

2012 French elections: NPA bids to join pro-austerity government

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With the approach of France's presidential and legislative elections, a tendency of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) is working to prepare a direct alliance between the NPA and the Left Front. The aim of the NPA is to participate in a possible Socialist Party (PS) government after the presidential and legislative elections in April-May and then June of this year, to impose austerity and class-war measures against the workers.

This confirms the analysis made by the WSWS of the founding of the NPA by the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) in 2009: "To be part of the bourgeoisie's realignment of the left, the LCR must make clear they are breaking whatever tenuous association they had with revolutionary politics. To the extent that the LCR is publicly identified with Trotskyism, this is an obstacle to the sharp swing to the right that the LCR anticipates it will carry out in collaboration with the trade unions, the Socialist Party, and other forces of the French political establishment." (See: "France: What is the LCR's New Anti-Capitalist Party?")

The mechanism for a potential NPA governmental alliance with the rest of the bourgeois "left" is the rapprochement between a faction in the NPA, the Anti-capitalist Left (GA), and the Left Front, which consists of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Left Party (PG). The Left Front's presidential candidate is Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a former PS minister, who left the PS to found the PG in 2009. The GA arises from the former "Platform B" NPA faction, which got 40 percent of the votes after the NPA summer school in August. At the time, it was already advocating an alliance with the Left Front. (See: "French New Anti-

Capitalist Party's summer school marks new rightward lurch")

On February 11, the GA held a meeting that brought together the NPA leadership, the PG, the Unitary Left (a faction of the NPA already working inside the Left Front), the PCF leadership, and other petty-bourgeois groups. Its goal was to lay the basis for an alliance in the presidential and legislative elections.

According to the GA statement, unanimously adopted by the participants, "In the context of a global crisis of capitalism, the euro zone and France ... now the issue is to build an anti-crisis left bloc both in the streets and the ballot box, bidding for power to build, in close relationship with the self-activity of the masses, a program of a break with capitalism."

The bloc would bring together "political tendencies (from the far anti-capitalist left to the anti-free-market left reformists, trade unionists, activists in the working class neighborhoods, male and female critical intellectuals, youth movements, radical ecologist groups."

The pretentious language of the statement tries to hide a patent lie: the GA and the NPA want to make out that it is possible to "break with capitalism" by allying with Mélenchon, a former minister in the Plural Left government of 1997-2002. This government collapsed in the 2002 elections, when PS Prime Minister Lionel Jospin was punished for his unpopular privatisation measures and his participation in the war in Afghanistan in 2001. Mélenchon is in the process of making an alliance with the PS for the legislative elections.

No political tendency can be unaware, however, of the role that a social democratic government would play in Europe today. Far from “breaking with capitalism,” it would impose austerity measures on the workers, with the help of Mélenchon and the petty-bourgeois “left.”

The social democratic governments of the Greek PASOK have played a central role in the pillage of Greece by the banks of the European Union. François Hollande, the PS presidential candidate, is campaigning on a program of social austerity and pursuing French imperialism’s wars in Afghanistan and Libya—and potentially Syria and beyond.

The NPA has a record of supporting these reactionary policies, applauding the unions when they enabled the police to crush the petrol refinery and port workers’ strikes in the autumn of 2010 and defending France’s war against Libya. (See: “A tool of imperialism: France’s New Anti-Capitalist Party backs war on Libya”)

The NPA’s orientation to the bourgeois “left” parties mirrors that of its Italian counterpart, the Pabloite group Sinistra Critica (Critical Left). Inside the Stalinist Rifondazione Comunista party (Communist Refoundation), they participated in the government led by Romano Prodi from 2006 to 2008. Rifondazione helped Prodi to impose austerity measures against the working class, to reinforce the troops in Afghanistan, and to authorise American military bases in Italy.

Were the NPA to achieve participation in a PS government or parliamentary majority at a time when the economic crisis and the intensity of wars are much greater, their policies would be even to the right of those Sinistra Critica pursued six years ago.

The GA’s arguments to justify their orientation to Mélenchon reveal the profound demoralization within the NPA. The GA is particularly hostile to the NPA’s own presidential candidate, Philippe Poutou. Poutou was selected by the NPA after the decision of its previous candidate, Olivier Besancenot, to withdraw from the presidential elections after the eruption of

revolutionary struggles in Egypt and Tunisia.

Poutou, however, lacks one critical element: the interest that the media had in Besancenot, whom the NPA put forward in TV programs to give a maximum impact. Lacking this media coverage—which made the NPA largely dependent on the corporate media for the spread of its political influence—Poutou’s candidacy is now trailing.

The GA declared: “Poutou’s campaign, which had been decided by a majority vote, has failed to take off—this is obvious and serious. At best it comes across as a marginal and impotent candidacy, just to show we exist, and at the worst as a useless and imperceptible candidacy.” In contrast, it declares: “Mélenchon’s candidacy is the only one which exists on a mass scale with well attended meetings, a media presence, [and] a credible level of voting intentions in the polls.”

This only goes to show that the NPA is not a party which tries to build itself in a political struggle against the bourgeoisie and the state, but a petty-bourgeois party which attempts to create a small electoral base with the help and complicity of the bourgeois media.

Although mainly negotiated by the GA, plans for an alliance with Mélenchon are clearly supported by those sections of the NPA that had opposed Platform B, notably Besancenot’s supporters. On Monday, February 13, Besancenot went to demonstrate outside the Greek embassy together with Mélenchon, but without Poutou.



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