

France: New Anti-Capitalist Party prepares “unitary” coalition with state parties

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The New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) of Olivier Besancenot met on September 28 with the French Communist Party (PCF), the traditional coalition partner of the Socialist Party (PS) and also the Left Party (PG) of the former PS minister Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The purpose of this meeting, as of the NPA’s October 1 meeting with the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) trade union, was to deepen the NPA’s political integration into the French establishment.

The statement issued by the September 28 meeting was signed by numerous parties making up a so-called “unitary” coalition, including most prominently the PCF, PG, and NPA. The main practical proposal made in the statement was to “establish a national political framework in order to check the possibility of going into the regional elections together.” These are due to take place March 10, 2010. A more long-term collaboration was also envisaged: “It’s a first step but it is important because the stakes involved in these elections are not just regional but national.”

The participants agreed to meet again October 7, in order to set up a series of “discussions on all the points to be settled so as to reach an agreement.”

The statement ludicrously sought to portray all the parties involved as representing a “fighting left” (*gauche de combat*) and a counterweight to the PS’s developing alliance with the MoDem, the right-wing party of François Bayrou, a former minister in conservative governments. It asserts, “Faced with a more and more brutal and unrestrained capitalism and a government bent on accelerating its attacks, nothing must divert us from the necessary construction of an alternative to the capitalist and productivist system.” It added, “It is necessary to work to win the majority of

workers and citizens to the perspectives opened up by a fighting left.”

This amounts to using the relative novelty of the NPA, founded this February, to promote the “left” credentials of the PCF, for decades a pillar of French capitalism. It participated in De Gaulle’s first government after the Liberation of France from the Nazi occupation and, since the 1970s, has been continuously in electoral partnerships and government coalitions with the PS.

The joint statement asserts that the purpose of its so-called “far-left alliance” is to oppose the rightward shift of the PS to an alliance with the MoDem: “This means a left which is veering ever more to the right and is thus likely to create favourable condition for electoral victories of the right, as is unfortunately proved by the situation in Italy.”

This warning against a replay of the support of the Italian bourgeois left for the 2006-2008 government of Romano Prodi is both hypocritical and fraudulent.

In fact, the NPA’s organic orientation to the state parties of the French bourgeois left is leading them down precisely the same path followed by its Italian co-thinkers, organised since 2007 in the Pabloite organisation Sinistra Critica. At the time, the Italian Pabloites participated in the Stalinist Rifondazione Comunista. When Rifondazione predictably joined a coalition government with Prodi, the Italian Pabloites found themselves participants in implementing the right-wing policies of the Prodi government.

Prodi’s government cut pensions, sent of troop reinforcements to Afghanistan, and approved the enlargement of an American military base in Italy. Having betrayed the hopes of workers who had voted for it, it lost the elections in 2008 to right-wing candidate Silvio Berlusconi.

The NPA's implicit claim that the coalition it is arranging represents something different from the coalition that supported Prodi is entirely bogus. A NPA-PCF-PG coalition would be politically dependent on established bourgeois parties like the PS, just as the Italian Pablotites ended up backing the bourgeois centrist Prodi. The NPA has already agreed to join in lists with the PS "to beat the right" in the second round of the regional elections.

Moreover, the main alternate party in its coalition, the PCF, now has powerful historical and institutional ties to the PS, and is developing relations with openly conservative parties. The September 23 issue of the magazine *Marianne* reported, "In the Paca region [Provence, Alps, and French Riviera, in the south of France], the outgoing PS president Michel Vauelle, for his part, would opt for the so-called 'strategy of the splits' by attempting to bring together behind the same banner the MoDem and the PCF."

The PCF and the PS are working in joint workshops on policy. The NPA refused their invitation to participate and is expressing the hope that the PCF can be made to refrain from first-round alliances with the PS in favour of an alliance with the NPA's "fighting left." Since many of the over 185 PCF regional councillors and officials owe their positions to alliances with the PS, this appears unlikely.

The document's appeals for an end to "productivism," as the economic crisis slashes production levels in key areas of industry like automobiles and steel, has a particularly ominous character. Anti-productivism claims that the excessive production created by the working class is to blame for environmental problems, and implies that there is an excess of consuming human beings. It is no accident that such views coincide with calls by capitalist politicians throughout the world for workers to get used to the idea that their living standards need to be destroyed by sackings, closures and the loss of social and democratic rights.

The NPA's adoption of anti-productivist phraseology is an ideological cover for deals with middle class and bourgeois political groups and serves as a justification for its electoral alliance with the PCF and the PG.

It implies that there are grounds for collaboration with the PS. Significantly, the joint NPA-PCF-PG document echoes a theme raised by PS First Secretary

Martine Aubry in *Le Monde* of August 27. She wrote: "Post-productivism does not consist in renouncing production, but in defining a selective growth to produce usefully, soberly, and cleanly. Now, we know that abundance is not synonymous with happiness. The new model demands a profound change in our methods of equipping our cities, of living, or consuming, and moving about."

The immediate purpose of the NPA's invitation to the CGT for an October 1 discussion was to mend relations after the union had declined the invitation to participate in the NPA's summer school.

The NPA had offended the CGT leadership by inviting Xavier Mathieu, the CGT shop steward leading the Continental Clairoix workers' fight against the closure of their plant. Mathieu had called Thibault "scum" for not supporting the Clairoix workers' struggle. The NPA itself gave uncritical support for the Continental Clairoix settlement—which accepted the plant's closure and the sacking of the entire workforce, in exchange for a €50,000 severance payment to every sacked worker.

The NPA reported that the discussion with the CGT "took place in a calm atmosphere." It continued: "The NPA reaffirmed that it did not have the aim of substituting itself for the unions" and that "the NPA was determined to tell the CGT that its fear of the building of an NPA faction in the CGT was groundless. The autonomy of the unions in the defence of workers goes without saying for the NPA...."

In other words, at the same time as the NPA follows the "anti-productivist"—that is, anti-industrial, political line of the PS—it accepts that the CGT should be completely "autonomous" in its betrayal of workplace struggles. That is, even while maintaining a fraudulent pose of independence from the PS, its own positions ever more unmistakably replicate those of the best-established bourgeois parties.



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