

France's New Anti-Capitalist Party continues support for war on Libya

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When France, the US and Britain launched a war in Libya in March, France's New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) supported the war, declaring its solidarity with the imperialist powers' cynical pretense of "protecting civilians" from the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

With each passing day, however, the imperialist character of the Western military intervention becomes more obvious. Over the past days, the NATO war planes have escalated air strikes on the Libyan capital, Tripoli, destroying infrastructure, schools and hospitals. The intensified NATO bombing has killed hundreds of civilians, including Gaddafi's youngest son and three of his grandchildren on April 30—a figure that does not include large Libyan military casualties.

As NATO's war of aggression against Libya intensifies without achieving victory, the affluent pseudo-"left" social layers that backed the imperialist war are increasingly disturbed. This is in particular the case of the NPA, whose web site was utterly silent on the war for almost a month. It finally broke its silence, publishing a brief and ambiguous article on June 4; its last article on Libya before that was published on May 11.

The article, titled "Libya: the situation gets stuck," deplores the quagmire that threatens to envelop the NATO war effort. It begins, "Will Muammar Gaddafi let himself be pushed towards the exits? This is what the NATO and also the G8 powers seem to hope."

The NPA avoids taking a position on the motives and strategy underlying the NATO war, writing: "However, on the ground the objectives of the military intervention are less clear. Is it a question of stopping the attacks of the dictator's regime on the region controlled by the

rebels, situated mainly in the East of Libya? Or is it to force Gaddafi to leave, even if this means killing him if he is obstinate and refuses to do so? Artful ambiguity surrounds this question."

The NPA then complains that the "perspective of an overthrow of Gaddafi 'from below' by forces emerging from the population seems to be largely over." It then proceeds to make limited criticisms of the Transitional National Council (TNC), the Western-backed organization in Benghazi whose small forces serve as NATO's main proxies in Libya.

Even more than NATO, it is the NPA whose position on the war is marked by "artful ambiguity"—or, to speak more plainly, cynical evasions. It is quite clear that NATO's war plans involve toppling the Gaddafi regime, at the cost of indiscriminately killing large numbers of Libyan civilians.

On the other hand, the NPA's complaints represent an attempt to evade any responsibility for their previous enthusiastic endorsement of the war. (See: A tool of imperialism: France's New Anti-Capitalist Party backs war on Libya).

Their support for the war was most clearly expressed by Gilbert Achcar, whose statement was published on the NPA's web site. Achcar argued that the NATO attack on Libya was a vital "humanitarian" intervention: "Here is a case where a population is truly in danger and where there is no plausible alternative that could protect it... You can't in the name of anti-imperialist principles oppose an action that will prevent the massacre of civilians."

The absurd position implicitly advanced by the NPA was that an imperialist war would protect Libyan civilians and simultaneously make possible the overthrow of Gaddafi "from below"—that is, by some

sort of mass popular uprising. This reactionary fable bears no relation to reality: a Western terror bombing of Libya, in league with the reactionary TNC clique in Benghazi. Nor did the NPA's position bear any relation to the intentions of the NATO powers.

Despite the NPA's cynical phrase-mongering about a war to protect civilians, the imperialists' aggression against oil-rich Libya is bound up with their geo-strategic interests and those of their energy conglomerates. It is also part of an increasingly threadbare attempt to project themselves as the defenders of the North African population, as they try to suppress revolutionary struggles of the working class in neighbouring countries like Tunisia and Egypt.

In supporting the war, the NPA joined the major political satellites of the French bourgeois "left" Socialist Party: the PCF (French Communist Party), PG (Left Party, a split-off from the PS), Europe-Ecologie and the Greens. They issued a joint statement endorsing the Libyan war, demanding "the recognition of the National Council as the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people."

Now that the Western powers have failed to rapidly dislodge Gaddafi, the NPA cynically tries to strike an "oppositional" pose by criticizing the TNC, the imperialists' main proxy in Libya. It is led mainly by ex- ministers of the Gaddafi regime, Islamist terrorist forces linked to Al Qaeda, and various Libyan tribal leaders.

The NPA does not address the political character of the TNC. Instead, it focuses mainly on the anti-black pogroms carried out in TNC-controlled territory: "In the rebel zone, a certain hysteria about 'Gaddafi's black mercenaries' has often turned into racist attacks. If it is true that Gaddafi employs mercenaries, the real anti-black pogroms that this climate has repeatedly produced are completely worthy of condemnation."

The NPA's criticisms of the TNC are cynical and baseless, however. From the beginning, the NPA backed the TNC, claiming that it was fighting for democracy in Libya against the dictatorial rule of Gaddafi. Nowhere does the NPA assess its decision to provide political support to the TNC, or the responsibility it therefore bears for the TNC's actions.

Soon after the war began in March, the NPA suggested that France should run guns to the Libyan

opposition. The NPA communiqué declared, "Our full solidarity goes to the Libyan people, to whom we should give the means for self-defense and the weapons it needs to throw out the dictator and to conquer liberty and democracy."

The NPA is now trying to hide its support for the TNC with a few empty phrases. Its article criticizes to the "heterogeneous forces that make up the rebellion, led by the TNC" as an "organ composed of co-opted personalities."

To be sure, the NPA does not bother to explain who has "co-opted" the TNC. It only refers briefly to the fact that Secopex, a private firm employing French ex-military forces, is active in rebel-held areas in Libya.

Coming from the NPA, however, this is a perhaps unintentionally revealing comment. It is admitting that the group it repeatedly praised and promoted as a force for democratic liberation is "co-opted," apparently by forces tied to the French state and military. Nonetheless, it does not see the need to make any major change its own political strategy or perspectives.

It would be difficult to imagine a more direct proof that the NPA knows itself to be "co-opted" by the French state.



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