

French President Hollande prepares assault on the working class

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Statements over the past week by newly elected French president François Hollande, his interim Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius gave a clear indication of the imperialist, anti-worker intentions of the new bourgeois government of the Socialist Party (PS).

Hollande is lining up the forces he will deploy to defend the interests of French capitalism in the turbulent economic, social and political situation developing in Europe and globally.

There are sharp differences among the euro zone countries on how to manage the European debt crisis, now also enveloping Spain and Italy. The southern countries, deeply indebted and needing massive financial aid in order to avoid default, increasingly see France as their ally. The northern countries oppose any more bailouts unless the finances of the debtor countries are placed under virtually total control of Brussels bureaucrats, acting at the orders of Germany, the most powerful European economy.

Amid these profound conflicts there is one issue upon which these bourgeois governments agree: the debts to the banks and big investors must be paid for by the working class, through slashing jobs and wages to boost profitability and “competitiveness.”

Despite his reformist rhetoric in the presidential campaign, Hollande is determined to impoverish the working class to satisfy the insatiable appetites of the banks. This is clear from the bullying remarks he made on Greek Mega TV before the June 17 vote, aimed at steamrolling Greeks into voting for pro-austerity parties.

The French president showed no sympathy for the plight of the Greek workers and youth who, their economy destroyed by austerity measures imposed by EU and IMF bailout conditions, endure 25 percent and

50 percent unemployment rates and the destruction of social services. “If the impression is given that the Greeks wish to depart from the commitments which they have taken and abandon any perspective of straightening up their finances, then there will be countries which will prefer to terminate Greece’s presence in the euro zone,” he threatened.

Piling on the bullying, he warned: “As much as is possible, and I will see to it, as the president of France, to provide Greece with funds for growth, for the improvement of its situation, similarly, the pure and simple abandoning of the memorandum [austerity measures required in order to receive the bailouts from the EU, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund] will be seen by many members of the euro zone as a break from it.” He admonished: “The euro zone countries may remain in the euro zone, on condition that they wish to do so.”

Prime Minister Ayrault, speaking to a French audience on France Info radio, expressed himself more discreetly, but with the same intransigence as his president. He wished to reassure the banks that a PS government would firmly impose austerity. He was also preparing the trade unions for their job of policing working class opposition. Already, since the May 6 presidential election, Ayrault has met twice with trade union and employers’ leaders to prepare the Social Conference on July 17 where the government and the “social partners” will work out their joint economic and social plans to defend French capitalism.

Le Monde explained that the SP leaders had to disguise their intentions during the period between the presidential election and the June 17 second round of the parliamentary election. Their purpose was: “To prepare people’s minds for the difficult times without making them despair. To announce to the French

people a painful future without discouraging them. Because there is an election campaign to complete.”

Both Hollande and Ayrault have spoken publicly of the need for “sacrifices.” In remarks June 14, Ayrault made reference to an upcoming report on government finances by the Court of Accounts, which is expected to be the basis for new austerity plans.

“The situation is difficult,” he said. “Yes, it’ll be harder than we thought. The Court of Accounts report to be published at the end of June should reveal a deteriorated legacy. Sacrifices will be necessary.”

The Court of Accounts already gave a preview on May 30, reported by Atlantico.fr: “To really reduce state expenses, it’s going to be necessary to carry out a more drastic strategy of the ‘reduction or elimination of the least efficient elements.’ The new executive will have to redouble its efforts. It is imperative since the state finances are still in a very bad state, according to the Court of Accounts.”

In foreign policy, French imperialism seeks to use its military superiority in relationship to Germany and the other European powers in order to pursue its own imperialist interests. This was revealed at a press conference given by Foreign Minister Fabius. He gave notice that a PS government will continue the Sarkozy government’s imperialist and militarist intervention in Syria in alliance with the NATO powers.

This is in line with endorsement of Sarkozy’s military adventure in Libya by the entire bourgeois “left” (the PS, Communist Party, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Left Party, and the New Anti-capitalist Party). The attack last year on Libya and the impending attack this year on Syria are part of Western imperialism’s strategy of remodeling the Middle East and Central Asia by regime changes favourable to its oil and gas interests. Hollande and Fabius have also pledged to finance and arm the military intervention by France’s proxies in Mali and the Sahel region, where France has important uranium mining operations.

Fabius described Syrian president Bashar al-Assad as a “pampered hireling at the head of a band of assassins” and announced a strengthening of international pressure on “a regime of death and blood.”

He asserted, “France intends to be in the forefront of action against Bashar al-Assad,” and stoked up the hysterical selective humanitarian outrage of

imperialism and its servile media against Assad. He ignored the atrocities committed by proxy forces like the Sunni sectarian militias armed and financed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, France and the United States. He ranted against the civil war that France had helped to foment: “The situation in Syria has taken an even more and abominable turn ... Children of eight to nine years of age are put in front of tanks, raped and murdered.”

Figaro reported: “Consequently, Paris has declared its intention to ‘strengthen sanctions against Damascus.’ Laurent Fabius stressed that he was going to ‘immediately’ contact his European and American counterparts with the view to adopting ‘the harshest sanctions’, not only against ‘Bashar and his clique’, but also against those who help him, notably the military.” He threatened that if they did not “abandon ship” they “will be put on trial.”

According to the newspaper: “Laurent Fabius wanted a resolution to be submitted [to the United Nations Security Council] under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter requiring stringent measures of application, for sanctions, and if need be, military force.”



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