



# SENEGAL VICTORY OVER MACKY SALL'S MACHINATIONS OPENS UP A NEW SITUATION!

The elections in Senegal on 24 March have transformed the entire situation. With Macky Sall ejected from power despite all his schemes, a breach has opened up. To fulfil the powerful aspirations of the population, massive mobilisations of workers and young people will have to seize this promising breach to assert their own interests, starting now!

## **'Woe to those who would gag their people!'**

Macky Sall's 12 years in office marked the continuation of the brutal plundering of wealth by multinationals (especially French, but not exclusively). It was a hyper-authoritarian regime, where repression was omnipresent. Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Ousmane Sonko (the new president and prime minister) were themselves victims. Promises of a 'break with the past' - including institutional reforms - understandably raised high hopes.

But Macky Sall himself in 2012 presented himself as the candidate for change, just like Abdoulaye Wade before him. Diomaye Faye and Sonko want to distinguish themselves because they do not come from the same parties. So, are we heading for a new era of democracy

in Senegal, starting with an end to repression? The appointment of two (military) generals to the Ministries of the Interior and the Armed Forces should sound a warning. They were heavily involved in previous regimes, including that of Macky Sall. Jean Baptiste Tine (the new Minister of the Interior) was a pillar of that regime as head of the gendarmerie, which he did not leave until 2021 after the arrest of Ousmane Sonko. Sonko has promised to abolish the post of prime minister, but what will he replace it with? We don't know. He is not the first to make such a promise. Moreover, the post of prime minister has already been abolished several times and always reinstated. To change these institutions, on which the entire post-colonial Senegal was built (especially with Senghor), will require much more than a change of president... especially without a majority in the National Assembly.

As Thomas Sankara said: 'Woe to those who would gag their people!'. From now on, young people, workers and the communities can organise and mobilise to make the most immediate democratic demands a reality:

- reopening of all closed land and sea links, freedom of movement;

# SOCIALISTWORLD.NET

- formation of militant trade unions in all workplaces to organise workers and wage struggles to win pay rises, new jobs, etc.;
- the right to assemble, organise and demonstrate freely without fear of repression; an end to administrative closures of schools and universities;
- against corruption: for the revocability of elected representatives and the limitation of their allowances to the average salary of a skilled worker;
- equality for all, against all forms of repression and discrimination (ethnicity/origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)!

### **A victory for the mass movement in the face of an intolerable situation**

The old regime embodied by Macky Sall has made every desperate attempt possible to prolong its agony. Cancelling, then postponing, then bringing forward the date of the elections; closing universities, isolating the poorest regions (in particular Casamance in the south, with the 9-month interruption of the ferry link between Dakar and Zinguichor – the town where Sonko is mayor!), releasing Diomaye Faye just one week before the election, imprisoning opposition activists or ordinary people just for publicly supporting Sonko...

The very fact that the elections were held was a victory for the mass protest movement. Mass demonstrations, a 'dead city' day in Dakar and multiple strikes played a key role. Of course, social networks helped to popularise these actions - which they could in no way replace. Sonko's candidacy had to embody this aspiration for radical change. Because for the population, the daily situation is simply unbearable.

Unemployment is at an all-time high, with almost 20% of the working population out of work. Corruption has been unbearable for over 60 years. Prices are soaring, particularly for energy and especially food, so much so that even those who have a job earn just enough to do the shopping and pay the bills, and nothing more. Many can't make ends meet, with inflation at almost 16% in just two years. Senegal has the second-highest cost of living in Africa, just behind Côte d'Ivoire. Day labour is commonplace; a precariousness encouraged by the 'Emerging Senegal Plan' implemented since 2014... It is indeed all these policies favouring capitalists that were massively rejected by this mass electoral revolt.

### **Democracy and neo-colonial hypocrisy**

And yet, in the international press, journalists' comments rivalled each other in paternalistic cretinism. "Ah, really, these manoeuvres, what a shame for such a democratic country", or "Oh, how attached the Senegalese are to their democracy". Of course, never a word about the struggles

of the workers and the people who won this victory. The voices of their capitalist masters! Which were worried that they would no longer be able to do business in a country full of opportunities for them.

France and other imperialist powers have never said anything about the repression. But that's logical. In Senegal, as in France and elsewhere, repression and authoritarianism are the normal march of "democracy" under capitalism in crisis. It didn't bother these "democracy" worshippers that more than 60 people lost their lives in 2021 and 2023 because of the repression of social movements, especially when these were mainly young men from the suburbs of Dakar or the Casamance region. Further proof of their hypocrisy. Macron & Co can only criticise a regime if it inconveniences the capitalists and multinationals whose interests their government represents... and the same applies to other imperialist countries.

### **A deep political crisis**

In addition to the shenanigans of Macky Sall and the APR-Yaakaar (Alliance for the Republic), the results of the 2024 elections have dramatically demonstrated the depth of the political crisis in Senegal. This reflects a situation found in many other countries around the world. Voter turnout was down to 61.3% (from 66% in 2019). Traditional political parties have collapsed. The historic Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), having still not been allowed to run a candidate (but without having waged any struggle to do so, apart from a vague legal appeal, as in 2019), ended up rallying to Sonko, hoping perhaps to have a place in the government... it's a miss (at least for the moment)!

No candidate apart from Amadou Ba (Macky Sall's former prime minister and his candidate) and Diomaye Faye managed to get more than 3% of the vote. It was a real electoral duel, with no second round. Amadou Ba won only 35.8% of the vote, or 1.6 million, whereas Macky Sall won 2.6 million in 2019. Diomaye Faye won 54.3% of the vote, or 2.4 million. This shows that despite this powerful desire to get rid of anti-social policies, part of the population is disillusioned with the situation. Workers and students are also suffering from the political crisis on their own side.

Building a political voice for workers and students

Senegal has a rich history of mass struggles and revolts, including in the very recent past. But there is a desperate need for a party that can organise workers and students on a massive scale. A party to lead campaigns, organise struggles and defend their interests. A party that is independent of the imperialists and Senegal's big bosses, but also of all the schemers and corrupt politicians who serve them and help themselves in the

process. A party against the neo-liberal policies and capitalist exploitation that are limiting the development of Senegal and the entire African continent. This need is also felt in the trade unions, where the majority doctrine is more one of “responsible participation” (and therefore class collaboration) than an uncompromising defence of workers’ interests. One of the tasks facing the workers is to build such a party and the fighting trade unions to build and carry their own voice.

“The role of a new party would be to organise workers and students on a massive scale. It should put at the heart of its programme that wealth must belong to the workers and the population, not to the imperialists (whether French or others) or to the super-rich Senegalese bosses. It should fight for the nationalisation/expropriation, without compensation, of the main companies, energy, transport and infrastructure, and particularly the banking and financial system, at 100%, because this is the only way to get out of the CFA and cancel the debt. A party that fights against capitalism and to replace it with democratic socialism, in the hands of the workers and the people, the only system that can enable us to emancipate ourselves from the imperialists and really develop the country by planning economic production according to needs, and thus put an end to unemployment, poverty...”

Gauche Révolutionnaire, “Sénégal : Macky Sall dégage, et tout ton régime pourri avec!”  
12 March 2024

### **Anger expressed through strikes**

There have already been many struggles and strikes, because the workers have clearly understood that the situation is favourable for asserting their demands. In Bambey (centre), the day after the elections, students went on strike for two days and organised a boycott of room rents to protest against the water and electricity cuts on campus, which were so severe that the infirmary was closed. The Zinguichor regional hospital was on strike for 3 days, from 15 to 18 April, to demand a pay rise, better organisation of work and payment of retirement allowances. In Dakar, workers at Groupe Futurs Médias were also recently on strike against wage arrears and the abolition of the “13th month” wage. In Kaffrine (centre), Dakar and elsewhere in the country, local authority workers have been on a well-attended strike for an across-the-board pay rise and to obtain civil servant status for the workers. For the past two years, these workers have been regularly called out on 120-hour strikes by the unions. A trade unionist from the commune of Grand Yoff describes the state of mind: “Local authority workers are tired, they’re experiencing real difficulties, and why

should they increase the salaries of most state employees while leaving us out? It’s abnormal, and we won’t stop demanding and showing our anger until our demands are satisfied. (Quoted by Dakar Actu, 31 March 2024).

A joint call for a nationwide strike on the same day will be a decisive first step in uniting the deep anger of the Senegalese people in the struggle. The situation is open, now is the time! There is a need for a mobilisation that will make a strong impact on the situation, that will impose on the new government that if it is really on the side of the people, it must give its full support to the workers’ demands.

- Jobs for all, with decent wages!
- For equal pay for equal work between men and women (who earn 50% less than men for the same job!)
- Lower the prices and then freeze them, against the high cost of living!
- Public services (energy, hospitals, education, early childhood, culture, transport and infrastructure) with sufficient staff and resources, without subcontracting and the private sector coming in to make profits...

### **Where should the wealth go?**

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Senegal is poised for economic growth of more than 8% in 2024. Newly discovered natural gas and oil deposits promise revenues estimated at FCFA 400 billion over 30 years. The crucial question is: who will benefit from this wealth?

Diomaye-Sonko have launched an audit of the contracts signed with private energy providers. And the new energy minister said that afterwards, the contracts “will be revised if necessary”. Is there really any doubt? What’s more, we wonder by what miracle multinationals as rapacious as BP (25 billion in profits in 2023) or the smaller but no less rapacious Kosmos and Woodside would kindly accept seeing such a “revision” take these profits away from them. It’s exactly the same question for capitalists from other countries, who have invested massively in Senegal (rising from 2% to 9% of GDP over the last ten years, and exceeding 2.6 billion dollars in 2022).

The question of leaving the FCFA is still unresolved. Sonko has already toned down his rhetoric on the issue, moving from a promise of “rupture” to a more nuanced attitude of “seeing the options”. Macron had also “promised” in 2019, but nothing has materialised since. In fact, since 1983, every deadline for renegotiating the CFA franc has been postponed. Everyone is saying “leave the CFA”. It doesn’t hurt for France to say “Of course we will see” about the CFA franc, because the outlook is so vague. Even the military juntas of the AES (Alliances des États du Sahel) have not left the CFA despite their

announcements (while they left ECOWAS as soon as they announced it) - and not for nothing, since the debt and trade of CFA countries are denominated in dollars. The Senegalese government's objective is to find a way to trade more freely with the rest of the world (ECOWAS first and foremost), rather than being tied to a currency largely controlled by France. And once again, exit or not, the question will be: who benefits? Once again, massive and unified action by workers to assert their interests, independently of the capitalists, is absolutely crucial.

### **10 men = 20% of Senegal's wealth?**

For there is the question of the Senegalese capitalists themselves. In the new government, many ministers are really their friends. The Minister for Agriculture is a banker; the Minister for the Economy spent 15 years in the top echelons of the IMF, whose austerity plans have already fuelled anger and mass movements in Senegal in the 1990s and 2000s... The Pastef's "Project" is very clearly focused on supporting the private sector, which always benefits a rich and privileged minority at the expense of the population (and the environment). They are already salivating. The testimony of the President of the Senegalese Investors Club is edifying: "We can already mention Industries Chimiques du Sénégal [the largest phosphate producer], which we are going to do everything we can to get back - I'm not saying 'nationalise'" (quoted by Jeune Afrique, 23 March 2024). This social class see things clearly. They want the profits and wealth for themselves, to do business and make profits, not to benefit the population.

Already today, the ten richest men in Senegal, the country's biggest capitalists, together own a fortune of 5.3 billion dollars. That means that ten people alone hold almost a fifth of the country's wealth!

- On the contrary, we say that the main industrial sectors of the economy must be nationalised and managed collectively by the workers themselves, democratically, so that they are the ones who control everything, put a definitive end to fraud and personal enrichment and ensure that the wealth really benefits the whole population.

### **For a revolutionary struggle for democratic socialism**

For things to really change, the whole profit-driven system - capitalism - needs to be tackled. Entire regions are kept in poverty because they are dominated by foreign capital. The current global situation indicates that the competition for "market share" (i.e. to get hold of wealth) will be even fiercer in the years to come. On the one hand, the imperialist powers are all competing more fiercely than ever (the US, the EU, Canada, but also China, India, Russia, Turkey, etc.). On the other hand,

the instability in many countries and regions (notably the Sahel) means that countries like Senegal, which are seen as more "stable", will be highly coveted by capitalists of all stripes, because they see a more favourable business climate there. The only constant in all this is that it will all be at the expense of the people, and unless the root of the problem is tackled, no lasting solution can be found.

But this will never happen without the working class and the people resisting and fighting back. Given the economic crisis of capitalism, economic growth and stability are now a thing of the past. The notion of "Africa rising" or "emerging countries" has always been a myth, but it is an even greater illusion today. In reality, it was in the 1960s, thanks to revolutionary struggles, that African countries achieved their highest standard of living for their populations.

Only revolutionary workers' and peoples' movements, organised on independent political platforms, which establish workers' governments based on revolutionary and democratic socialism, can lead the continent out of the capitalist quagmire. With public ownership of the core sectors of the economy and resources, under the democratic control and management of the workers and oppressed, the enormous resources and potential of the continent can be harnessed both nationally and continentally, in the interests of the workers and poor of Africa. Any success in winning support for a programme of revolutionary socialism in a particular country can serve as an example to show the way forward to the working class and youth of the continent who are hungry for change.

### **Join the Committee for a Workers' International!**

Such revolutionary struggles are the order of the day. As Trotsky said, "revolutionaries don't create revolutions, they prepare them"! Marxists are not people who wait passively, fatalistically, for "something to happen". The CWI is a world party fighting the class struggle in every country where we are organised. We are inspired by the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky to intervene actively in the struggle to advance it at all levels and in all sectors, using the transitional method and waving the banner of socialist revolution on which Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is inscribed. The overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society are the future. Join the CWI in this struggle!