

# Petty-bourgeois “left” applauds betrayal of French airport strike

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4 January 2012

As the trade unions tried to strangle the December strike of airport security staff who were under threat of strike-breaking by police, the French petty-bourgeois “left” gave unfailing support to the trade union bureaucracy.

This was the reason for the intervention on the seventh day of the strike by Olivier Besancenot for the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), Nathalie Arthaud of Workers Struggle (LO) and Marie-Georges Buffet of the French Communist Party (PCF), at a meeting of 200 airport security staff.

During the meeting, Nathalie Arthaud stated: “I condemn the fact that the government is preventing the strikers from defending themselves and blackmailing them. ... it’s the bosses who are responsible for all this.” She was alluding to intervention, on the orders of the government, of the frontier police (PAF) and the air transport police (GTA) to take the place of striking security workers, in order to break their strike.

In fact, the employers depend largely on the trade union bureaucracy and its defenders such as Arthaud, to enable the government to make such threats. The unions made no call for a wider movement of workers to defend the strikers’ democratic rights. They sought to bring the dispute to an end (See: French unions seek to end airport security workers strike).

The strike ended after a “crisis resolution agreement” was signed by the trade unions, without the airport security staff gaining satisfaction of their demands—and despite the fact that the workers voted to continue the strike.

Eric Biro, the general secretary of the UNSA-FMPS union (National Union of Autonomous Unions’ security section) stated, “The strike has taken a very

difficult turn in the past four days. We became somewhat bogged down. A lot of workers were very tired and at the end of their tether.”

The CGT (General Confederation of Labour, close to the PCF) saw no point in signing the agreement, but also called for a return to work, praising what the workers had won: “The employers of the sector have agreed to some of the demands supported by the CGT, notably on the retention of staff in the event of a market transfer.”

In fact, airport security unions decided not to buck workers’ demands for a strike, in order to avoid losing control of the dispute—knowing full well that neither the state nor management would accede to the workers’ demands.

Their aim was not to win the wage rises sought by the workers, but to keep the union bureaucracy’s control over the working class. The airport security staff—who are among the 50 percent of the French population earning under €1,600 a month—are demanding a €200 per month raise.

The outcome of the strike recalls the NPA’s support for the state’s manoeuvres to break the 2010 refineries strike against President Nicolas Sarkozy’s pension reform (See: France: New Anti-Capitalist Party academic advocates surrender to Sarkozy’s cuts). With the support of the NPA, the CGT called for “symbolic” opposition to the sending of police to force strikers back to work.

The mass movements of workers in the Arab world and the Occupy Wall Street protests have frightened the CGT and the petty bourgeois “left,” who fear that a workers’ movement might develop and get out of their

control. Their response to the mounting struggles and social tensions is to line up ever more directly with the ruling class and its political instruments. In France, in the months preceding the 2012 presidential elections, this includes most notably the Socialist Party (PS).

“The right to strike is in danger, I hope that the entire left understands this,” Besancenot was quoted in the *Parisien* article entitled “Security strike: Besancenot, Arthaud and Buffet with the demonstrators.” Thus Besancenot is trying to make workers believe that the PS and the rest of the French bourgeois “left” would side with them and defend the right to strike.

These organisations depend on the PS for their survival, which gives them a profoundly anti-working class character. The PCF participated in various governments with the PS in the 1980s under President François Mitterrand, who had carried out austerity and deindustrialisation policies against the industries with the most combative sections of the working class. During the 1990s, under the PS government of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, the PCF helped to privatise broad sectors of the economy.

LO and the PS presented joint lists in the municipal elections, and the NPA hopes to obtain the endorsements it needs from local PS officials, so it can present its candidate in the 2012 presidential elections. In exchange, the NPA will try to guarantee that its candidates’ vote in the first round will transfer to the PS in the second round run-off.

Indeed the whole NPA programme is oriented to a strategy of tying the working class to the PS. When the NPA speaks of prohibiting sacking or wage rises, in the final analysis it is with the perspective that in the future the PS or another bourgeois party should form a government and propose such measures.

Philippe Poutou, the NPA’s presidential candidate, has frequently affirmed that the NPA’s priority is to “kick out” Sarkozy and has stated that he would call for a PS vote in the second round of the presidential elections. Poutou and the NPA’s position is dishonest, wishing to make workers think that in power the PS would carry out different policies from those of Sarkozy.

European social democratic governments have used the same methods as Sarkozy to break strikes of workers fighting the destruction of their wages and social gains. George Papandreou, the social democratic

Greek prime minister, instructed the army to break the Greek lorry drivers’ strike in 2010, with the support of the GSEE trade union federation and of petty-bourgeois “left” parties such as SYRIZA.

A few months later, the Spanish social-democratic government of José Luis Zapatero broke an air traffic controllers’ strike by declaring a state of emergency and sending in the army in order to place the air traffic controllers under military discipline.

By attempting to rally workers behind a perspective of pressuring the PS, the NPA and the rest of the French petty bourgeois “left” is preparing to act as an accomplice of the bourgeoisie in such crimes against the working class in France.



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