

Refugee crisis reveals human cost of French NPA's "humanitarian" wars

By Anthony Torres
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The refugee crisis in Europe has exposed the criminal role of the pseudo-left parties that defended imperialist wars on "humanitarian" grounds. France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), a fervent defender of wars in Libya, Syria, and Ukraine, has worked constantly to disorient popular opposition to wars that have now provoked the worst refugee crisis since World War II, including the death of 3,000 migrants.

After expressing its "anger" and "rage faced with the cynicism and hypocrisy of European leaders," the NPA writes in its article, titled "Welcome to refugees," that responsibility for the migrant deaths falls on "borders, which kill." The article continues: "The higher the borders, the greater and deadlier the risk taken by the migrants. So the answer is as simple as the observation: let's open the borders, and the mass deaths will cease."

This cynical response lacks any serious content. The NPA has no more intention than the European governments themselves of opening the borders. In fact, the European Union (EU) is reinforcing the borders and preparing to escalate the war in Syria, which will only intensify the refugee crisis.

The NPA's pose as an internationalist defender of freedom of movement and its calls for opening the borders are totally fraudulent. This party supports bourgeois separatist movements in Scotland in Britain, and in Catalonia in Spain. They want to create new borders and national governments, aiming to develop closer ties to the EU and international finance to exploit their own working class.

On the other hand, the NPA is totally silent on the responsibility of the wars it supported for the suffering of millions of refugees and the deaths of thousands, drowned in the Mediterranean or suffocated in traffickers' trucks. Since 2011, according to official statistics, 300,000 people have fled Libya, 4 million

fled Syria (in addition to 7 million Syrians who are refugees inside their own country), and 2 million from Iraq.

In all these countries, the social catastrophe is the result of imperialist interventions the NPA has aggressively supported, on the foul pretext that the wars were a humanitarian defense of the population. In reality, the NPA was carrying out the policy of a pro-imperialist layer of the petty bourgeoisie who were totally indifferent to the hundreds of thousands of lives that would be lost in wars fought for the commercial and strategic advantage of the imperialist powers.

When France and NATO launched the war in Libya in 2011, academic Gilbert Achcar gave the line of the NPA: "If Gaddafi were permitted to continue his military offensive and take Benghazi, there would be a major massacre. Here is a case where a population is truly in danger, and where there is no plausible alternative that could protect it. The attack by Gaddafi's forces was hours or at most days away. You can't in the name of anti-imperialist principles oppose an action that will prevent the massacre of civilians."

"Of course we all know that France, UK, and the US are not driven by some sudden kindness—but by strategic interest in the oil-rich region," wrote Bertil Videt, a leader of a Danish party affiliated to the NPA. He threw these considerations aside, however, to declare his support for the war: "we have to come up with better alternatives than posting blogs of solidarity and anti-imperialism."

As for NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot, he suggested that France publicly arm the Islamist opposition militias who served as NATO's ground troops in the war: "Our full and total solidarity goes to the Libyan people, to whom one should give the means to defend itself, the weapons it needs to throw out the

dictator, and conquer freedom and democracy.” After six months of fighting that claimed 30,000 lives and devastated the country, when the Libyan “rebels” captured, tortured, and murdered Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi, the NPA hailed it as “good news.”

Once the imperialist powers saw that it was possible to destroy the Gaddafi regime under the pretext of “humanitarian” war, Assad was a marked man. The NPA effortlessly moved to promote the next war. Achcar covertly met Syrian opposition fighters tied to the CIA, to counsel them on how to market the war for regime change in Syria.

Even when media reports undeniably established the Islamist and terrorist character of the Syrian opposition, this did not cool down the NPA’s enthusiasm for the wars. Besancenot denounced those who opposed arming so-called “moderate” opposition forces, saying: “Those who say, ‘we should not give them weapons because they will end up with the jihadists’ should know the jihadists are already armed,” cynically adding: “It is my strength as an internationalist to have confidence in the peoples to decide their own destinies.”

Several years later, 11 million Syrians have had to flee their homes in a war that has cost over 200,000 lives and reduced large sections of Homs, Aleppo, and other cities to ruins. The NPA only began criticizing the Islamist militias in Syria when one of them, the Islamic State (IS), began to attack the US-backed regime in neighboring Iraq.

The NPA has demonstrated its reactionary, pro-war character, reflecting the interests of a narrow layer of pro-imperialist academics, union functionaries, and political con artists marketed by the media. They happily give a “left” veneer to the bloody operations of far-right forces, as long as these remain aligned with the strategic interests of French imperialism. They did not defend the population of Africa and the Middle East, but defended the ongoing imperialist bloodbath.

The NPA shamelessly retailed the propaganda lies of the French media used to justify attacks on Libya, Syria, and finally IS, without concern for the consequences they would have for tens of millions of people.

The suffering of millions of refugees and the deaths of thousands are also an exposure of those who attacked the *World Socialist Web Site*’s opposition to

the Libyan and Syrian wars as support for Gaddafi or Assad, lacking any compassion for the suffering of Libyan and Syrian people. As it opposed these wars, the WSWS based itself on a correct and scientific analysis of the interests of the international proletariat.

When the NPA denounced references to the imperialist character of NATO’s wars in the Middle East, as we wrote at the time, it was “declaring its open hostility to Marxism, which insists that the attitude of a working class party towards a war must be based on the social and class character of the regimes waging it. In particular, Marxists oppose a war by leading imperialist powers such as the US, the UK and France against an oppressed, ex-colonial country like Libya on principle.”

With the refugee crisis, the WSWS’ criticisms of the war on a principled, Trotskyist perspective have been vindicated. It is the “humanitarian” lies of the NPA that have prepared the terrain for the current disaster.

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