

France: LCR dissolves itself to found New Anti-Capitalist Party

Alex Lantier
7 February 2009

Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* attended the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire's* (LCR) 18th Congress on February 5 in the north Paris suburb of La Plaine Saint Denis. At this congress, the LCR formally dissolved itself. At the next sessions on February 6-8, the LCR delegates and additional recruits to the New Anti-Capitalist Party (*Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste*, NPA) will found the NPA.

The LCR is trying to turn to the right by recruiting political forces from the "left" parties of government—the Socialist Party (PS) and especially the French Communist Party (PCF)—as well as from smaller left parties such as Lutte Ouvrière, PCF-linked anti-globalization groups, and smaller protest groups. The LCR is using "anti-capitalism" as a more ideologically diffuse slogan with which to recruit inside these organizations.

Sharp differences on how to orient the LCR to the bourgeois left parties emerged, however. The congress' morning session was dominated by a faction struggle between the majority and minority factions of the LCR's political committee, who proposed two competing platforms in the run-up to the party congress. Two reports were presented—one by LCR leader Alain Krivine, speaking for the majority, and another on the minority platform presented by Christian Picquet.

The LCR majority platform calls for a reconstitution of the tendencies of the establishment left inside the NPA: "Bringing everyone together inside the NPA is the logical outcome of the process we have started. This necessitates dissolving the LCR. [The NPA] needs members new to politics or members from other political sensibilities or tendencies - socialists, communists, ecologists, libertarians, revolutionaries, the social movements..."

In his opening address, Krivine said the necessity for the NPA arises from the "discrediting of the reformist left," which means it cannot meet workers' needs in the current economic crisis. He added, "It is not a question of burying" the establishment left, noting that the Socialist Party (PS) has significant "electoral strength" and the PCF has "sincere and courageous militants" held back only by an "identity crisis" due to the PCF's electoral attachment to the PS. Krivine described the "imperative of unity," that is, "gathering together the reformists, trade unions, the entire left" in protest actions.

He was glad, moreover, that questions of history and political perspective would not be discussed: "[In 1968] we talked to people who could distinguish between Maoist, Trotskyist tendencies.

Now, what a breath of fresh air: we have people who just want to fight, to oppose [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy."

He suggested that LCR militants should not defend any particular political orientation and should downplay discussion of revolutionary Marxism: "No one has the audacity to claim, 'I have the answers.' All the basic strategic questions remain open." He warned, "We should not play at red professors," noting that with the recruitment of people with feminist, ecological and other political orientations to the NPA, ex-LCR militants will have to "pay attention to their vocabulary."

Christian Picquet's intervention spoke for sections of the LCR oriented to more direct collaboration with the PS and PCF. For these elements the LCR majority's perspective—recruiting from inside the bourgeois left parties by criticizing the PS and PCF leaderships—cuts across the well-established relationships Picquet's sympathizers have built up inside the leaderships of these parties.

The minority platform stated, "[The NPA] must be a lever, a step towards a gathering of a large party for socialism, a pluralist and democratic party allowing a reorganization of the entire left and of the workers' movement," adding that the immediate goal was to "make a convergence of all the political forces to the left of the PS."

Picquet was removed from the LCR's political committee last year, and he attacked the NPA in the bourgeois media prior to the Congress. In an interview with *Libération*, Picquet said the NPA project was an "insane attempt at political exaggeration," adding, "Even with 10,000 members, wanting to revolutionize society is megalomania."

In his report, Picquet noted that the political "morass leads to a liberation of forces that can lead to a convergence of the best forces on the left." He cited the recent split of the PS left wing, led Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who has set up a Left Party (PG, *Parti de Gauche*) seeking a political alliance with the PCF. Noting that the NPA was built on the basis of the media appeal of LCR presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot, Picquet said Besancenot's ambivalent response to the PG's proposal of a joint NPA-PG electoral platform for the 2009 European elections was a poor decision.

Picquet called for a rebirth of "the best aspects of the LCR," by which he meant its opposition to basic conceptions of revolutionary Marxism. These aspects included: "not thinking of oneself as the nucleus of the revolutionary movement; being an organization open to the outside and opposed to any conception of

a political vanguard; [...] a conception of socialism as arising from the extension of conquests realized under the capitalist regime."

Supporters of the majority and minority factions spoke in a tense and somewhat rowdy discussion after the initial reports. Speakers for the LCR majority agreed to Picquet's characterization of its revisionist politics, but argued that its methods were better suited to winning broad support from the French bourgeois left. François Duval congratulated the LCR majority for "bringing together comrades in social struggles, of the PCF, and youths where the principle of organization is not yet a settled question [i.e. anarchists]." He added, "[The minority] has dreamed of going beyond the LCR, we have done it."

LCR theorist Daniel Bensaïd articulated perhaps most concisely the perspective of the LCR majority. Referring to the economic crisis, he said, "In 5-10 years all the political lines will have shifted. Some often think of the LCR as an obstacle. They're not wrong. The NPA," he added, would entail "quantitative and qualitative changes" and allow the organization to "be a factor in the decomposition of the old left."

The afternoon session was dedicated to discussing the NPA's future relations with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), an international organization of revisionist and opportunist parties. The LCR provides significant financial resources to the USFI, runs several of its publications, and runs several youth training activities for the USFI. The LCR made clear, however, that the NPA will not maintain any semblance of socialist orientation or international discipline that links to the USFI would entail.

The first speaker for the majority platform explained that the NPA would "maintain all the links—financing, training sessions, etc. But the NPA will not be bound by the [USFI's] orientations and possibly by its decisions." She added that requiring the NPA to affiliate to the USFI and accept international input would violate its "pluralism."

The speaker for the minority platform criticized the majority's position as clumsy and implausible: a significant portion of the USFI's activities will be run by a party that has formally renounced Trotskyism and that refuses to acknowledge USFI authority. He noted broad agreement in the LCR on the fact that the NPA should not be a USFI section, but that the NPA should continue to play a key role in the USFI. For this, he proposed that there should be a pro-USFI "association" inside the NPA.

Another LCR member presented a statement that international collaboration might help overcome the right-wing conceptions of many NPA recruits. His account confirms the right-wing character of "anti-capitalism" as a basis for political recruitment in France: he said many NPA recruits are hostile to the plight of the Palestinians in Gaza and support protectionist economic policies.

A confused discussion ensued. The minority's political conception appeared to be the following: it wants to keep a certain reference to the USFI and Trotsky in order to maintain some political and ideological independence from its negotiating partners in the PS and PCF. A pro-USFI association in the NPA would, moreover, be a rallying point for Picquet's supporters inside the NPA.

The LCR majority views any international affiliation, socialist

orientation, or reference to Trotsky as an intolerable obstacle to the international alliances it seeks to build and its recruitment in the French bourgeois left. Nor does it want to strengthen Picquet's group, whose political line shows that the LCR's pose of intransigent opposition to the PS and PCF—one of its main political selling points in gaining mass electoral support—is based not on principled but tactical considerations. Therefore, despite the commonalities between the two factions' perspectives, no compromise was possible.

The final speech was given for the LCR majority by François Sabado. His contribution made clear that the majority's opposition to the USFI was bound up both with conscious orientation to bourgeois politics and the decision to force an end to the LCR's internal debates.

Sabado said a "window is opening" that cannot be missed. He pointed to the left bourgeois Latin American regimes of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia as "revolutionary" developments in opposition to global capitalism, and concluded that "we need an anti-capitalist pole, not a new International"—a term traditionally implying socialist loyalties. He added that to have a "mass character," parties such as the NPA could not have such affiliations.

He added, "We do not want to continue the debates between the minority and majority platforms inside the NPA." Sabado declared the difference between "revolution and reform," like that of support or opposition for the USFI, to be no longer relevant.

This concluded the LCR's dissolution congress. After a discussion of financial and organizational matters behind closed doors, the LCR membership proceeded to a vote. The majority platform won a decisive majority of the delegates. Out of a total of 150 voting delegates, the majority platform received 87.1 percent support; the minority received 11.5 percent support, and 1.4 percent abstained.



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