

France's New Anti-Capitalist Party considers role in government

Pierre Mabut, Alex Lantier
31 July 2010

France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) is preparing closer ties with the Socialist Party (PS), the country's bourgeois "left" party of rule, with a view to participating in government. This policy, signaled by rising dissension inside the NPA after its poor showing in the March regional elections, received official confirmation in a July 1 interview by NPA leader Alain Krivine.

Speaking of the PS to the newspaper *Le Bien Public*, Krivine noted that "as to governing France with [the Socialists]," he was not sure, but "if there is an agreement that unites the left, it might be possible." He explained, "We must first force all the political and trade union left to work together against Sarkozy's policy. And we're starting to get there."

With this policy, the NPA is seeking to lay the political basis for a betrayal of the working class.

As Krivine is well aware, the PS would return to power on a platform of massive social cuts directed against the population. In response to the European economic crisis, ruling social democratic parties, such as PASOK in Greece and the PSOE in Spain, have attacked jobs, wages, pensions, and labor regulations. The PS assisted in this assault by voting to fund France's portion of the €750 European bailout package, which imposed massive cuts on Greek workers in exchange for bailing out major banks holding Greek debt.

Such policies emerge from the previous betrayals of the working class by the PS. President François Mitterrand's so-called "austerity turn" devastated workers' living standards, particularly in mining and steel communities in the 1980s. From 1997-2002 Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin carried out a massive privatization program.

Krivine does not see this legacy as precluding a

political alliance with the social democrats. "We have seen what the PS has done in Greece, in Portugal, in Spain, and in France," he said. "We are willing to struggle with them against [conservative President Nicolas] Sarkozy, to the extent that they agree."

The interview comes amid a bitter debate inside the European ruling classes, as each government seeks to restore the competitiveness of its national economy by imposing austerity measures. British Prime Minister David Cameron is setting the tone, demanding cuts in government budgets of 25 to 40 percent. These policies were recently ratified by the June G20 financial summit, which issued a communiqué calling for global spending reductions.

In France, sections of the political establishment could consider replacing the current conservative government with the social democrats, in an attempt to replicate the enormous cuts enacted by their Greek, Spanish, and Portuguese counterparts. Sarkozy, already unpopular, has been deeply implicated in the recent tax-evasion scandal of billionaire Liliane Bettencourt, which has intensified already profound public hostility to further social cuts. There are rising expectations of strikes and protests in the fall.

The NPA's reaction, in such a climate, is to move into closer alliance with the establishment. The NPA is deepening its public ties to the PS and promoting illusions that the PS and its allied parties, Ecologie (EE) and the Communist Party (PCF), can be pressured into adopting progressive policies through trade union protests or political deals.

This orientation was implicit in the February 2009 founding of the NPA by the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), which was based on a rejection of the idea that the working class is the leading political force in the fight against capitalism and of any residual

verbal association with Trotskyism.

The NPA leadership's decision earlier this year to run a campaign independent from the PCF-dominated Left Front in the March 2010 regional elections was bitterly contested inside the party. In January Leila Chaibi, the head of an NPA faction that organizes "protest" shoplifting in grocery stores, said, "The choice of going it alone in the regional elections is for me the expression of the failure of the NPA project."

After the March elections, in which the PS won all but one of metropolitan France's 22 regions thanks to popular anger over Sarkozy's policies, there were growing calls inside the NPA for collaboration with government parties. Raoul-Marc Jennar, an anti-globalization activist and one of the founders of the NPA, denounced the NPA's "sectarianism" in an April 9 *Libération* interview. He explained that he favored "confluences" with the EE and other environmentalist groups, and announced his resignation.

As shown by Krivine's interview in *Le Bien Public*, the existing NPA leadership agrees with the need to work with the PS or its satellite parties, though for the time being they prefer to adopt a falsely independent stance.

NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot shares this position. He welcomes PS members onto public platforms, with the fraudulent claim that the PS is fighting President Sarkozy's pension cuts. Speaking on June 14 in Rouen, alongside Guillaume Bachelay of the PS and Jacky Hénin of the PCF, Besancenot said: "Today, we are hitting the same nail on the head....and the mayonnaise is beginning to gel," (a French expression indicating all the groups are starting to work together as a coherent whole).

As Krivine's comments on the social democrats' policies in Greece and Spain show, such bravado from the NPA leadership amounts to a conscious betrayal of the working class and all those who mistakenly look to the NPA as some sort of genuine opposition movement. The NPA leadership is well aware of the right-wing character of the PS and similar parties throughout Europe. Its aim is to foster the conception that, with enough pressure from below, the PS can be made to adopt policies less harmful than Sarkozy's.

This illusion, which is immensely valuable to the French bourgeoisie, is maintained by cynical operators like Krivine. He told *Le Bien Public* that he did not

currently have plans to go into a PS government because "that discredits the left." By this, Krivine means that immediate participation in a right-wing PS government would threaten to expose the entire "left" political establishment, from the NPA to the PS.

This was the experience in Italy, where Krivine's Italian co-thinkers in Communist Refoundation (Rifondazione Comunista—RC) participated in the 2006-2008 Prodi government, which cut pensions and continued Italian participation in the Afghan war. Subsequently, RC's vote in the Italian parliament collapsed.

For the moment, the NPA intends to corral growing opposition to the government using other well-worn methods. Referring to youth protests in 2006 sparked by the government's proposal to slash job protections for young people in the form of the First Job Contract (CPE), Krivine stated, "[A]t the NPA, in September, we are starting a general strike movement, just as the youth did with the CPE." Krivine declared it is his intention to make the government "retreat" from its proposed austerity measures, similar to the Villepin government's partial retraction of the CPE in 2006.

Krivine's analogy, however, rests on a false presentation of what actually happened at that time. The anti-CPE protest movement was sold out by the unions and the "left," in exchange for a partial pullback by the government. Sections of the unions acted directly in concert with Sarkozy, who used then-Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin's defeat to promote his own 2007 presidential campaign. This maneuver gave Sarkozy a false populist gloss, which he exploited to move against the workers, slashing pensions and labor laws, in the early period of his presidency.

That Krivine would promote such an example underlines the treacherous, anti-working class character of the NPA's policies.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact