

The NPA pursues right-wing alliances for France's regional elections

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Plans for alliances between the NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party) and the ruling bourgeois-left parties in the March 2010 regional elections testify to the rapid evolution of the NPA towards a collaboration in government with the establishment “left.” Since the autumn, the NPA has held regular meetings to fix the details of this alliance with the Left Front—that is, the Left Party (PG, a split off, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, from the Socialist Party, PS) and the French Communist Party (PCF).

On November 7-8, the NPA National Political Council voted 66 percent in favour of “a national agreement” with these parties. In the first round of voting, the NPA would present lists “independent of those presented by the Socialist Party and Europe-Ecology.” There could then be “democratic fusions” of lists on the second round, according to the proportion of votes won by the PS, the NPA, and other allied parties. The NPA national agreement essentially reproduced a text decided at a meeting of the Left Front on October 28.

The agreement confirms the principle that the NPA would participate in PS-dominated administrations, despite the NPA's claims of independence and its barrage of criticism of the PS about its “social-liberal”—that is, free-market—policies.

Having taken this step, the NPA immediately tried to blur the issue by proposing an amendment to the Left Front text. The NPA resolution declared that its participation in regional executives “will not be possible in the framework of executives which were dominated by the PS and/or Europe-Ecology who pursue a policy adapting to liberalism.”

This is a bogus attempt to maintain a semblance of independence from the PS, for it raises the following question: What could the policy of an alliance including the PS and the PCF be, other than a free-market one? It is well known that these parties implemented austerity policies under the presidency of François Mitterrand (1981-1995) and the government of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin

(1997-2002). After the start of the financial crisis last year and the failure of the PS in the European elections in June 2009, a significant section of the PS even wanted to eliminate the term “socialist” from the party name!

To speak more directly, the NPA would participate in PS administrations, as long as the policies of the latter do not arouse too much criticism of its liberal and right-wing character. But, if there is controversy, it wants to reserve the right to make limited criticisms of the PS.

The NPA's amendment did not suit PCF leader Marie-George Buffet and the PG's Mélenchon, whose two parties depend on a more open alliance with the PS.

Buffet, the national secretary of the PCF, exposed her views in *L'Humanité* on November 6 to put pressure on the NPA: “The aim of the Left Front is to unite the left around the highest objectives for the population. In the second round, we have made it clear that we will work for unity to beat the right and form majorities to carry forward our propositions. Because, unlike Olivier Besancenot of the NPA, we do not think it is a question of ‘a good left opposition’ that is necessary in the regions, but good left majorities.”

On November 16, the Left Front representatives did not appear at the planned meeting with the NPA.

In a November 22 article, the NPA returned to its proposition that the Left Front rejects: “The possibility of participating in regional executives depends therefore on the relationship of political and social forces which determine the conditions under which policies could be really implemented.... We will refuse therefore to participate in an executive dominated by the PS or Europe-Ecology which would carry out a free-market policy in line with the requirements of the employers and the European Union.”

Proposition A, formulated by the NPA majority on November 25, confirmed this concession to the right: “Such democratic mergers, which [electoral] law allows in the case where our lists obtain more than 5 percent of the vote, could only be conceived of with left lists which have made no agreement with the MoDem [Democratic Movement, the

conservative party led by François Bayrou].”

Despite this failure, the NPA has not closed the door to an alliance with the Left Front: “The NPA, in the coming weeks, will continue discussions, seeking to unite all the available forces for such a policy. Neither adaptation to the framework proposed by the PCF leadership, nor acceptance of going it alone, which is not our policy.”

These negotiations go directly to the *raison d'être* of the NPA, which was founded in February 2009 by the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, the NPA's predecessor. The main ideological issue of the NPA founding congress was renouncing the vestiges of the LCR's association with Trotskyism, in order to better facilitate collaboration with parties of government. The question of political tactics debated at the congress was how to facilitate the alliances with the Left Party (PG) and the PCF, whom the NPA allowed to distribute leaflets inside its own congress.

In the European elections of June 2009, the NPA stood independently, refusing an alliance with the Left Front of the PCF and PG. The NPA's results were bad, leaving it behind the Left Front with 4 and 6 percent of the vote, respectively. The European election setback served to justify the central perspective of the founding congress—that is, to draw closer to the Stalinists (PCF) and the social democrats of the Left Front.

The negotiations themselves have an artificial character, tending to hide the deep ties that exist between the NPA and the Left Front. A significant section of the NPA, the United Left minority led by Christian Piquet, in fact works inside the Left Front. However, this tendency obtained an official representation on the national leadership of the NPA at the founding congress—where the attitude towards the PCF and PG among the delegates was most positive.

It is not certain, either, that the NPA will impose a national directive on its various regional sections. They could well arrive at their own arrangements with the Left Front and the PS, region by region.

The artificial character of the NPA's opposition to the right also stands out in its attempts to launch an NPA-Left Front alliance. The Left Front has no principled opposition to agreements with the right. The PCF has participated in several joint lists with the MoDem in municipal elections in 2008, notably in Lille and Dijon.

For the PS, the alliance with a section of the right is taking on an ever-greater importance. In the 2004 regional elections, it won control of 20 out of the 22 French metropolitan regions. And yet the PS lost out in the 2007 presidential elections and the European elections of 2009. To keep these regions, the PS must conclude the widest possible alliances, and the alliance with the MoDem, as well as with the Greens (the longtime allies of the PS), is seen as more

and more desirable within the PS leadership.

The attitude of the NPA towards this eventuality gives a glimpse of the hypocrisy of the verbal opposition to the PS and parties of the right. In a declaration, the NPA states that a PS-Bayrou alliance would be “exactly the same scenario as that which led to the catastrophe in Italy. Allied to the centrist Prodi, the left first beat Berlusconi then disappointed popular expectations, opening the way to Berlusconi II. Today, there remains not a single left deputy in the Italian parliament.”

The Italian example is fundamental, for it underlines that the NPA is trying to organise alliances, knowing full well that they will end up betraying the working class. At the time of the 2006 election, Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation), the Italian Communist party (PdCI) and the Greens together obtained nearly 4 million votes. On April 14 and 15, 2008, these same parties collapsed, not even obtaining the required minimum number of votes for a parliamentary representation.

During the two years that separated these two elections, the parties making up the Rainbow Left coalition participated actively in the Romano Prodi government and fully supported his anti-working-class policies. The Prodi government sent extra troops to Afghanistan and reduced the public deficit by attacking retirement pensions.

All these measures were supported by the Rainbow Left coalition, with the argument that it was the only way to prevent the return to power of Silvio Berlusconi. While the most right-wing elements of the Prodi government imposed their political programme, the so-called “left” adopted this policy and stabbed its electors in the back.

The criticisms that the NPA makes of the Prodi government and implicitly of the Italian co-thinkers of the NPA, regrouped since 2007 in the Pabloite organisation Sinistra Critica, are fundamentally impotent. The Italian Pabloites had participated in the Stalinist party Rifondazioni Comunista, which was an essential component of the Prodi coalition. Today, the NPA acts in the same way as the Italian Pabloites: it is preparing an alliance with the French Stalinists, whose aim is none other than to bring the PS back into government, on a right-wing political programme.



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