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Bamako World Social Forum

Another Africa is Possible

- News from around the world -

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This year the World Social Forum is being held on three continents. Before the Forum in Caracas, the first big gathering of the global justice movement took place in Bamako, the capital of Mali, from 19th to 23rd January. More than 20,000 activists from social movements discussed and proposed initiatives for "another Africa in another world". The following report of the Forum appeared in the January 26th, 2006 issue of Rouge, weekly paper of the LCR.

At the World Social Forum (WSF) in Bamako, Mali, the existence of two camps in the global justice movement was palpable. A global justice "seeking respect", trying to find a "more human" compromise with neo-liberalism, contrasted with a radical African global justice.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Mali1a.jpg>]

The initiatives of the "stars" of the global justice movement were in contrast with the debates that were organized by the peasants of Niger, the community radio Kayira, the miners and the wives of union leaders who are at present in living in clandestinity from Morilla (Malian gold mines belonging to the French company Bouygues), the youth of the Union of Democratic African Youth, the cotton producers of CMDT (Malian Textile Development Company), the rail workers and citizens in struggle of Cocidirail (Citizens' Collective for the Restitution and the Integrated Development of Malian Railways).

On the one hand, an official summit, on the other, the summit of an African social movement which is building its structures and developing outside of the control of states and international bodies.

The differences between these two camps, about the project to be put forward for another world and about possible ways of getting there, could be symbolized by what happened with the Malian sans-papiers (undocumented migrants) who were recently expelled from France. These militants proposed a solidarity demonstration in front of the French Embassy on the question of the sans-papiers and the racism that immigrants suffer from.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Mali3a.jpg>]

Unfortunately, the former Malian Minister of culture, Aminata Traore, a leading figure on the institutional wing of the forum, intervened at the starting point of the demonstration with the aim of cancelling it.

This intervention discouraged some of the people who had begun to assemble. The several hundred demonstrators who finally decided to continue found themselves, a little further on, faced with the police, who prevented them getting any closer to the Embassy.

A few hours earlier, a representative of Chirac had been invited to the debate on "What kind of African youth, faced with imperialism?" organized in the "Thomas Sankara" youth camp [1].

So we were able to hear her say, in front of an assembly of astounded militants, that Chirac liked "Africa and African students". Of course, the emissary of the French government quickly fled in the face of the radical interventions of African militants who were revolted by her provocative behaviour.

So, the French government is able to come and disrupt a militant debate on imperialism, while French imperialist

policies - creating sans-papiers by the thousand - cannot be challenged when they concern Africans. Everyone had to take account of the different positions adopted at this point, which showed up the limits of the forum.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Mali2a.jpg>]

The JCR, the LCR and militants of the Fourth International from several African sections were able to organize a series of meetings with radical global justice militants who were present in Bamako.

Our presence in the demonstrations, the contacts that were exchanged with comrades from the left of the African social movement, the idea that was put forward, during the debate on "African youth faced with imperialism", of a joint campaign in France and on the African continent for the dismantling of French bases in Africa, all this will enable us to strengthen our activity in solidarity with Africa. The Nairobi Forum in 2007 will be the occasion to draw a first balance sheet of the work that was begun in Bamako.

[1] The young army captain Thomas Sankara came to power in Burkina Faso in 1983 and headed a radical regime until his assassination in 1987