

French New Anti-capitalist Party backs NATO war drive against Russia

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As war fever grips the affluent middle classes after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the French Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and its international affiliates are issuing anti-Russian statements indistinguishable from CIA propaganda. They are irresponsibly whipping up a war fever that could lead to a conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

The international Pabloite web site *International Viewpoint*, the NPA weekly *L'Anticapitaliste* and the Podemos-linked *Viento Sur* site in Spain published a statement on the war by Professor Gilbert Achcar. A professor at London's School of African and Oriental Studies who is a paid advisor to the British military, Achcar applauded NATO military interventions in Libya and Syria. His statement, titled "A memorandum on the radical anti-imperialist position regarding the war in Ukraine," argues that a military defeat of Russia is essential for world peace. He begins:

The fate of Russia's invasion of Ukraine will determine the propensity of all other countries for aggression. If it fails in turn, the effect on all global and regional powers will be one of powerful deterrence. If it succeeds, that is if Russia manages to 'pacify' Ukraine under Russian boots, the effect will be a major slide of the global situation toward unrestrained law of the jungle, emboldening US imperialism itself and its allies to resume their own aggressive stances.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which publishes the *World Socialist Web Site*, opposes Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. This invasion divides Russian and Ukrainian workers and has already led to thousands of deaths. However, it rejects the absurd lie that a defeat of Russia by NATO would inaugurate a golden era of world peace.

The main source of military aggression in world politics is not Russia but the NATO imperialist powers. The 1991 Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, by eliminating the main military counterweight to the NATO powers, freed them to pursue a wave of neo-colonial wars that claimed millions of lives and forced tens of millions to flee their homes. Among the countries devastated by these wars over the last 30 years are Iraq, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, Libya, Syria and Mali.

In a conflict with NATO, Russia is neither the more powerful nor the more aggressive side. The yearly Gross Domestic Product of the NATO countries is around \$40 trillion. Russia's is \$1.7 trillion. NATO's population is about 900 million with 3.3 million under arms, compared to Russia's 144 million with one million active-duty troops. It is the NATO countries' banks that are seizing Russia's export earnings, not the other way around.

Achcar, however, endorses NATO military and territorial demands on Russia, trying to disorient his reader with emotive slogans presenting

support for NATO as an inescapable moral duty. "To give those who are fighting a just war the means to fight against a much more powerful aggressor is an elementary internationalist duty," Achcar writes. He adds, "We are in favor of the delivery of defensive weapons to the victims of aggression with no strings attached—in this case, to the Ukrainian state fighting the Russian invasion of its territory."

That is to say, Achcar is lining up behind NATO's provision of massive amounts of weapons, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, and even biowarfare laboratories to the Ukrainian regime. He is proposing an action agenda for the armed forces of the NATO imperialist powers.

Moreover, as NATO weapons flood into Ukraine, it is apparent that Ukraine is not fighting a defensive war. Rather, the imperialist powers, acting in conjunction with layers of the Ukrainian armed forces and far-right nationalist militias, have chosen Ukraine as the ground to fight a war against Russia. Achcar is clearly well aware of this. He supports it because he and the entire political milieu for which he speaks are representatives of imperialism.

The NPA and its affiliates represent affluent layers of the middle class that, especially in the last 30 years since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, have moved far to the right. As the professors, union bureaucrats and professionals in the Pabloite organizations grew more affluent, they have become ever more fully aligned with the state and the imperialist militaries. The fact that the Pabloite parties give the task of replying to these events to Achcar, an imperialist operative and paid advisor of the British military, speaks to their essentially right-wing character.

The task of a Marxist party, facing the danger of world war, is to unify workers internationally against war propaganda in which the ruling class tries to drown public opinion in every country. Exposing the historical falsifications and political lies each ruling class uses to argue for war arms the working class to intervene, as the Bolsheviks did in the October 1917 revolution in Russia during World War I, to stop the war and overthrow the social order that gave rise to it.

Achcar, on the other hand, endorses the war as a noble struggle for Ukrainian freedom from Russia:

[W]e should demand not only the cessation of the aggression but also the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. The demand of Russian withdrawal applies to every inch of Ukraine's territory—including the territory invaded by Russia in 2014. When there is a dispute on the belonging of any territory anywhere in the world—such as Crimea or provinces in Eastern Ukraine, in this instance—we never accept that it be solved by naked force and the law of might, but always only through the free exercise by the people concerned of their right to democratic self-determination.

In reality, one cannot determine what caused and who is responsible for war simply by asking who fired the first shot. Achcar's promotion of this conflict as a "just war" against Russia, tearing the war out of its historical and international context, is a political falsification. While he claims his demands are "radical internationalist," he is in fact only demanding that NATO continue its current war policy: pouring massive amounts of arms into Ukraine to tie Russia down in a bloody war that Washington and its European NATO allies have been long been preparing.

Achcar falsifies the origins of the Russia-Ukraine conflict

Achcar's brief for supporting NATO against Russia in a war in Ukraine is rooted in a tissue of lies. The conflict over Crimea and Eastern Ukraine that began in 2014 was not, as Achcar writes, the result of a Russian invasion. It flowed from the February 2014 far-right putsch in Kiev, supported by the NPA and its international affiliates, that installed a pro-NATO Ukrainian regime not by "democratic self-determination," but by force.

Crimea and eastern Ukraine, which NATO and Achcar demand that Russia return to Ukraine, broke away after the November 2013–February 2014 Maidan protests in Kiev. These protests were held around demands that Ukraine join the European Union (EU).

The Maidan protests were intertwined with a US- and EU-led regime change operation in Ukraine. German and US officials, including current Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, came to Kiev to visit and whip up the protests. The Maidan protests ended in a putsch by the neo-Nazi Right Sector group in February 2014, bringing to power the far-right Svoboda Party, boxer Vitaly Klitschko's Udar ("Punch") party, and banker Arseny Yatsenyuk.

Official US and European media now routinely hail the Maidan protests as a democratic revolution and dismiss reports of the neo-Nazis' role in them as Russian propaganda. To establish what occurred, therefore, it is useful to quote the NPA and its allies, who supported and joined the Maidan protests and cannot be accused of being biased against them.

From the Maidan, the NPA's Ukrainian affiliates reported that the protests were led by the far-right. Their statement, titled "A mass revolt for democracy" and written by Zakhar Popovych, declared: "The first attacks against the anti-riot police of the Berkut were organized mainly by the neo-Nazis of Right Sector, who are even more radical than the far-right Svoboda movement." He added that "people at Maidan [were] mostly Ukrainian-speaking people from villages in western Ukraine."

The leader of the NPA's Russian allies, Ilya Budraitskis of the Russian Socialist Movement, backed Popovych's orientation. He wrote: "I understand completely how vulnerable my reasoning will look, but I still feel that this conversation—about the possibility of a 'Left Sector' and its struggle for hegemony in the protest—is important not only in the Ukrainian context, but also for the future, in which we will face similar (if not worse) circumstances every time."

The NPA similarly endorsed the Maidan putsch, declaring: "While the main organized forces are, for now, from the right and far right, we support the social and political forces which are trying to build a left opposition within that movement." With staggering cynicism, the NPA took this position though it admitted that the "movement itself has no progressive program on democratic, national, and social issues," and predicted that it would lead to the "disintegration of the country."

The NPA's prediction that the Kiev putsch would trigger civil war did not, in truth, require great insight. The policies of the new regime made it all but inevitable. The Svoboda Party, which the EU parliament had condemned in 2012 for promoting ethnic hatred, had outlined a genocidal

policy in Russian-speaking areas in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. On its website, Svoboda had declared:

To create a truly Ukrainian Ukraine in the cities of the East and South ... we will need to cancel parliamentarism, ban all political parties, nationalize the entire industry, all media, prohibit the importation of any literature to Ukraine from Russia...completely replace the leaders of the civil service, education management, military (especially in the East), physically liquidate all Russian-speaking intellectuals and all Ukrainophobes (fast, without a trial shot. Registering Ukrainophobes can be done here by any member of Svoboda), execute all members of the anti-Ukrainian political parties.

Once in power, Svoboda and the other putschist parties indeed attacked Crimea and the Donbas in eastern Ukraine. The new Kiev regime backed far-right militias such as Right Sector, the Azov Battalion and the Ukrainian National Guard, which organized raids on eastern Ukraine and mass killings of anti-Kiev protesters in Odessa and Mariupol. It was under these conditions that Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine—Crimea, and Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas—seceded.

In Crimea, a Russian-speaking area, a referendum to rejoin Russia passed with a 97 percent vote, on 83 percent voter participation. Russia did not need to invade Crimea, as Achcar writes. The Russian military had leased the naval base at Sevastopol from Ukraine since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and its forces quickly disarmed a few troops loyal to Kiev. Crimea had been part of Russia for centuries before it was transferred to Ukraine in 1954—when the decision had no great practical significance, as Ukraine and Russia were both part of the Soviet Union.

Fighting in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region has continued with brief lulls ever since 2014. This year, Putin decided to invade amid an explosion of fighting in the Donbas and NATO's threats to include Ukraine in the NATO alliance, potentially paving the way for the deployment of NATO missile bases and biological and even nuclear weapons to Ukraine.

All of this is, of course, well known to Achcar and to the leaderships of the NPA and its allies. Their decision to hide the fascistic origins and appeals to race murder of the forces they are supporting in Ukraine, so as to promote NATO despite the danger of world war arising from its policies, exposes their utterly reactionary role.

It has been 69 years since the political ancestors of the Pabloite organizations split from the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in 1953, claiming that Stalinism and the Soviet regime would provide revolutionary leadership to the working class for centuries. Having broken with working-class politics, they have evolved as petty-bourgeois groups for decades. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, they rapidly reoriented to NATO: the NPA's predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League, helped run supplies to pro-NATO forces in Bosnia in 1995.

Today, they primarily play the role of disorienting layers of voters and of workers who could become the base of a left-wing movement and disorienting them with right-wing propaganda such as the current anti-Russian hysteria. The task of building a movement against war and the danger of a nuclear world war requires irreconcilable opposition to the reactionary politics of Pabloism.





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