

France's New Anti-Capitalist Party backs imperialist intervention in Syria

Kumaran Ira
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As it becomes increasingly apparent that the Western powers and their Middle Eastern allies are preparing military intervention in Syria, France's New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) is legitimizing imperialist intervention in the name of "protecting civilians." In this, they are reprising their politically criminal role in Libya, where they backed the NATO war to install a regime run by the National Transitional Council (NTC).

The Western powers, Turkey, and Persian Gulf sheikhdoms are fomenting a civil war in Syria, supporting forces consisting of the Syrian National Council (SNC) and its armed wing, the Syrian Free Army (SFA). The SNC includes Islamists, former Assad regime officials and Syrian Kurds. The Western powers have used the SNC to transform popular protests against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—inspired by working class struggles in Egypt and Tunisia—into an attempt to replace Assad with a pliant, pro-Western regime in Syria through imperialist intervention.

The NPA is backing this offensive under a dishonest cover of humanitarian solidarity with imperialism's Syrian stooges. On December 21, it published a communiqué titled "Bashar al-Assad's murderous offensive," calling for Assad's overthrow. It wrote, "With great courage and determination, the opposition and the population are continuing their combat against the dictatorship. The NPA reaffirms its solidarity with them and supports the initiatives that are being organized. Like the region's other dictators, Bashar al-Assad will have to get out."

As in many of its statements, the NPA relies on vagueness and imprecision of language to hide its unrestrained support for French imperialism. What "opposition" is waging what "combat" and what "initiatives that are being organized," the NPA does not say. Press reports make abundantly clear, however, that the NPA is declaring its solidarity with NATO

intelligence assets who are launching not a revolution, but a pro-imperialist civil war.

The French government has formally recognized the opposition SNC as "legitimate interlocutor" and called for the forcible overthrow of Assad. It cynically tacks on calls for a buffer zone in Syria, to facilitate appeals to petty-bourgeois sentiment justifying war on "humanitarian" grounds, by forces like the NPA.

French military forces, along with their British and Turkish counterparts, are training the SFA, which claims to have some 20,000 Syrian army deserters in its ranks and is based in Turkey. The SNC and the SFA have asked the Western powers to enforce a no-fly zone in Syria, a prelude to military intervention. SFA commander Riad el-Asaad, who is based in Turkey, has called for the imperialist powers to carry out air strikes against Syria.

According to the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet*, France has sent its military trainers to Turkey and Lebanon to coach the so-called Free Syrian Army. *Milliyet's* reports were confirmed by the French satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, which wrote: "The DGSE's [French foreign intelligence] action service and the French army's Special Operations Command (COS) are already in contact with Syrian military dissidents to train them and help structure their operational capacity." It reported that Paris and Ankara would "tolerate, even encourage" weapons trafficking along the Syrian border.

The weekly added, "Ankara is proposing a no-fly zone and humanitarian buffer inside Syria, destined to greet civilians fleeing repression and military deserters." According to *Le Canard Enchaîné*, the "buffer" will offer "a possible point of support for the SFA inside Syrian territory." That is to say, the "initiatives" the NPA supports include forming a military enclave inside Syria, from which Western-backed militias can launch armed

operations against the Syrian government.

The NPA not only supports such operations, but attempts to hide this support from popular opposition on its left. Aware that the Libyan war—which it supported on similar grounds last year—is now deeply unpopular, it now tries to muddy the issue, making empty statements that appear to criticize direct Western military intervention. Thus the NPA interviewed a member of the Syrian opposition, who, when asked whether Syrian protesters supported foreign intervention, said: “Street demonstrators ... yes, because they do not see any immediate perspective so they ‘ask the devil’ to come.” She added, however, that cities and neighborhoods that do not support the opposition “fear foreign intervention,” as well as the possibility of a right-wing, Islamist regime coming to power.

Asked what could be done from France, she replied: “Pressure the government. Watch out, no one wants a Western armed intervention—no one! We need medical assistance to treat the wounded, food aid, and economic pressure on the regime.”

Taking this report at face value, the NPA is backing pro-imperialist protesters viewed with alarm by much of the Syrian population, then promoting Western intervention on “humanitarian” grounds: providing medicine and food to Syrian insurgents. As it is well known that Western support for the SFA already includes military support, this position is consciously deceptive.

The deception is all the more flagrant, as the NPA’s international co-thinkers have made clear that they support direct Western intervention in back-channel talks with the SNC and SFA. One instance of this was a report by Gilbert Achcar, a member of the international Pabloite United Secretariat affiliated to the NPA and a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He spoke at a conference organized by the SNC in Sweden last November (See: French petty-bourgeois “left” plots military intervention in Syria).

According to Achcar, “he was invited to speak on the subject of foreign military intervention in the current situation in Syria.” He signaled the SNC that, under the correct conditions, it could arrange for foreign intervention in Syria: “The reluctance regarding direct intervention that we see today on the part of Western and regional states might change tomorrow, if intervention

requests made on behalf of the Syrian opposition were to increase.”

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The NPA’s attempts to posture as a critic of Western military intervention in Syria are all the more unconvincing in that it made similar efforts last year, with regards to the Libyan war—where it claimed to oppose the introduction of ground troops while supporting “humanitarian” bombing.

NATO bombing and TNC forces led on the ground by Western intelligence and Special Forces operatives—about whom the NPA kept a cynical silence—nonetheless succeeded in devastating Libya. They toppled Colonel Muammar Gaddafi’s regime and caused an estimated 50,000 deaths. Now, Western oil firms again operate in Libya’s rich oil fields, and the Islamist-dominated TNC rules Libya as a pro-Western puppet regime.

Throughout all of this, the NPA nonetheless continued to support the Libyan war. Shortly before France and Britain began bombarding Tripoli on March 19, the NPA declared its solidarity with the war. It joined the major political satellites of the French bourgeois “left” Socialist Party (PS), the PCF (French Communist Party), PG (Left Party, a PS split-off), Europe-Ecologie and the Greens—issuing a joint statement demanding “the recognition of the National Council as the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people.” The NPA even suggested that France should run guns to the Libyan opposition.

Then as now, the NPA backed imperialist intervention by covering up the basic class question involved in the war: the re-subjugation of Libya, Syria, and the entire Middle East to the plunder of the imperialist powers.



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