with French imperialism!**
- **Long live the international union of the proletariat!**
- **Long live the renaissance of the class struggle against global capitalism!**

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(1) See the article of the New York Times 01/14/13 detailing U.S. spending for military training in Mali, as part of the U.S. anti-terrorism policy in Africa. According to the Times 1600 military trained by the Americans (of the 8000 that comprise the Malian army) have joined the rebellion with arms and equipment! <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/world/africa/french-jets-strike-deep-inside-islamist-held-mali.html?pagewanted=1>

"The Islamist rebellion has used American-trained soldiers and officers who defected from Mali's regular army last year, taking their counter-terrorism training, their advanced combat skills, and their knowledge of western intelligence methods with them. France is now facing off against an Islamist foe that the United States has unwittingly assisted--and the U.S. is barely offering help.." See <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2013/01/14/Leading-From-Behind-Part-II-France-Intervenues-in-Mali-After-US-Strategy-Collapses>

(2) Malian gold mines are particularly profitable. According to a report by IFHR (International Federation for Human Rights) in September 2007, in 2005 the production of an ounce of gold cost \$95 while garnering \$245 when sold on the market. The price of an ounce of gold is now over \$ 1,600, while the cost of production has hardly increased. No wonder the South African Randgold announced record profits last year for its Malian Morila mine! Randgold and Anglogold outsource production to a subsidiary of Bouygues, Somadex. In 2005, Somadex fired 530 workers for going on strike. See <http://www.peuples-solidaires.org/293-mali-sombres-mines-d%E2%80%99or/>

(3) See Les Echos, 1/18-19/13