

New Anti-capitalist Party tries to whitewash France's scramble for Africa

By Kumaran Ira
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The pseudo-left New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) is a cynical propagandist for French imperialism's bloody wars in Africa, from Libya and Ivory Coast to Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR). This is the content of an article, "The redeployment of French imperialism in Africa and the humanitarian daze of the left," written by Jean Batou of the NPA-affiliated Solidarity organization in Switzerland, and recently posted to the NPA's English-language site, *International Viewpoint*.

While cynically acknowledging that Paris has deep corporate and military interests in Africa, the article claims they play no significant role in the ruling Socialist Party's (PS) policies. Embracing the PS's fraudulent claims that its African wars are dictated by its concern to protect Africans from terrorism, Batou claims PS President François Hollande has broken with the policies of his conservative predecessor, President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Batou writes, "In Libya and the Ivory Coast, one could argue without difficulty that Nicolas Sarkozy harboured ulterior economic motives, but it seems less obvious on the part of François Hollande in Mali, and highly questionable in the CAR.... In fact, although no serious observer can believe the humanitarian motives put forward by Paris, it seems clear that the sending of shock troops to prevent the definitive shipwreck of 'failed states' such as the CAR is in the first place motivated by the need to maintain security in its 'backyard', which is a condition for the credibility of France on the threshold of a new 'scramble for Africa'."

Batou's arguments reek of bad faith. While admitting that Paris's humanitarian rationalizations for its wars are not credible, he immediately endorses them, portraying French wars as a campaign for security in

Africa.

His admission that economic motivations drove Sarkozy's 2011 war against Libya is itself an indictment of the NPA. While Batou does not recall it, the NPA enthusiastically promoted that war as a humanitarian intervention to save the city of Benghazi from repression by Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Batou now admits, however, that the war endorsed by the NPA was driven by the strategic and financial interests of French capital.

The NPA's promotion of the PS's policies notwithstanding, the wars launched by Hollande flowed directly from those of Sarkozy. The Mali war emerged from the devastation caused by the 2011 war in Libya, in which NATO armed Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias against Gaddafi. Tuareg fighters, who had fought alongside Gaddafi's troops and were persecuted by the NATO-backed forces, returned to Mali in early 2012, joining northern Malian rebel groups and various allied Islamist militias who attacked the Malian army.

Paris exploited this chaos unleashed by its reckless support for Al Qaeda-linked forces in Libya to escalate the war into Mali in January 2013. It cynically claimed that it was fighting terrorism, while it simultaneously collaborated with Al Qaeda-linked Islamic militias in Libya and in the US-led proxy war to oust Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The NPA aggressively supported those wars, praising Paris's reactionary Islamist proxies' forces as revolutionaries and calling on NATO to arm them in the proxy war in Syria.

Having cynically denied the imperialist interests behind Hollande's wars, Batou proceeds bluntly to lay out the material interests driving the French imperialist scramble to establish control of African markets.

He writes, "Despite the explosion of inequality, the

sustainability of this expansion therefore favours the emergence of a bigger and bigger layer of micro-consumers, already stronger, according to some studies, than that of India, which could generate promising commercial opportunities for foreign investors and suppliers, especially those in emerging markets, better prepared to respond to this type of demand...The number of subscribers to mobile phones has more than doubled, reaching today 500-620 million users.”

He continues, “The policy of Paris in Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Mali, Niger, the CAR, Senegal, Chad, etc., is inconceivable without the careful advice of the Areva group, Bolloré, Bouygues, Total and others. It would be tedious to repeat here the incestuous triangular links forged by the French government with a certain number of companies and potentates.”

That is to say, French imperialism is waging war to protect Total’s control of African oil wells, Areva’s control of African uranium mines, Bouygues’ control of African infrastructure and telecom projects, and the logistics and raw materials projects of the Bolloré corporate empire. This undermines NPA lies that Paris is waging a war to ensure the security of the African masses.

Behind the NPA’s embrace of neo-colonial wars in Africa stand the interests of the reactionary layers of the affluent middle class for which the NPA speaks. By orienting to the PS, the NPA aims to boost France’s strategic position and the profits of its corporations and banks. This is also the source of the cash flow that the bourgeoisie directs—through its funding of the union bureaucracy, media programs, and grants for “left” academics—to pseudo-left groups like the NPA.

With the NPA’s support, these wars are turning Africa into a powder keg of conflicts between the major powers. French imperialism is allying with Washington to try to seize back African markets lost to “emerging market” countries like China, and competing with German imperialism for markets and influence across the continent.

“Paris is in fact doing all it can to avoid resurrecting the image of France as the ‘gendarme of Africa’, especially in a context where emerging countries can take advantage of their non-colonial past,” Batou explains, continuing, “The new strategists of French

imperialism are casting greedy eyes on the market share won by German companies in the land of Nelson Mandela by playing on the historical links of the Ebert Foundation with circles close to the ANC [the African National Congress in South Africa].”

As it defends the interests of French imperialism in this new scramble for Africa, the NPA seeks to give itself a false “left” face by presenting itself as a friend of social protest and of the union bureaucracies of Africa. It ends up, however, by endorsing the unions that oversaw the August 2012 massacre of striking miners at Marikana.

The article praises “the National Federation of Metalworkers of South Africa, which is growing steadily, and now claims 340,000 members (out of a population of 50 million)”, which “recently held an extraordinary congress to call on the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to break with the governing ANC, to denounce its neo-liberal policies and the corruption of its leaders, but also to work towards the formation of a new class-struggle workers’ party for the abolition of capitalism.”

The NPA’s attempt to endow these blood-stained bureaucracies with progressive and anti-capitalist credentials is evidence of its violent hostility to the working class.

On August 16, 2012, South Africa’s ANC, relying on the COSATU-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), sent police to massacre striking miners at Marikana, killing 36 miners. It was the worst massacre of workers in South Africa since the end of apartheid.

After the Marikana massacre, the NPA maintained a deafening silence for three weeks, later coming out with a statement distancing itself from the massacre while sowing illusions in the ANC and the unions. Its endorsement of COSATU today is a warning to the working class of the attacks on the working class that it will promote in South Africa and internationally.

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