

The Socialist Party adopts an anti-working class program in France

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On May 28, after two months of discussion, the French Socialist Party (PS) unanimously adopted a program to serve as a common platform for all PS candidates in the 2012 presidential elections. The PS indicates that it is ready to take over from Nicolas Sarkozy in 2012, whilst continuing to carry out essentially the same policies as Sarkozy.

In a May 29 article by Sylvain Courage in the *Nouvel Observateur*, titled “PS project for 2012 : [PS First Secretary] Martine Aubry’s big show,” the author writes, “Aubry employs the royal ‘we’ to say ‘we are ready to straighten out France as in 1981 and in 1997 in a grand democratic advance.’” The PS’s 2012 project serves notice that this party is ready to take office in order to lead the attacks against the working class that are indispensable for the French bourgeoisie.

According to opinion polls, if the presidential elections were held today, the PS would be elected. Following the pension reforms, President Sarkozy has become highly unpopular. Right-wing personalities like Jean-Louis Borloo and Dominique De Villepin are thinking of standing in the presidential elections. The neo-fascist National Front (FN) has registered an increase in support, thanks to the racist ban on the burqa and the “national identity” debate launched by Nicolas Sarkozy, which received the support of the PS and its satellite parties.

The PS program is fundamentally pessimistic and announces no serious measures to improve workers’ conditions of life. It reflects the fear of the French bourgeoisie confronted with the rise of the developing countries and the decline of medium-sized imperialist powers like France—in particular, its fear of the developing class struggle that has spread from the Middle East and especially North Africa.

The PS recognizes that the foundations of the economic stability in France after the end of World War II “have been shattered.” The economic improvement of France

and Europe was tied to the role played by the USA as the dominant world power with the US dollar as the international currency for trade.

The decline of American capitalism, as well as the emergence of the developing countries with their low wages, capable of competing with France, was an important factor in the decline of medium-sized countries. Paragraph 4 of the PS document points out, “The arrival of new economic giants, which demand their share of material well-being, combined with a mode of development based on the exploitation of nature, is bringing the world to a tipping point.”

In paragraph 5, the PS speaks of the postponement of all the promises made on the fall of the Berlin Wall. This confession on the part of the PS is remarkable because indeed capitalism—contrary to what was said at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy—is manifestly not a stable system guaranteeing freedom for everyone.

As has been shown by the behavior of the banks during the economic crisis, it uses criminal measures to make profits by attacking the social gains and democratic rights of the working class. The PS presents France and the world as entering a period of social regression that is more or less inevitable.

The PS is not able to propose another alternative because—like the social democrats Giorgios Papandreou in Greece or José Luis Zapatero in Spain—it agrees with the austerity programs. In paragraph 7, the PS draws what is in fact a devastating balance sheet of its own record. It attempts dishonestly to declare that the social democratic movement is only guilty of “passivity”: “To increase profits, free-market governments have weakened social protection and purchasing power—with the passivity of some social democratic leaders in Europe.”

The PS lies when it speaks of “passivity” to qualify the anti-worker policies of the social democrats. In fact, since

the founding of the contemporary PS in France in the 1970's, the PS in government has always served to put down workers' struggles and re-establish capitalist order at the expense of the workers.

In 1983, two years after the PS took office led by François Mitterrand with the aid of the French Communist Party (PCF), it adopted an austerity plan against workers. This led to the definitive stifling of the strike waves following the 1968 general strike, and an even more determined pursuit by the bourgeoisie of a policy of de-industrialization and privatization, notably in the French steel industry.

The PS government of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, which took office to stabilize the presidency of Jacques Chirac, which had been shaken by the strikes in 1995, ended up implementing a brutal policy of privatization.

At present, with the world economic crisis and the European debt crisis, the social democratic governments are all carrying out deep attacks against the social gains of workers. Far from being passive as the PS claims, they have increased the retirement age in Greece and Spain, while attacking the social gains and conditions of work.

The policies of countries governed by the social democrats are turning more and more towards dictatorship. In response to the protests last year, governments sent the forces of the state—against the air traffic controllers' strike in Spain, the truck drivers in Greece, in the same way Sarkozy sent the CRS riot police against striking refinery workers in France battling his retirement reforms.

The PS's silence on this underlines the fact that they are preparing to carry out similar policies in France. Moreover, the PS is an accomplice to austerity measures: in the National Assembly it voted for the implementation of the austerity package in Greece.

The PS criticizes Sarkozy's foreign policy in the Mediterranean, but agrees with his main initiative in the region: the French military aggression against Libya. The PS thus writes that Sarkozy "reduced France's credibility by rolling out the red carpet to Gaddafi the assassin when the other democracies were denouncing his deeds. When he acted, rightly, three years later, to prevent the Libyan regime from massacring his own people, he did it too late...."

The PS thus relays Sarkozy's cynical lie—according to which the war in Libya is necessary to protect civilians—to justify its support for the war in Libya and the bombing of civilians by France and NATO.

The PS elaborates a nationalist economic policy, whose

adoption, were it to take place, would provoke profound divisions in world trade. It develops the idea of a position more independent of the US, and turned towards Germany: "a realistic defense of our commercial interests confronted with low-wage countries and protectionist measures by governments. In order to realize this, let's give encouragement to 'reinforced cooperation,' let's put forward the outline of a pioneering group led by France and Germany."

The PS tries to give a pseudo-social justification for a European commercial policy with essentially autarkic implications. The PS wants to create policies to put an end to the access to Europe of products from developing countries, by closing Europe's frontiers.

The PS measures are in line with those of Nicolas Sarkozy. The PS wishes to see an annual conference on salaries with the employers, trade unions and the state to establish a general framework for the evolution of wages.

The unions have participated in all the measures proposed by Sarkozy's government to try to reduce the standard of living of the working class and make it accept the austerity measures demanded by the government, such as the pension reforms, as happened with the rail workers' struggle, without creating a political explosion.

Apart from the protectionist measures, the PS announces, above all, measures whose content demonstrates the anti-worker character of the policies it will carry out. As if to underline that de-industrialization will continue under a PS government, it proposes to "increase the cost of mass redundancies for companies which pay out dividends."

As soon as it is in government, as in 1981 or in 1997, the PS governs well to the right of its promises made during the election campaigns. This highlights the significance of the fact that its program for 2012 is not "left," but a right-wing program that defends war and social austerity. Were it to take office in 2012, in the middle of a deep crisis of world capitalism, a PS government would be of the most reactionary variety.



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