

Besancenot and the NPA support Sarkozy's policy on Iran elections

Peter Schwarz
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Pseudo-left organizations often reveal their true social orientation by their response to international events. Domestic politics, where the record of right-wing politicians is known to a broader audience, often impose certain at least rhetorical limits to their opportunism. However, they know no such inhibitions on the international stage and openly reveal their true class standpoint. This is the case with the reaction of the French New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) to the recent events in Iran.

The NPA, under its leader Olivier Besancenot, has so far dedicated only a few lines to the events in Iran. [1] Nevertheless, their attitude is clear, and it is fully in line with the attitude of the French president, the establishment parties and the official media.

The NPA has uncritically and without any proof accepted the claims that the Iranian election result was substantially falsified. It accuses the incumbent president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of keeping the so-called reformist forces from power by means of a “veritable coup d'état”, declaring the organization's unreserved solidarity “with all those demonstrating publicly and courageously their opposition to the existing regime.”

An official statement by the party dated June 16 declares: “The NPA supports all those who want to put a stop to the Islamic Republic.” The statement makes no analysis of the social interests and the political programs being fought out in Iran. The NPA provides a blank check to all those who want to overthrow the Iranian regime—regardless what interests and goals they are pursuing.

That those who “want to put a stop to the Islamic Republic” also include American and French imperialism is of just as little consequence to the NPA as is the program of the defeated candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, who supports cuts in social programs, the privatization of

state enterprises and the opening up of Iran to international capital. That is, Mousavi argues for the very same “neo-liberal” economic model that the NPA otherwise nominally rejects.

The NPA statement is a clear signal to the French and American governments that they can rely on the propagandistic support of the NPA in their attempt to establish a pro-Western regime in Iran.

The NPA does not offer any trace of an independent perspective for the working class and the oppressed masses in Iran. It swears solidarity with “the student youth, women and all those who are courageously resisting” the regime, but does not distinguish itself from the right-wing, bourgeois elements that lead the protest movement.

It is no secret that many of the demonstrators come from the upper middle class, for whom the priority is not primarily democracy (and certainly not social justice), but the extension of their social privileges, which are currently restricted by the clerical regime.

In this regard, there are parallels to the demonstrations that brought down the Stalinist regimes twenty years ago in Eastern Europe. At that time as well, a large number of young people took part, but in the end the main beneficiaries were a tiny, privileged minority, which enriched itself through the restoration of capitalism and the destruction of the social welfare system.

The NPA makes no attempt to reach the poor and oppressed, who largely voted for Ahmadinejad because they know that Mousavi and his supporters are planning significant social attacks. In order to unite the working class, the masses of the poor and the student youth, a socialist program is necessary that is directed against all wings of the ruling elite. But the NPA rejects such a program. In the struggle between Mousavi and Ahmadinejad, two reactionary representatives of the ruling elite, they unreservedly stand on the side of

Mousavi.

The position of the NPA is all the more remarkable since just a few days earlier, before the elections, it made a completely different evaluation. At that time, it had assumed the elections would meet with little interest. “With nearly 40 percent unemployed, 30 percent inflation, and 12 million who live under the poverty line, the purchasing power of the large majority of the population has collapsed”, they wrote on June 10. “Iranians do not expect much from this ballot.” [2]

All four candidates placed on the ballot are “prominent figureheads of the regime,” the article continued. “A bitter struggle for influence between different groups within the ruling powers is under way.” Mousavi is the candidate, who “comes closest to Western interests,” and is supported by “a section of youth from middle class and urban layers.”

At that time, the NPA conceded that Ahmadinejad had good prospects in the elections: “But Ahmadinejad’s election prospects are real. In particular, his pious, nationalist and populist rhetoric enables him to mobilise strong support among the poorest layers of the nation. He enjoys strong support among the Pasadaran [or Sepah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps], whose interests he guarantees. And finally, he is the candidate of the supreme leader.”

Seven days later all this was forgotten. As soon as the protests opened up the chance for a regime change, the NPA switched to the camp of the candidate who came “closest to Western interests,” and joined the chorus claiming the election results had been falsified.

This *modus operandi* is typical for the NPA and its predecessor, the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (LCR, Revolutionary Communist League). As long as the situation is calm, they present themselves as left-wing. When a crisis looms, however, they stand fully in the service of the bourgeois order.

In 2002, Olivier Besancenot won 1.2 million votes as the LCR candidate in the first round of the presidential election. At that time, candidates standing to the left of the Communist Party received ten percent of all votes cast. But when millions took to the streets in protest against the fascist Jean-Marie le Pen gaining a place in the second ballot, the LCR channeled this movement behind the incumbent president Jacques Chirac. It called for Chirac’s election, helping him gain an overwhelming election victory and thus stabilizing the rule of the French right wing.

The NPA’s support for Mousavi is an expression of a

more general phenomenon. The economic and social crisis is leading to a differentiation of the middle classes. While the lower layers are descending socially, the upper, more privileged layers are turning to the right. Political organizations that predominantly rely on the middle class follow in the wake of these upper layers.

This is shown most clearly in the development of the Greens, whose leading personnel—like that of the LCR/NPA—originated in the 1968 student movement. The Greens have profited in part from the decline of the social democratic and communist parties, and they have moved far to the right in the process. Today, they belong to the most important pillars of the bourgeois order. In Germany, along with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) they have overseen the re-militarisation of foreign policy and the most comprehensive cuts in social spending since the Second World War. In France, in the recent European elections, they have almost drawn even with the Socialist Party and present themselves now as potential allies for a new bourgeois coalition. The European Greens unreservedly support the Mousavi camp in Iran and are calling for the overthrow of the existing regime.

Despite its left rhetoric, the NPA represents a similar social orientation as the Greens. The reaction of the NPA to the events in Iran shows that it stands far closer to the upper middle classes, which form the backbone of Mousavi’s protest movement, than the working class and the poor, who abhor Mousavi and his rich backers at least as much, if not more, than Ahmadinejad.

Notes:

[1] “Iran: vague de colère...”, 17 juin 2009 (<http://www.npa2009.org/content/iran-vague-de-colere>); “Fraude électorale et répression en Iran”, 16 juin 2009 (<http://www.npa2009.org/content/communiqué-du-npa-fraude-électorale-et-répression-en-iran>)

[2] “Iran: une élection sans grand espoir”, 10 juin 2009 (<http://www.npa2009.org/content/iran-une-%C3%A9lection-sans-grand-espoir%C2%A0>)



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