

The NPA's support for France's wars in Africa

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France's rampage through its former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa is an indictment of reactionary pseudo-left groups like the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA).

Having applauded wars in Libya and Syria and called for the election of now-hated president François Hollande, who is waging the wars, they bear political responsibility for the blood French imperialism is shedding in Africa.

The NPA's recent attempts to distance itself from Hollande's Socialist Party (PS) and its wars in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR) reek of bad faith. As working class anger rises against Hollande, the NPA is trying to cover its tracks and keep the wars from exposing its own role as a bribed tool of neo-colonial intrigue.

On December 5, in a brief note titled "No to French military intervention in CAR," the NPA criticizes PS claims that the CAR war aims to halt violence between Christians and Muslims after French-backed Seleka rebels ousted CAR president François Bozizé in March.

It writes, "This intervention has the same objectives as the one in Mali. In both cases as in the rest of Africa, the aim is to maintain the political order of the great powers, as the regimes they have installed lose all power. For the Hollande-Ayrault government, it is a question of preserving the privileges of France the old colonial power, of French multinational corporations like Areva, Bolloré, or Total. Military intervention will only visit new suffering and tragedy on the population. French troops out of Africa!"

The NPA's anti-war posturing is empty rhetoric. France's wars are indeed filthy acts of imperialist plunder, for which workers in France also pay through rising taxes and new social cuts. They aim to boost Paris's strategic position, the profits of its oil corporations and banks. But this is also the source of the cash flow that the bourgeoisie directs—through its funding of the union bureaucracy, media programs, and grants for "left" academics—to pseudo-left forces like the NPA.

It is for this reason that, after the working class uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011, the NPA backed wars in Libya and Syria it proclaimed to be "revolutions." And despite its phony posturing, it is also why the NPA in reality supports war in Mali and the CAR.

The NPA writes not as an opponent of imperialism, but as an advocate of different, cleverer policies to pursue increasingly unpopular wars. It argues in particular for relying more on the troops provided by impoverished African Union (AU) regimes to assist and support French forces in Mali and the CAR. It complains, "France was not supposed to intervene in Mali, but only support African forces.... French forces must give way to African ones."

While the NPA tries to posture as opponent of French wars in Africa before the working class at home, its affiliates on the ground in Africa make no such pretenses.

The NPA's co-thinkers in Mali, African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence (SADI), argue for deeper French intervention against

Tuareg-nationalist and Islamist forces in northern Mali. Strengthened by aid from NATO-backed Islamist forces in nearby Libya, these forces came close to launching an offensive on Bamako, Mali's capital located in the south of the country, last year. An integral part of the Bamako establishment, SADI openly praised the military junta that took power in a coup and now serves as France's puppet regime.

In a statement issued January 14 of last year, unambiguously titled "Statement of support for the army and security forces of Mali," SADI praised the junta's role in the war. As France's bombs fell on Mali and its troops marched through Bamako, SADI wrote, "The SADI party salutes the determination with which our soldiers and officers have confronted and routed the bloody terrorist hordes that invaded our country to subjugate and dominate us."

In its own press, the NPA interviewed SADI's representative in France, Mohamed Diarra. When the NPA asked Diarra about SADI's position on the French war, he replied, "Given the suffering of our population because of the jihadists, we did not condemn the intervention."

Diarra added that SADI hoped Paris would deepen its support for the Bamako junta: "We want a Malian army that would be strong enough and that would be helped enough."

By publishing such pro-war remarks, the NPA and SADI are peddling the same propaganda as the French corporate media. They make no attempt to reconcile these statements with the NPA's observation elsewhere that these wars aim to protect the privileges of French corporations or the pro forma demand to pull French troops from Africa.

This speaks volumes about the corrupt character of the forces that come together through the foreign policy operations of the NPA.

In Africa, its allies issue by turn nauseating tributes or the occasionally harmless criticism of the local dictatorships Paris uses to police its former colonies. In this, the pseudo-left lawyer or "humanitarian" activist finds his rightful place alongside coup-plotting African lieutenant colonels, Foreign Legionnaires, and plugged-in *barbouze* intelligence operatives through which Paris carries out its Africa policy.

In France, the former 1968 petty-bourgeois student radicals that lead the NPA have come to wield considerable influence in the French political establishment, in their own right and through ex-members who have risen to high ranks in the PS or the media. They are connected by their class interests and their social ties to the PS and its agenda of social austerity and war.

When the NPA tries to posture as an opponent of war despite its record of support for NATO interventions, its arguments become Orwellian.

Nervously noting that PS allies are silently backing the wars despite their rising unpopularity, the NPA criticizes the Stalinist French Communist Party's (PCF) position on the war in Mali for "not breaking with it, not condemning it. The 'lesser evil' argument and the danger of chaos has been invoked to back an intervention that initially (falsely) was presented as a targeted one, limited to air strikes."

These lines in fact read as indictments of the NPA's role in supporting

the Libya war, on which the NPA is deafeningly silent while writing on sub-Saharan Africa. As it pressed for NATO to bomb Libya in 2011, the NPA used precisely the same arguments it now condemns in Mali. Downplaying the imperialist interests at stake, it claimed NATO would launch a targeted intervention limited to air strikes that were a lesser evil needed to avert a greater humanitarian catastrophe: repression of pro-Western opposition forces by the Libyan regime.

As the time, the NPA's *International Viewpoint* web site wrote: "Of course we all know that France, the UK, and the US are not driven by some sudden kindness—but by strategic interest in the oil-rich region."

It dismissed such uncomfortable truths, however, insisting that a NATO war in Libya was a lesser evil compared to a potential Libyan army attack on Al Qaeda-linked, pro-NATO opposition forces that it falsely promoted as revolutionary.

"None of these points are by themselves arguments for opposing the no-fly zone over Libya. Rejecting Western military intervention in Libya requires a better analysis of the risks and possible scenarios on the ground. And we do need to address some rather difficult objections—namely, the fact that the leaders of the opposition forces have been calling for a no-fly zone and that we have to come up with better alternatives than posting blogs of solidarity and anti-imperialism," it added.

The NPA then supported a war waged by Al Qaeda-linked forces and the CIA that killed tens of thousands of people, led to the NATO bombing of Tripoli and Sirte, and handed Libya over to a patchwork of far-right Islamist militias and criminal gangs. This was the prelude to the NPA's alignment with the CIA in yet another, even deadlier conflict: the ongoing imperialist proxy war in Syria.

The NPA's criticisms of the PCF on the Mali war are unprincipled and duplicitous. It does not oppose, but shares the Stalinists' pro-war positions. It would simply prefer that the PCF issue a few pro forma criticisms of imperialist war, "breaking with it" in words if not in deeds, so as to confuse the issue, posture as "left," and thus disorient opposition from the working class.

The NPA acts as a somewhat more astute defender of the interests of French imperialism and of the political establishment. It goes on to insist that its foreign policy operations must appear "independent" from the states whose interventions it is supporting.

It writes, "Our current long-term task is to rebuild a capacity for independent, progressive solidarity. This solidarity must not only be a 'principled' act, but a concrete engagement. For example, in the case of Afghanistan, there is support for the progressive feminist RAWA [Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan] organization; or the city of Tuzla in the Yugoslav conflict, this 'city of solidarity' towards which 'workers' convoys' traveled; or the secular, partially Marxist left of the Syrian resistance."

Only a party as deeply integrated into the imperialist state as the NPA could have chosen these operations as models of "independence" from imperialism. They are all, in one way or another, initiatives linked to or funded by imperialism to help it pursue wars of conquest.

RAWA is a former Maoist student organization founded in 1977 in Afghanistan that, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, fell rapidly into the orbit of the NATO powers that used the Soviet-Afghan war to undermine the Soviet Union. According to its web site, its founder, Meena, attended the PS's 1981 party congress to represent the anti-Soviet mujahedin forces. Amid growing conflict between RAWA and the CIA-backed Sunni fundamentalists that dominated the mujahedin, Meena was assassinated in 1987—a killing RAWA blames on both Afghan intelligence services and fundamentalist mujahedin.

RAWA has received increased funding and official praise since NATO began to exploit concern over the conditions facing Afghan women to justify invading and occupying their country. Among other awards, it

received an official Human Rights Prize from France in 2000, the SAIS-Novartis journalism prize in 2001, a 2002 honorary doctorate from the University of Antwerp, and a Special Congressional Recognition from the US Congress in 2004. It works with various foundations and Maoist groups in the West to fund its activities.

In a 1994 operation, as NATO partitioned Yugoslavia, a variety of petty-bourgeois "left" groups sent supply convoys to Tuzla in a political operation designed to promote the newly independent, NATO-backed Bosnian regime of President Alija Izetbegovic. This was part of a broader campaign that would culminate in the 1999 Kosovo War, in which NATO bombed Yugoslavia's former capital, Belgrade.

In the Tuzla operation, the French Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, the forerunner of the NPA) worked alongside the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) led by Cliff Slaughter, which broke from the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1986. They organized so-called Workers Aid to Bosnia convoys, launched with the support of Labour Party politician Michael Foot (see "Marxism, Opportunism and the Balkan Crisis").

The last example of an "independent" operation the NPA endorses is the bloody US-led proxy war in Syria—in which the NPA promoted Al Qaeda-linked Sunni Islamist militias armed by the CIA and its allies as "revolutionaries." These "revolutionaries" then organized death squads to terrorize sections of the country they had overrun. The NPA's absurd claim that there was a "partially Marxist left" inside the Syrian opposition apparently refers to the role of breakaway factions of the Stalinist Syrian Communist Party that promoted the CIA war.

The NPA's choice of a CIA proxy war to exemplify the type of "independent, progressive" operations it can support shows that its claims to oppose imperialism are political lies.

The NPA speaks for petty-bourgeois forces allied to imperialism as it launches a ruthless military offensive to impose neocolonial rule across the Middle East and Africa. They see the rising anger in the working class in France and among the popular masses of its former colonies not as the basis for a coming socialist revolution, which the NPA fears and opposes, but as a threat to the privileges of the social layers for which it speaks.

Before the French war in the CAR began, in an October 7 article titled "Faced with French intervention in Africa, let's fight our own imperialism," the NPA wrote: "The French state's military policy in Africa is that of an imperialist power that has lost a great deal of stature, that has had to abandon many positions, and that is threatened today in its main remaining sphere of influence. This threat comes from instability emerging from the conditions of its rule: the crises of many client states, deepening social decomposition hastened by free-market policies, and the rise of religious extremist movements."

The NPA has reacted to this state of affairs—its pro forma calls for French troops to leave Africa notwithstanding—by placing itself in the service of French imperialism's attempt to reconquer its old colonial empire.

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