

French Morenoites cover for New Anticapitalist Party's backing of NATO against Russia

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The arming of the Ukrainian nationalist militias by NATO and the calls by Washington for the overthrow of the Russian government have unmasked the middle-class pseudo-left. Under conditions of the the reactionary invasion of Ukraine by Russia, provoked by NATO threats, the pseudo-left has lined up behind its own bourgeoisie. In France, the Pabloite New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) and the Stalinist apparatus of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union have unabashedly supported the policy of the NATO imperialist powers against Russia.

The role of the Morenoite group, Permanent Revolution, linked to the Argentine Socialist Workers Party (PTS), is to cover for the reactionary role of these forces. The Morenoites are trying to prevent workers from overrunning the national apparatuses that are accomplices in the march towards WWII. This is the meaning of the article in *Permanent Revolution*, entitled "Ukraine: the challenge of an independent anti-imperialist policy," by Juan Chingo, Philippe Alcoy and Pierre Reip.

Their article comments on a debate between professor Gilbert Achcar, a member of the NPA and paid adviser to the British army, and professor Stathis Kouvelakis, ex-member of the Syriza party, which, when in power, imposed austerity on Greek workers. The Tartuffes at *Permanent Revolution* claim in their article that figures like Achcar and Kouvelakis are leading a debate on revolutionary politics. They write:

The very rich texts of Gilbert Achcar (GA) and Stathis Kouvelakis (SK) reflect some of the current controversies in the left and the far left in France over the war in Ukraine. While they make possible a deeper reading of the situation and the questions it poses, in our view they leave out the perspective of an independent politics of the working class and popular sectors, which would be, however, the only perspective that can open the way to a real self-determination of the Ukrainian people.

Permanent Revolution covers over the political role of Achcar and Kouvelakis, and thus of the NPA, of which they are both prominent political representatives. In reality, the two professors are not revolutionaries who "feed" the discussion about Ukraine within the "extreme left." Both are anti-worker reactionaries who cover the imperialist policy of NATO with pseudo-left propaganda.

Achcar is a member of the NPA, a professor at the School of African and Oriental Studies in London, and a paid adviser to the British army. As one would expect from an adviser to British imperialism, he has applauded NATO's military interventions in Libya and Syria. In 2011, he supported UN Security Council Resolution 1973, authorising the imperialist bombing of Libya, stating, "You cannot in the name of anti-

imperialist principles oppose an action that will prevent the massacre of civilians."

Achcar was also a strong supporter of imperialist intervention in Syria. He participated in the 2011 meetings of the Syrian National Council, allied with US intelligence. He advised the Syrian opposition against Bashar al-Assad, dominated by a collection of CIA-linked Islamist militias, to seek indirect assistance rather than direct intervention from Washington.

Now Achcar unsurprisingly supports NATO's arming of Ukrainian far-right militias, bluntly developing a pro-imperialist argument. "We support the unconditional delivery of defensive weapons to the victims of aggression—in this case, to the Ukrainian state fighting the Russian invasion of its territory," he writes in an article already refuted by the WSW. Achcar falsely accuses any NATO opponent of pro-Russian "campism."

Achcar's article also provoked a response in *Contretemps* magazine, by professor Stathis Kouvelakis, who was an activist in the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), the NPA and Syriza.

Kouvelakis joined the PCF while studying in France in the 1980s, after the PCF made its governmental alliance with President Mitterrand's Socialist Party (PS) to impose an "austerity turn" on workers. A professor at King's College London between 2002 and 2020, he joined the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire-LCR) in 2005, before it became the NPA in 2009. He then served as a member of the central committee of Syriza from 2012 to 2015.

Syriza campaigned in 2014-2015 promising to stop the European austerity policy that was devastating Greece. It came to power in January 2015. While Kouvelakis was a member of Syriza's central committee, it promised the European Union, in February 2015, to maintain the "structural reforms" imposed on Greece, and then imposed €13 billion in austerity measures in July. Shortly thereafter, Kouvelakis left Syriza, saying nonetheless that "the word 'betrayal' is not appropriate if you want to understand what is going on."

In his article, Kouvelakis warns of the opposition to NATO among large masses of workers in China, India, Vietnam and Latin America. In these countries, he writes, "the moral discourse of the U.S. and Western countries, and their defence of 'right,' so selective as to be absurd, are widely perceived for what they are, namely a monumental hypocrisy in the service of an enterprise of subjugation."

Kouvelakis discusses NATO's expansion eastward since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 by absorbing Poland and other former members of the Soviet bloc. He criticizes those who call Vladimir Putin "an unbalanced person who fantasizes about the 'encirclement' of Russia by hostile powers. No, all this is unfortunately true, and began to take place long before Putin."

Despite these admissions, Kouvélakis ends up agreeing with Achcar. Denouncing Russia as a “secondary and regressive imperialist power,” he characterizes the conflict as a Ukrainian national liberation war. He writes, “One thing is certain: this war can in no way be that of the forces fighting for human emancipation; by its very goals and logic, it is the exact negation of it. It is an aggression directed against the Ukrainian people.

This definition of war provided by Achcar and Kouvélakis is reductive and ultimately false. While it is clear that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is reactionary and divides Russian and Ukrainian workers, it is also clear that Russia and Ukraine are far from the only combatants. NATO is spending billions of euros arming Ukrainian nationalist armed forces and militias, which are serving as a conduit for a NATO-led war against Russia.

This conflict cannot be understood outside the policy of the NATO imperialist powers since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Washington and its allies have attempted to impose their dominance on a series of imperialist wars in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Mali, and beyond. At the same time, NATO was absorbing the former Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe and trying to pit the former Soviet republics against each other.

Since the installation of a pro-NATO regime in Ukraine in February 2014, in a coup led by far-right forces following the Maidan protests in Kiev, NATO has been pitting Ukraine against Russia in particular.

Permanent Revolution, on the other hand, takes very seriously the apologies for NATO formulated by Achcar and by Kouvélakis and tries to distinguish doctrinally which of the two professors it likes more:

While SK’s argument has the advantage of highlighting the internationalization of the war in Ukraine and the role of NATO, these elements are not enough to define the war as a mere ‘inter-imperialist conflict’, let alone as an ‘undeclared global imperialist war’ as some go so far as to say. In this respect, GA is right to point out that an inter-imperialist war is ‘a direct war, not a proxy war’, but he is mistaken in refusing to see the undeniable international dimension of the war in Ukraine.

Here, Permanent Revolution falsifies the nature of the war and minimizes the enormous dangers it poses to workers. In reality, the conflict that NATO is waging against Russia by arming Ukrainian nationalist militias is an “undeclared imperialist world war.” The greatest danger is that of an escalation, where NATO and Russia would start fighting not only within but also outside the borders of Ukraine, provoking a full-scale world war, fought with nuclear weapons.

Another political falsification by Permanent Revolution, as by the entire pseudo-left, is to call Russia an “imperialist” power. Putin’s invasion is undoubtedly reactionary: it divides Ukrainian and Russian workers and paves the way for intensified NATO military intervention in the region. But calling Russia an imperialist power falsifies history and the international power relations that underlie the war.

Russia, a capitalist regime born of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, is neither more powerful nor more aggressive than NATO. Russia’s GDP is approximately \$1.7 trillion, roughly 20 times less than that of NATO. Its population of 144 million is six times smaller than NATO’s, its armed forces (about 1 million regular soldiers) three times smaller than NATO’s. And while NATO’s armies are on Russia’s borders, it is the banks of NATO countries that are taking Russia’s export earnings, not the other way around.

Permanent Revolution, on the other hand, judges that the reactionary debates between Achcar and Kouvélakis “raise the question of the policy

we need for the convulsive period that is opening,” and concludes:

If the response to the Ukrainian situation is therefore a litmus test for the whole period to come, the position formulated by GA seems to us to open the way to a dangerous alignment behind NATO while that of SK has the limit of underestimating the role that could be played by workers and peoples on the political scene.

Yet Permanent Revolution says no more about the role that workers could play. In fact, it is Permanent Revolution that is also aligned behind NATO, and its own propaganda underestimates the role that workers could play in stopping the war. To stop the war and prevent it from leading to nuclear war, workers will have to not only overrun but consciously fight the union and political apparatuses that Permanent Revolution covers for. The WSWS explained in its response to Achcar:

A Marxist party, in the face of the danger of world war, struggles to unite the workers of all countries against the chauvinist propaganda in which the ruling class wants to drown opinion in every country. It unmask the historical falsifications and political lies that the bourgeoisie mobilizes in favor of war. Thus it prepares the intervention of the workers, as the Bolsheviks did in the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia during the First World War, to stop the war and overthrow the social order that created it.

Such a policy requires unmasking, first, the petty-bourgeois political and trade-union circles that the pro-business media pass off as the “extreme left” and the “workers’ movement.” These are totally integrated into the imperialist propaganda apparatus. Thus, not only the NPA, but also the CGT, historically Stalinist and pro-Moscow trade union, and also the Workers Struggle party, give more or less open support to NATO in Ukraine.

These organizations have moved far to the right since the time, 70 years ago, when the Pabloite political ancestors of the NPA broke with Trotskyism and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The bureaucrats and petty-bourgeois professors of that time relied on the financial manna of huge trade unions and especially of the Stalinist-dominated Soviet state. The Pabloites broke with the ICFI in 1953, insisting that the PCF was the only party that could lead workers’ struggles in France.

Since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the national trade union apparatuses, this milieu has evolved as petty-bourgeois groups for decades. Stunned by the demise of the Soviet Union, which fulfilled Trotsky’s warnings about the role of Stalinism, they quickly reoriented themselves to NATO. Enriched by the stock market and employed in trade union apparatuses and universities financed by state credits and employers’ organizations, they instinctively identify their interests with those of imperialism.

Above all, they serve to demoralize layers of voters and workers who could form the basis of a left-wing movement. The task of building an anti-war movement against the danger of a nuclear world war requires irreconcilable opposition to the reactionary politics of Pabloism.



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