

The New Anti-capitalist Party and the expulsion of the Roma from France

Anthony Torres, Alex Lantier
31 October 2012

The racist expulsions of Roma carried out by the French Socialist Party (PS), whose election the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) supported, reveal the reactionary character of the NPA's support for the PS. The NPA attempts to hide its political culpability in the persecution of the Roma by maintaining a virtual silence on the subject.

The sole comment published by the NPA on the persecution of the Roma, dated October 5, addresses cynical and impotent criticisms of the expulsion of Roma from Marseille.

On September 30, the city of Marseille had lodged a complaint in order to obtain the expulsion of Roma living in a deserted warehouse in the city's 15th district. On September 27, they had fled from their encampment, under pressure from hostile local residents. The magazine *Médiapart* of October 20 quotes a Roma person on the expulsion: "Some Arab and Moroccan people came with weapons and petrol-filled bottles to tell us to leave, otherwise they would set the place alight. We called the police but they also told us to leave."

The expulsion took place with the support of the PS senator for the 15th and 16th districts of Marseille, Samia Ghali, who previously had received a visit from Interior Minister Manuel Valls and Justice Minister Christiane Taubira. Taubira declared that order had returned to Marseille, after which the state stood by as the police expelled the Roma—even after the reactionary riot of the local residents of September 27. The last Roma residing in Marseille were expelled last week.

The NPA reacted by publishing a communique entitled "Roma: in Marseille, the sinister emulators of Valls." It describes the thoughts of activists from the Education Without Frontiers network (a support organization for undocumented immigrants) who were

clearing a part of the street to shelter the expelled Roma, writing: "We of course think of pogroms, of fascist militias. Something has changed: after the unabashed right-wing [under previous President Nicolas Sarkozy], which implemented the policies which the neo-fascist National Front dreamed of, it is the racist law and order left of Valls which moves into action, justifying the local inhabitants' actions".

This cynical commentary leaves an essential question unanswered: what is the position of the NPA in the face of a developing climate of fascist tendencies?

The NPA chooses to pass over in silence the fact that it called for a vote for "the racist law and order left" during the presidential elections. With this unambiguous gesture, it indicated its support for François Hollande, while the latter was preparing to base himself on social forces that the NPA now compares to fascist militia of the Vichy regime.

The NPA cannot claim that it did not know that once President Hollande was elected, he would carry out an anti-Roma policy. Already in February, nearly three months before his election, Hollande announced that he would bring forth a solution to the presence of Roma in France by limiting their right to move freely, and placing them in camps (see also "French Socialist Party presidential candidate calls for interning the Roma").

The NPA therefore knowingly supported what it calls the "racist, law-and-order" PS. While the character of the PS policy is clearly established in practice, the NPA persists in its orientation towards the PS: it impotently "demands" that Valls carries out a less reactionary policy.

Thus, in its communiqué, the NPA writes that "the state has the means to take the necessary measures to welcome the Roma in a fitting manner. We demand that it do so and that it put an end to the racist, law-and-

order hysteria which aims to divide the lower classes.”

This confession that the PS aims to divide workers with its “racist, law-and-order hysteria” only underlines the reactionary and utopian character of the illusion that a brief protest by the NPA will make the PS shift its policy. President Hollande stokes “racist, law-and-order hysteria”, because he has to divide workers to force through his unpopular austerity policies.

While the PS’s encouragement of such neo-fascist moods is obvious, the NPA puts forward no perspective to oppose it. The NPA supports the PS, anti-Roma policy and all, because it does not consider the rise of far-right tendencies as threatening its fundamental class interests.

The social gulf separating the workers from the social layers represented by the NPA—the trade union bureaucracy, a layer of university lecturers and students, and the periphery of the bourgeois “left” in the civil service administrations—is widening.

Workers are angry about the austerity measures and mass layoffs organized by the PS. Hollande’s negative ratings in the polls recently rose to 64 percent, and his government fears a social explosion. He therefore plans to accelerate attacks on the Roma to continue to divide the working class and divert attention from social ills his policy will exacerbate.

The 15th arrondissement where the anti-Roma persecution took place includes some of Marseille’s poorest districts, with a high unemployment rate and a high immigrant population severely affected by the crisis. Social misery there is ever more apparent as unemployment rises. With the 16th arrondissement, it constitutes Samia Ghali’s electoral district.

Ghali, a Frenchwoman of Algerian descent, started her career in 1995 as a PS advisor of Guy Hermier, the local mayor and member of the French Communist Party (PCF). Ghali adopted positions ever closer to the far right, as the FN vote has progressed in the district, as the population became disillusioned with the corrupt local politics of the PS and PCF and their anti-worker policies at the national level.

She attracted press attention with her reactionary proposition to militarize the suburban housing projects, ostensibly to end violence between rival drug gangs in Marseille. She declared in *La Provence*: “Today, confronted with the weapons of war used by the gang networks, only the army can intervene—to disarm the

dealers first of all, and then to block access to the districts to clients, as in times of war, with roadblocks. Even if that lasts one or two years, we have to hold the line.”

Such demands to militarize civilian life reflect the rapid turn to the right of a section of local French officialdom. The NPA’s frequent political incoherence stems from the fact that it is oriented towards this layer, but still tries, at times, to promote the illusion that it opposes their policies.

Thus, at the end of its communiqué, the NPA makes its usual rhetorical flourish, proposing “an emergency plan for unemployment, to oppose discrimination during recruitment, to remedy bad housing to enable the districts of Marseille, Roma included, to find a common solution to this crisis which enflames hate and worsens the misery of everyone.”

The NPA does not of course address itself to the working class, which is systematically absent from its articles. According to the NPA, it is a question “above all of imposing the organization of a solution on the Prefecture”—i.e., the chief local police authority. The NPA thus addresses its program to supposedly help the Roma to the same police and municipal authorities who just helped expel them!

The persecution of the Roma in France is a serious warning to the working class. Faced with rising political tensions, the NPA and the broader petty-bourgeois ex-left are already ranged on the side of repression and the established order against the working class.



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