

Cahuzac affair exposes bankruptcy of French petty-bourgeois “left”

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The scandal over tax evasion by former Budget Minister Jérôme Cahuzac, which has destabilised the Socialist Party (PS) and President François Hollande, exposes the entire French political establishment.

Cahuzac had opened a secret bank account in 1992 with the aid of his friend and lawyer Philippe Péninque, a close advisor to Marine Le Pen, the leader of the neo-fascist National Front (FN). For over 20 years, he maintained personal and business links with members of the far-right Union Defense Group (GUD). This affair has exposed the hypocrisy of the PS’ claims to be a “socialist” party, whilst carrying out a reactionary right-wing austerity policies against the working class.

This affair also shows the political bankruptcy of petty-bourgeois parties like the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the Left Front, which called for a vote for Hollande and the PS in last year’s elections. Composed of affluent social layers drawn from the universities, the trade union bureaucracy, and the professional classes, they are integrated into a corrupt milieu that depends politically and financially on the PS.

The NPA contented itself with two brief comments on the Cahuzac affair of three paragraphs each. It called for the unity of the “real left to prevent the [government’s] labour reform”, for a “real democracy” and against the “government’s cynicism”.

That is to say that the NPA’s response to the Cahuzac affair is to propose yet another mobilisation controlled by the union bureaucracy—which has negotiated all the austerity measures with the Hollande government—and supported by the petty-bourgeois parties. The fact that 95 percent of the €4 billion annual expenses of this same union bureaucracy is met by the employers and the state, according to the Perruchot report, underlines the political fraud of such manoeuvres.

These mobilizations have not halted any reactionary reforms on retirement pensions and social gains in France since the outbreak of the euro crisis. Their aim is to give false credibility to a political establishment which is hostile to the working class, and thus to prevent the development of a working class struggle against capitalist austerity.

If the NPA implicitly admits that the PS does not belong to the “true left”, the question which is raised is: why should workers believe that the NPA, which called for a PS vote, wants “real democracy” and is, as its slogan claims, “100 percent on the left”? It would be more honest on the NPA’s part to inscribe on its banners in the next protests, “We are all the false left”.

The *Lutte Ouvrière* party (Workers Struggle, LO) reacted to the Cahuzac affair with a communiqué, declaring in relation to bourgeois “left” politicians who are indignant over the existence of the Cahuzac bank account: “What hypocrisy! What else do they do, all as bad as each other, lying from noon to dusk, getting elected on lies, acting on lies! The left got itself elected by promising to defend workers: lies! They pretend to be indignant over companies closing down: lies! They vote laws favourable to the bosses, claiming it is for the good of workers: yet more lies!”

LO denounces some of the PS’ lies, but it is careful not to look at its own role. LO made political alliances with the PS it attacks as a group of “liars”, most recently for the 2008 municipal elections. In 2012, LO presidential candidate Nathalie Arthaud explicitly said she did not oppose a Hollande vote by her supporters, thus helping boost the Hollande vote.

After Hollande’s election victory, several factory closures were announced, notably of PSA Peugeot-Citroën’s Aulnay plant. LO’s Jean-Pierre Mercier, the CGT representative at Aulnay, is currently negotiating

redundancy payments for Aulnay workers with PSA and the PS government. He has never sought to mobilize the working class in defence of the PSA workers and in a political struggle against PS austerity.

LO also published an article protesting a court decision overturning the dismissal of an employee wearing a Muslim headscarf at a day care in Chanteloup-les-Vignes. LO has joined the anti-Muslim campaign organized since 2000 under the false pretext of defending secularism, with utter contempt for the democratic and social rights of the working class.

To turn popular anger over the Cahuzac affair into a political blind alley, Left Front leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon has proposed a street protest calling for a Sixth Republic. He said, “The chain of lies starts at the Socialist Party and ends with the National Front, it is absolutely unheard of!”

In fact, Mélenchon’s career illustrates most clearly the links connecting the petty-bourgeois “left” parties, the PS, and the far-right. He started his career in the Lambertist party, now called the Independent Workers’ Party (POI) – which has until now written nothing on the Cahuzac affair.

He joined the PS in 1977, the same year as Cahuzac, while the bourgeoisie was manoeuvring to install the PS in power and crush the wave of workers’ struggles that broke out after the 1968 general strike. It was in 1984, after the “austerity turn” by President François Mitterrand of the PS, that Mélenchon’s stature grew inside the PS, as he became a senator.

Mélenchon recounts that he admired Mitterrand upon hearing him speak for the first time: “He spoke of happiness, of politics in a sensual way, he spoke of the beauty of the snow. I was liberated. We never dared to say ‘I’”.

Mélenchon idolized a man who in his youth was around a far-right terrorist group, the Cagoule, then became a civil servant of the fascist Vichy regime, and who maintained close links all his life with friends from the fascist circles—notably billionaire André Bettencourt. The whole time Mélenchon was in the PS, this party was tainted by several scandals, notably the Elf affair. He never called into question his membership of the PS.

At the time of the Elf affair—Elf was the precursor of Total Oil—François Mitterrand committed himself to defending Elf’s oil interests in Africa and to its African

neo-colonial puppets—notably in Rwanda, Zaire and Congo-Brazzaville.

Elf management was involved in over-billing, as in the Taiwan frigates affair, or paying out extra commissions under the table during the takeover of refineries at Leuna and Ertoil. They also used fictitious jobs to pay off the friends of those connected to the affair. This sprawling affair also compromised the PS minister Roland Dumas. Over €300 million were embezzled.

Dumas also participated in another “dirty trick” of the Mitterrand epoch, when the PS negotiated an alliance with the FN to secure victory in the 1988 elections.

Journalists Emmmanuel Faux, Thomas Legrand and Gilles Perez deal with this in their book *The Right Hand of God: An Enquiry into François Mitterrand and the Far Right*.

They write, “One evening in May 1988, Roland Dumas had a rendezvous by the Marne river for a dinner appointment with the Faucher family. The father, Jean André, was a childhood friend. The content of the discussion was more political than personal, given the presence of another guest, [FN leader] Roland Gaucher. He immediately provided a precious guarantee to his listener: ‘There is no risk that one day I will vote for the Gaullists; Chirac or another’. He then explained that the strategy put together by Jean-Pierre Stirbois and his team [of National Front leaders] consisted in getting out the vote, discreetly, for Mitterrand. Over several days, either by telephone or direct contact, the National Front secretary and his team acted to get their message across.”

The ex-1968 radical Mélenchon and Cahuzac both became trusted operatives under the Mitterrand regime and in the context of the PS’ ties to the neo-fascists. The demagoguery of one and the corrupt enrichment linked to the neo-fascists of the other are two sides of the same political reality—that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois “left” are profoundly hostile to the working class.



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