# Ex-French resistance members make reactionary nationalist appeal

**Alex Lantier**
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On May 14 France's daily of record, *Le Monde*, published a political appeal to unify the French nation around the values of the welfare state, issued by former members of the French resistance. Thirteen people—including former Gaullist intelligence officials Raymond Aubrac and Stéphane Hessel, and ex-leader of the Stalinist CGT (General Confederation of Labor) union Georges Séguy—signed the appeal.

It was issued from the Glières plateau in the Alps, the scene of one of the first major guerrilla actions in March 1944 against French-collaborationist and Nazi troops. During this operation, coordinated with Allied governments, the Glières plateau was briefly held and then evacuated by Resistance fighters. Most of them were turned in by collaborationist Frenchmen as they fled, however, and then deported or shot.

*Le Monde*'s decision to publish the Glières appeal is part of a broader campaign in the political and media establishment to promote Resistance fighters and French nationalism. Hessel's book *Time for Outrage* has sold 1.5 million copies in France. It was translated into Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Greek; translations are underway into Slovenian, Korean, Japanese, Swedish, and other languages. *The Nation* magazine published an English version on its website in March.

The response to Hessel's book, with its denunciation of the "power of money," reflects rising popular sentiment that a struggle must be mounted against social inequality and the dictatorship of the major banks over the needs of working people. However, it also indicates the unresolved issues of historical and political perspective facing the working class.

Behind the observations made by Hessel and other members of the Resisting Citizens of Yesterday and Today (CRHA)—the group issuing the Glières appeal—lies not a perspective of social struggle, but of national unity and accommodation with the ruling class. This is not only utopian, but chauvinist and hostile to the proletariat.

The Glières appeal declares, "We would like all citizens, all parties, all trade unions, all associations to participate in elaborating a Project for Society of the 21st Century, basing itself on the '*Happy Days*' program of the National Resistance Committee adopted on March 15, 1944. This political program still constitutes a fundamental reference for French republican identity."

The National Resistance Committee (CNR) brought together factions of the Resistance, led primarily by General Charles de Gaulle and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF). Its 1944 program—which famously demanded the "eviction of great economic and financial aristocracies from control over the economy"—was the ideological basis for the constitution of the new (Fourth) Republic that replaced the pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

Behind the CNR's rhetoric, however, lay a more sordid reality: the rehabilitation of the French bourgeoisie, which had collaborated with the Nazis, with the PCF's help. Anxious to hide its collaboration with the Nazis at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact, the PCF enforced the Yalta agreements by which the Kremlin divided the world with US and British imperialism, with France falling in the capitalist sphere. The Trotskyist movement—the only political tendency that fought for a revolution of the working class—was subjected to repression by the Stalinists and the state in France.

Aubrac, Hessel, and Séguy are the product of this tortured political history. When the post-war boom and US financial help under the Marshall Plan allowed improvements in the living standards of the masses, the PCF and the Gaullists held up the CNR as the proof of the viability of the capitalist regime they created in 1944.

The historical circumstances that allowed for economic development on a capitalist basis belong to the distant past, however. In an era of globalization, after the collapse of the USSR and the global economic crisis centered on the US, the European ruling classes have neither the personnel nor the financial resources for a policy of social reform. They are fighting wars in Libya, Afghanistan, and beyond, while cutting jobs and social spending across the continent—particularly with the outbreak of the European debt crisis, after the initial collapse centered on the US in 2008.

As the financial aristocracy everywhere decimates workers' jobs and living standards, the CRHA's perspective—appealing for national unity around the state, as it slashes social spending and fights imperialist wars abroad—is immediately and directly reactionary. In fact, as *Le Monde* publicizes the Glières appeal, it is also considering what political alliances could be formed between the ex-Resistance forces and the right wing.

Remarkably, the Glières appeal fails to mention that Marine Le Pen, the FN's 2012 presidential candidate, is campaigning on appeals to the Resistance and the Liberation. This is part of Le Pen's broader attempt to give the FN a pseudo-"left" gloss, hiding its anti-immigrant and anti-worker platform behind slogans about "Republican values" and "secularism."

That Le Pen is making such comments is, however, widely known. Indeed, *Le Monde*'s coverage of the CRHA directly refers to this campaign. Calling Le Pen a "skilled shot," *Le Monde* wrote that her May Day speech used much of the "vocabulary of the resistance."

Le Pen said the FN stood for "the spirit of resistance to servitude, resistance to oppression and to collaboration with the enemies of sovereignty.… Can we be reproached for fighting for a free France, for Free France? I do not believe so."

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It testifies to the degeneracy and cowardice of the French political elite that a neo-fascist can campaign with appeals to the Resistance to fascist rule in France. However, after years of trying to distract the population from right-wing social and military policies with anti-immigrant rhetoric—justified under the false flag of "secularism"—the establishment parties have fewer and fewer differences with Le Pen. Indeed, the burqa ban and similar measures received the support of all France's bourgeois "left" parties, including the Socialist Party (PS), the PCF, and the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA).

As the entire spectrum of official politics swerves to the right, *Le Monde* focuses on what right-wing alliances the Glières appeal might serve to make. It writes, "A sacred union cannot be formed with true enemies, there is no sacred union with Vichy, of course, or even with a certain right wing that has never tried to promote the humanity of humanity but that has always defended the struggle of all against all with, possibly, a few accommodations for show."

This remarkable statement raises serious questions. First, who even raised a "sacred union with Vichy"? Second, the fact that only a "certain right wing" is unsuited to a "sacred union" poses the question of which other right-wing forces could form a "sacred union" with the CRHA, the CGT, and beyond.

In this context, it is significant that the Glières appeal calls on "all parties" to participate in discussions—without ruling out the FN, or criticizing its attempt to appropriate the Resistance.

This highlights the Glières appeal's basic political function. It provides a pseudo-"left" cover for right-wing nationalism being prepared by the French bourgeoisie, as it contemplates the FN's rapid rise in the polls and the need for a more aggressive national policy—from tensions with Germany over the fate of the euro, to imperialist wars in Libya, Ivory Coast, and Afghanistan.

*Le Monde* disingenuously calls the CRHA "a small group of friendly people who, in 2007, were indignant when [President] Nicolas Sarkozy tried to take over the memory of the Resistance at Glières, trying make it an object of depoliticized political marketing."

This is an absurd description of the highly experienced members of the French political establishment. The aged diplomats, engineers and bureaucrats making the Glières appeal are all associated with images of the French capitalism of the post-war period—with state-directed planning, large public enterprises, and industrial development.

This is not, however, the content of the policies they advocate. In fact, they are calling for greater political representation for affluent diplomats, engineers, and bureaucrats in today's globalized capitalism. In their terms, they want "new Republican practices," so that "the action of civil society will be recognized."

They also express the pessimistic viewpoint that there are "limits on development that are compatible with human survival."

Such comments reflect the social evolution of the professional upper middle class. Over the course of the careers of Aubrac, Hessel, Séguy, and company—have increasingly absorbed the right-wing outlook of the financial aristocracy and adopted standpoints more immediately and directly hostile to the broad mass of the proletariat.

Aubrac and Hessel both went from Gaullist intelligence to long careers in international diplomacy at French or UN agencies. Aubrac was a "fellow traveler" of the PCF, hosting Ho Chi Minh after World War II, while French imperialism was reintroducing its forces into Indochina. He later helped US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger negotiate with North Vietnam during America's Vietnam War in the 1970s.

Séguy was from 1967 to 1982 the General Secretary of the CGT, and from 1956 to 1982 a member of the political committee of the PCF. The most famous incident involving Séguy is doubtless when he was shouted down by striking auto workers at the Boulogne-Billancourt plant, as he tried to push a deal to end the 1968 general strike that he had negotiated with the government. As a leading member of the CGT and PCF during the 1970s, he participated in their integration into a political alliance led by the PS.

This party held power in the 1980s, under President François Mitterrand, and ultimately used a wave of plant shutdowns and social cuts to crush workers' struggles and gradually bring the period of mass strikes after 1968 to a close. In the period since the 13 signatories of the Glières appeal were personally playing leading roles in official French politics, moreover, the social and political layer for which they speak has evolved considerably to the right.

Aided by various renegades from Trotskyism, the PS and its political and trade-union allies ha ve suppressed the struggles of the working class over a period of decades. This has produced a staggering growth of unemployment and social inequality that now places France, in line with the rest of the world, on the eve of explosive class struggles.

In France today the richest one percent of the population holds 24 percent, or nearly one quarter, of the country's total wealth. This does not and cannot satisfy France's capitalist class, however: it constantly competes for profits with its counterparts in countries like the United States. There, the top one percent holds nearly 40 percent of the wealth.

Far from having been "evicted" by the CNR program, this financial aristocracy has a stranglehold on political power. Last year multi-billionaire Liliane Bettencourt was found to have played a major role in funding the ruling conservative party, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). Funds passed from Bettencourt to the UMP, and allegedly to President Nicolas Sarkozy, through Eric Woerth, the minister who oversaw the 2010 pension cut.

Nonetheless, the government rammed through the pension cut demanded by major banks and investors like Bettencourt, despite overwhelming popular opposition and a wave of strikes that were broken by riot police. This was supported by CGT, the PCF, and the NPA, who called for only "symbolic" opposition to police strike-breaking.

These events testified to the social gulf separating the working class from the political representatives of the affluent professional classes. The Glières statement, with its nationalist appeals and coded signals to the political right, is another sign that the struggles of the working class require a new, revolutionary orientation—which it will not find in the politics of the CRHA.

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