

French petty-bourgeois “left” silent on NSA spying scandal

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The silence of France’s petty-bourgeois “left” parties on massive electronic spying by the National Security Agency (NSA) and other intelligence agencies is an eloquent indication of their hostility to democratic rights.

The NSA documents revealed by Edward Snowden and analysed by several publications since October show that the NSA can consult the data banks of major Internet firms in search of telephone conversations, documents, electronic mails or instant discussions. This all takes place within a legal framework that evades the need for individual warrants. In a 30-day period, from December 10, 2012 to January 8, 2013, 70.3 million recordings of phone conversations in France alone were carried out by the NSA.

This generalised surveillance even extends to political leaders, as in the case of NSA spying on German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The ruling elites of all the NATO countries are constructing a surveillance apparatus worthy of the most powerful police state the world has known. Continuous harvesting of telephone, GPS and internet data allows the surveillance and location in real time of targeted individuals, in France and worldwide.

The petty-bourgeois parties, such as Workers Struggle (LO) or the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), have shown a total disinterest in these revelations. LO published a perfunctory “news flash” poking fun at the hypocritical comments of the Socialist Party (PS), whose government ministers tried to calm popular anger by pretending to be surprised or angry over NSA spying operations.

The political hypocrisy of the PS—a feature of that party of which is acknowledged by most workers in France today—is not the principal question raised by NSA spying, however. On the fundamental question, that of the dangers posed to democratic rights, LO lies to the working class.

Chuckling over the PS ministers’ falsely indignant comments, LO writes: “No joking? French secret service police, they spy on no one in Europe? It’s not the moral principles that stop them but a question of means, that’s all!”

LO implies that something “stops” the French financial aristocracy from obtaining the “means” to develop its own spying. This is false: the French state acquired all the necessary means to spy in real time on the people, in France and internationally. *Le Monde* revealed this summer that the external security services (DGSE) spy and stock Internet and telephone data in France, along similar lines as the CIA and NSA.

If LO makes fun of the PS, it is in bad faith; the reactions of both

parties are in the final analyses similar. They both aim to obscure the dangers posed internationally by surveillance allowing for automatic tracing and, potentially, the repression of individuals or groups that become a nuisance to the state.

The NPA’s reaction is even more revealing than the lies and inanities of LO. Its website has kept totally silent on the torrent of revelations on electronic spying appearing over the last weeks. This silence is even more remarkable given that, for a decade, this party has had access to excellent information of the spying on the European population by US intelligence services.

NPA leader Alain Krivine received information about US spying directly from European and American government services. The former leader of student radicals in 1968, who then became a member of the European parliament, participated in 2001 in the European Parliament’s Enquiry Commission on the US spy network in Europe codenamed “Echelon”.

Nonetheless, Krivine and his party kept silent on the matter for over a decade, as a far broader system of electronic surveillance of the population metastasized throughout the Internet, going well beyond the “Echelon” system of 2001.

This reaction of LO and the NPA is not principally attributable to the individual limitations of their leaders and publications. Their obvious indifference to questions raised by the electronic spying reflects more generally their class character and the political evolution since 1968 of a corrupt layer of the middle classes in France from which these parties are drawn.

A workers’ organisation cannot be indifferent to the technical and judicial arsenal that the intelligence services and police develop. An organisation that wants to lead a struggle for significant workplace demands has to fear the spying of intelligence agencies and the employers, who are connected to them. This observation is doubly valid for a party that wants to struggle for a socialist revolution.

LO and the NPA, however, are ranged on the other side of the barricade, swimming in a privileged social milieu regrouping the police, intelligence services, the union bureaucracy, and the student and university circles which are close to them. These are not workers’ parties, but organisations of reactionary layers of the petty bourgeoisie.

They keep silent about the spying because, on the one hand they don’t seriously anticipate being troubled by the state, as they are part of its apparatus. Above all, they fear the working class, and on this basis they find the rise of the state’s repressive powers

reassuring. Since 2001, the NPA (and its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League) has been pursuing its integration into the milieu of the police and intelligence services.

At the time of the European members of parliament visit to the US in 2001, the American authorities took the reactionary decision to block a visa for Krivine, because they still had him registered as a “dangerous communist”.

Surprised by this designation, which had nothing in fact to do with his political activity, Krivine laughed off the situation saying: “When they read my name, the computer must have flashed! It’s true that 20 years ago, I was forbidden entry to America.”

When he arrived in the US after the intervention of the European Union, Krivine met the former director of the CIA, Jim Woolsey, and the intelligence commission of the House of Representatives. This commission is charged with controlling the American spy services and in direct contact with the American president, who was at that time George W. Bush. Krivine afterwards participated in the drawing up of the EU report on the “Echelon” system.

Two years later, Krivine travelled to New York to meet Kofi Annan, then Secretary General of the United Nations, and Hans Blix, responsible for the UN inspection mission in Iraq. He was also able to attend the anti-war demonstration in Washington.

Few details have emerged on the discussions with American and UN officials. However, in 2003 Krivine obtained a visa without difficulty, Washington having clearly been able to ascertain that he was not a dangerous communist.

In an article dated March 4, 2003 entitled “Alain Krivine at Uncle Sam’s,” *Libération* wrote with a slight snicker: “today, the Bush administration seems not to fear the ‘red peril’ posed by the spokesman for the Revolutionary Communist League”.

These passages underline the essentially false and dishonest character of the pseudo-left’s politics. The parties of the pseudo-left call themselves “anti-capitalist”, “workers” or even “communist” in order to above all create an obstacle to the development of workers’ socialist organisations. But at the highest levels of the state, nobody takes these pretensions seriously; they are false and recognised as such.

If these empty labels become a temporary obstacle to the collaboration between the pseudo-left and the CIA or French DGSE that imperialist policy requires, the European Union or the state quickly steps in to clarify any misunderstanding with the intelligence community. These labels are of great importance for the pseudo-left, however: they aim to give a “left” air to the imperialist politics that the pseudo-left support against workers and oppressed countries.

Having applauded the attempt to organise a CIA-backed “Green Revolution” in Iran in 2009, the NPA supported NATO’s decision to arm the Islamist opposition forces during the war in Libya in 2011. These policies have continued today in the Syrian conflict, where the NPA intervened to insist that the NATO intelligence agencies arm “rebels” linked to Al Qaeda.

Gilbert Achcar, the NPA’s leading Middle East operative, met representatives of the Free Syrian Army, led and armed by the CIA and French government, which the NPA propaganda declares to be “revolutionary”.

If the NPA now has a role as an important cog in French

imperialist interventions, it also helps to block the social struggles in France, insisting that only the trade union bureaucracy can organise struggles of the working class. The collapse of the working-class base of the unions, due to the betrayals of struggles against austerity of the right and of the PS in the 1970s and 1980s, has transformed the unions. They are no longer workers’ organisations.

Financially dependent on the employers and the state, with which they have negotiated multiple attacks against pensions and social gains from 2000 onwards, they work closely with the police and intelligence services. Their aim is to strangle workers’ struggles and prevent them from getting out of control and harming the interests of the employers. (see: “French unions secretly financed by millions of euros from business groups”)

In this mission, the unions and the pseudo-left work with the officers of the interior intelligence service (RG), who seek to foresee and limit the impact of social struggles, notably strikes and demonstrations.

An RG officer, interviewed by a journalist and former unionists who were preparing a book titled *The Unions’ Dirty Money*, explained this collaboration as follows: “We devote a lot of time monitoring relations between the unions and firms’ management. The only thing that has really changed is that we obtain confidences much more easily from the protagonists, we discuss more freely with all parties involved, we have less need of using wiretaps, deals are more or less passed on to us. We get guarantees on how social conflicts will unfold.”

In defending the role of the unions in such “social dialogue” and in strangling the class struggle, the pseudo-left demonstrates that it is on the side of the police, the state and banks against the working class.

It is because it defends these reactionary interests that the pseudo-left also gives its consent, by its silence, to the spying on the population by the NSA and the European intelligence agencies.



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