



Mali: imperialist intervention offers no hope for working masses

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Soldiers of former colonial power France deployed to maintain order in imperialism's own chaotic legacy.

From Liberia to the Congo and Somalia; Sierra Leone to Rwanda and Burundi; Sudan to South-Sudan and Kenya; Ivory Coast, Nigeria and now Mali, significant proportions of post-colonial or neo-colonial Africa are witnessing state failures.

As the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), has always emphasized, the major undercurrent of this failure, whether manifesting as wars, terrorist rebellions, coup d'états or unstable governments, is the incapacity of these states to meet the basic necessities of the ordinary masses.

The slide into chaos and anarchy is further exacerbated by unresolved national questions, the roots of which lie in the resource-grabbing motivated partitioning of Africa and the drawing of artificial boundaries by the former colonial powers. The integration of neo-colonial African countries into the global orbit of capitalism – in truth a re-colonization agenda – has come with the imposition of neo-liberal anti-poor economic policies, through which wealth is consolidated in fewer hands while the vast majority of the poor working masses suffer economic deprivation.

The real tragedy of Africa is that these countries are rich in human and natural resources, so much so that poverty should be an aberration. However, these resources have brought more pain than benefits. The richer some of the countries are in mineral resources, for example Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo, the more wars, chaos and civil wars there are.

The crisis in Mali is only the latest chapter of a sordid tale. The intervention of French imperialism and the ECOWAS forces won't be the last, due to the increasing fragility of so-called African democracies. It is this fragility that made the Malian ruling class – both military and civilian – embrace foreign intervention. The US-trained junior army officers, who initially staged the coup against the civilian government, had to back-track having realized how ill-equipped and indeed ill motivated their troops are. Neither would the defeat of the Islamist forces in Northern Mali bail the vast majority of Malians out of poverty as long as the capitalist system of exploitation holds sway.

While the immediate cause of the current crisis is the push by the remnants of the Tuareg forces, loyal to the former regime of Muhammad Gaddafi in Libya, to spearhead a move to forcefully grab a homeland, the underlying factor which made the job much easier was the fact that the government in Bamako has virtually lost all legitimacy because of its inability to solve any of the

fundamental problems confronting Malian society. In calling for foreign military intervention, the Malian ruling class was only acting to type, having pushed the economy to a state of dependence on foreign aid just to survive. As Walter Rodney wrote in his famous book 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa', "if economic power is centred outside of national African boundaries, then political and military power in any real sense is also centred outside until and unless the masses of peasants and workers are mobilized to offer an alternative to a the system of sham political independence".

Indeed, it is this economic dependence that also makes Mali vulnerable to any crisis in the international commodity market being an economy that rests on the twin pillars of agricultural production and gold mining. In 2001, Mali became Africa's third largest producer of gold. It is not ruled out that the country's rich gold deposits were a major attraction for the rebels; just as the vast mineral resources in the DRC have continued to encourage repeated armed rebellion. And just like diamond blood money was a central factor in the Charles Taylor-led rebel wars that gripped the Mano River region – Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire – in the 1990s up to the recent period.

Yet, Mali ranks among the twenty five poorest countries in the world. According to the African Economic Outlook, economic growth actually declined to just 1.1% in the country in 2011, a development attributed to the "post-election crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the Libya war, and the rise in oil, gas and food prices". As a consequence poverty is on the rise while unemployment has hit the more youthful segments of the population including 15.4% of 15-39 year olds while "young job seekers represent 81.5% of all unemployed people". All this happened after the country had taken an IMF loan and before the rebels' incursion into Northern Mali.

Unfortunately, this level of poverty will not stop the imperialists from extracting a tribute for the cost of the on-going war, just as Iraq was, and still is, being made to pay for the Gulf war with her oil resources and Liberia is being made to pay with her abundant rubber plantations which are now being recklessly sold to foreign economic interests so much so that the world's largest producer of rubber cannot boast of a single rubber factory. In Mali, this tribute will come in the form of further ruthless exploitation of the gold deposits and neo-liberal economic policies of privatization of the leading sectors of the economy.

After years of military expeditions by the leading world capitalist powers, led by the United States, at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars and the killing of hundreds of thousands if not millions of combat forces and defenceless citizens, the countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, etc where the imperialist forces have waged wars against so-called terrorism remain more volatile, poverty-ridden, undemocratic and divided than ever. Predictably, the aftermath of the current imperialist/capitalist military expedition and adventure to Mali will only worsen the general socio-political situation in Mali. Already, insurgents have ambushed and killed some of the soldiers who were being deployed to Mali.

Socialists and genuine working class activists will continue to oppose imperialist intervention in Mali and other parts of Africa as they offer no hope for the working masses. But the forces of disintegration will continue to surface in the absence of the decisive intervention of the working class acting in solidarity with the poor peasants and farmers.

It has therefore become imperative to raise the social consciousness of the working class through the building of powerful political movements that seeks to take power on the basis of socialist ideas. Only a government of workers and poor farmers can counter pose the guarantee of the right to self-determination

to attempts by armed groups to forcefully and undemocratically impose themselves on the people.

From Mali to Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya and the Sudans, such a government will also have to take the decisive step of nationalizing the commanding sectors of the economies under working class democratic management and control in order to liberate the resources needed to embark on a programme of massive public works in education, health, housing, roads and rural infrastructure.

We demand:

- No to imperialist intervention in Northern Mali! Withdrawal of foreign troops from Mali - withdrawal of French troops from Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Tchad...
- For the building of multi-ethnic and democratically-organised defence committees by the Malian population, in order to drive out all reactionary militias, but also to resist any attempt at neo-colonial military occupation of the North
- No to the state of emergency, for the reinstatement of all democratic freedoms in Mali
- Self-determination for the Tuaregs! All peoples of the Sahel and of the Sahara, as well as all the peoples within each country, must have equality of rights, and must independently decide their own future!
- The wealth of Mali belongs to the Malian people! For the nationalisation of the big land properties, the mines and other strategic sectors of the Malian economy. For the financing of a real economic development plan based on the needs of, and democratically controlled by, the Malian masses.
- Down with the regime in Bamako! For a government of the workers and the poor farmers, to begin the implementation of socialist policies to develop the country. Such a government should be built on the basis of a mass struggle democratically organised from below.

SA government backing up imperialist invasion

The South African government's response to the crisis in Mali shows just as much disregard for the democratic wishes and aspirations of ordinary Malians as French imperialism and the unpopular Bamako government. It is also a further demonstration of the the ANC government's servile, 'your wish is my command' attitude towards President Zuma who reportedly commented that he was pleasantly surprised that the French president had phoned him to consult beforehand, declaring "there was no other alternative" to French military intervention.

This puzzled many as Zuma had previously opposed European intervention in Libya and Cote D'Ivoire (for reasons of SA's own imperialist ambitions not concern for ordinary people). To resolve this contradiction, a deputy minister from the Department of International Relations and Cooperation was embarrassingly wheeled out to clarify what Zuma actually meant. Apparently South Africa's support for the intervention in Mali was not referring to the French bombardment and invasion, but to the UN Security Resolution for an African force to be sent into Mali.

This amounts to little more than the position that "African guns are better than European guns"! As the dominant ruling-class on the African continent this is simply a cover for the imperialist ambitions of the South African ruling class. They want to call the shots, literally, and have the final say over which regimes survive by SA largesse.

In addition to humanitarian aid, the South African government is making funds available for the 'capacitation of police forces' in Mali. But under whose control will this force be and where will it be recruited from? This will almost certainly be a police force defending the interests of the ruling elite tasked with maintaining the status quo as established by military intervention. It is ruled out that this force will be under the democratic control of ordinary Malians. Again, SA seeks a lever for its own manipulation of the situation.

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