

France's New Anti-capitalist Party applauds President Hollande's election

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The petty-bourgeois “left” New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and its Anti-Capitalist Left (GA) faction have applauded the victory of Socialist Party (PS) candidate François Hollande against incumbent President Nicolas Sarkozy in the May 6 presidential election.

On May 7, the NPA's presidential candidate Phillipe Poutou praised Hollande, declaring: “Nicolas Sarkozy, the ‘president of the rich’ is well and truly beaten, and we are glad.... After a campaign that took on an increasingly reactionary turn, the candidate claiming to be the ‘candidate of the people’ was thrown out, and it's a good thing.”

Having called upon voters to vote unconditionally for Hollande in the May 6 run-off, the NPA is now embracing the Hollande administration. While Hollande's victory is indeed the result of mass opposition to Sarkozy's right-wing policies, however, Sarkozy's defeat does not mean that Hollande will adopt any measures whatsoever in favor of the working class.

A representative of finance capital advocating pro-business policies at the expense of the workers, Hollande had vowed to slash budget deficits through cuts in social benefits, adopt structural reforms to boost competitiveness, and continue France's imperialist wars. Given that it knows that Hollande's program is reactionary, the NPA's claim that Hollande's election is a “good thing” is an unabashed political lie.

For its part, the GA declared: “There is no solution besides voting for François Hollande. This does not mean supporting the policy defended by the Socialist candidate, which is marked by the seal of austerity. But it's the concrete means to throw out Sarkozy.”

With NPA unconditionally calling for a Hollande vote against Sarkozy, the GA's claim that they vote for Hollande without supporting his policies is a fraud. The NPA has simply played the role of an adjunct of the PS to promote the PS and its right-wing policies. In doing so, it politically disarms the working class, trying to prevent it from developing an independent struggle against the political establishment.

The NPA knows full well the consequences for the working class, as they themselves note that the election of Hollande, which they supported, opens the way for austerity policies. Poutou commented, “The election of Hollande is the signal of austerity policies for the popular classes, in the name of austerity and balanced budgets.”

Nothing speaks more clearly to the NPA's hostility to a revolutionary socialist struggle against capitalism than its decision to nonetheless support Hollande, rather than warning the working class that it needs a political program independent of the bourgeois “left” PS.

Whatever its canned rhetoric criticizing the PS's policies, the NPA is drawn from upper middle class layers deeply integrated into the official bourgeois politics and tasked with defending the interests of French imperialism.

Sarkozy, during his presidency, negotiated a series of social cuts, including pension reform, with the trade unions, while carrying out undemocratic measures such as the burqa ban and unpopular wars, such as the war against Libya. With the support of petty bourgeois “left” parties including the NPA, the union bureaucracy

dissipated mass anger against social cuts with a series of toothless one-day protests.

The NPA also aligned with the state by supporting Sarkozy's anti-democratic burqa ban and the French military intervention against Libya, under the cynical guise of "protecting civilians." It supports imperialist preparation for war against Syria on the basis of similar lies, promoting imperialist-backed "rebel" forces against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Now, amid a deepening economic crisis in which France faces a rising trade deficit and falling competitiveness, particularly against Germany, Hollande is preparing draconian measures against the workers. In the name of boosting competitiveness, he will work closely with the unions to cut labor costs, freezing wages and attacking working conditions. The main unions, including the Stalinist CGT (General Confederation of Labor) and the PS-linked CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labor), also called for a Hollande vote.

Hollande's right-wing policies will provoke a confrontation with the working class. The NPA is preparing for this by advancing the bankrupt position that workers can defend themselves against Hollande by following the political line of the unions and petty-bourgeois "left" parties that support him.

Poutou said, "We address ourselves to those who saw themselves in our campaign, to the organizations and those people who saw themselves in the campaigns of the Left Front or of Workers Struggle [LO], to union members and to the entire social movement."

For its part, the GA declared: "The watchword of the coming period is coming together. All the social, ecological, and political left must come together to help develop the struggles. And we must bring together all the radical left in a political force, a front, useful for struggle and solid in the ballot box. It's possible and it works, that is what the electoral and militant success of [Left Front] candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon showed."

In fact, these organizations would only come together to try to suppress popular opposition to the PS. Like the NPA, the Left Front of Jean Luc Mélenchon, LO and the trade unions, including the CGT and the CFDT, supported Hollande.

Mélenchon, a former PS minister who left the PS in 2009, provided a cover for Hollande's right-wing policies with "left" demagoguery. After obtaining 11 percent of the vote in the first round, coming in fourth behind neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen, Mélenchon appealed to his voters to vote for Hollande.

Such parties aim at preventing the working class from struggling against PS austerity policies. The NPA is doubtless preparing to promote union-organized one-day protests to dissipate popular anger against social cuts, while endorsing the government that is preparing the cuts against the workers.



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