

French colonialism and militarism in Mali: The Left Front at an impasse

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France has been intervening in Mali for four months, so President Hollande could not avoid a debate in Parliament on keeping the troops there even though he had promised they would leave by April. As usual, one big bluff after another. There were no votes against! Concerns and reservations, yes, but nothing that stimulated the least bit of opposition!

Yet the reasons to oppose it abound: four months of military intervention at a cost of 200 million euros; no political solution in sight; no handover to Mali foreseen; and the power of France's influence, as [Foreign Minister] Laurent Fabius has said, is strengthened. This shameful vote allows for a lengthy military presence in Mali that will become a full-fledged territorial occupation in the interests of France and the other big powers supporting it. As in Gabon, Senegal, Djibouti, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic.

In the National Assembly earlier this year, the Left Front deputies voted in favour of sending French troops to Mali. These same deputies have now abstained on maintaining the French military presence in the country. The NPA reaffirms its total opposition to this military intervention so typically in the tradition of *Françafrique*. We denounce this imperialist war which, like all those before it—Iraq, Afghanistan or Somalia — will simply fuel chaos and the civil war.

In the same vein, we cannot but express our dismay at the recent response of Jean-Luc Mélenchon [presidential candidate of the Left Front in 2012] to the publication of the white paper on national defense. He declared:

"Let's not demolish the case for France's military role! Austerity and the Atlantic alliance are the watchwords of the White Paper on Defence presented today to the President of the Republic. These are two mortal dangers for the sovereignty and independence of France. This white paper is a new proof of the hypocrisy of the Socialist Party and the incoherence of the government. Hollande says he will not touch France's nuclear deterrent but he has agreed to include France in the NATO missile shield project in Europe. François Hollande says resources are being put aside for the military budget, but the White Paper contains tens of thousands of job cuts and the sale of state shares in the defense industries. This white paper marks a new withering of France's military power. It talks loudly about how "we can't do anything without others." An all-too-familiar discourse! The renunciation of independence and sovereignty is always presented as a fate beyond our control. I reject this demolition of France's military role. Far from yielding to Atlanticism and austerity, France must build a sovereign and anti-globalization defense." [\[1\]](#)

This statement combines the worst of everything: defense of the nuclear role of the "French" military; the references to "France" with no social content; the use of sovereignty in support of France's "military role"; and a bizarre reference to "anti-globalization" militarism.

This military doctrine of Mélenchon would be constitutionally entrenched in the Sixth Republic* the Left Front would like to found.

The position of the NPA, adopted unanimously at its founding congress [in 2009], proposes exactly the opposite:

“An end to the war and withdrawal of all French troops from Afghanistan; withdrawal of France from the imperialist military alliance NATO; dismantling of the French and European military industry and its conversion into industries protecting the environment; an end to French arms sales abroad; complete and unilateral nuclear disarmament and a global ban on nuclear weapons; and prohibition and elimination of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.”

Yet another illustration of why the NPA does not join in the call for a Sixth Republic [2] as advanced by the Left Front. The number of the republic interests us very little, its content much more.

P.S.

* correspondent of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) of France, published in French on *Afriques en lutte*, May 3, 2013, English translation by Roger Annis

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.jean-luc-melenchon.fr/2013/04/29/non-a-la-liquidation-de-largument-militaire-de-la-france/>

[2] The Revolution that overthrew the French monarchy in 1789 went on to found the modern republic of France. There have been five constitutions in the history of the republic. Present-day France is governed by its fifth constitution, declared in 1958 by President Charles de Gaulle. - translator