

French elections: Rising neo-fascist vote exposes bankruptcy of pseudo-left NPA

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The gains made by France's neo-fascist National Front (FN) in the ongoing municipal elections underscore the collapse of the mainstream bourgeois parties and the political bankruptcy of petty-bourgeois pseudo-left parties like the New Anti-capitalist party (NPA). They are no more than political shadows of the discredited bourgeois "left" parties, led by the Socialist Party (PS) of President François Hollande. In a brief March 24 statement titled "Rejection of the PS, worrying rise of the FN," the NPA calls the election "a terrible rejection of the PS and its policies in government." It concludes, "These elections are also marked by the new, worrying rise of the National Front, which threatens a certain number of cities. Faced with this situation, the NPA calls on people to mobilize against the far right, but also after the elections to build a serious alternative to the government's policies of social and democratic regression that are paving the way for the FN."

The NPA's call on voters to "mobilize against the far right" in the run-off round of the municipal elections on March 30 amounts to an endorsement of whichever candidate, of either the PS or the right-wing Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), might defeat a FN candidate in run-off votes. This gives no political perspective for workers or youth seeking to fight both the rise of neo-fascism in France and the reactionary policies of the PS.

Despite its empty and cynical appeal to voters to "build a serious alternative" to the PS, the NPA is itself a part of the political establishment and widely seen as such. Its only proposal for how to build a "serious alternative" is to participate in an impotent April 12 rally called together with the Left Front, a coalition of long-time political allies of the PS.

Its tepid criticisms of the PS are deeply hypocritical.

In the 2012 presidential run-off election between Hollande and UMP incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy, the NPA called for a vote for Hollande while cynically acknowledging that Hollande would adopt reactionary policies. It thus bears political responsibility for the tens of billions of euros in cuts in business taxes and social spending, and the wars in Mali and the Central African Republic that Hollande carried out.

It is precisely because pseudo-left parties like the NPA constantly support the ruling parties and block working class opposition that the FN can rise, posturing as the only real opposition that reflects deep popular anger and disillusionment with the PS and UMP.

While the NPA light-mindedly downplays the rise of the FN as only threatening "a certain number of cities," the party is rising throughout the country and is being actively considered by sections of the bourgeoisie as a possible third ruling party after the PS and the UMP.

In the first round of the municipal elections, the FN came in first in 17 major towns, including Forbach, Fréjus, Béziers, Perpignan and Avignon—even though the FN ran in fewer than 600 of France's 36,000 municipalities. The FN is running in second-round runoff races in nearly 230 municipalities. One FN mayor was elected outright in the first round in Hénin-Beaumont, in a former coal-mining area in the north that traditionally voted for the bourgeois "left" parties.

Madani Cheurfa, a political analyst at the Cevipof research centre on local elections, said: "There is a growing feeling of divorce between politicians and the electorate that has become worse over the last four years." Cheurfa said that "election results were due to three factors: the increasing gulf between politicians and the voting public, a sense that neither of the mainstream parties had solutions to ordinary people's problems and the recent spate of corruption scandals."

According a recent Cevipof survey, “87 percent of those asked thought politicians didn’t think the same way as ordinary people and 60 percent said they had no confidence in the left or the right.”

The struggle against fascism is bound up with the independent mobilization of the working class against the entire ruling class, based on the revolutionary Marxist program, in a struggle for overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism. This perspective is opposed by the NPA, whose petty-bourgeois social base sees its interests as bound up with the existing social order. Its function is not to mobilize the massive opposition that exists in the working class, but to block any struggle in the working class for socialism.

NPA spokesman and 2007 presidential candidate Olivier Besancenot said that the election results showed that “the political system is burned to a crisp ... We can thank the policy of the government, which has only reinforced the rise of the far right.” Nevertheless, Besancenot responded only by issuing a vague call for a “democratic insurrection.”

This term is itself quite ominous, as the NPA applies it to everything from the Libyan and Syrian fighters backed by the CIA and Al Qaeda in the Libyan and Syrian wars, to fascist-led Ukrainian protests in Kiev.

The current crisis confirms the perspective advanced by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) during the 2002 French presidential elections. After then-FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen defeated PS Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in the first round of elections, mass protests erupted against the prospect of an election between Le Pen and the right-wing incumbent, President Jacques Chirac.

The pseudo-left parties—the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, the predecessor of the NPA), Workers Struggle (LO), and the Workers Party (formerly the OCI)—responded by lining up behind the ruling elite’s campaign to elect Chirac. Although these parties received a combined 11 percent of the vote in the first round of the election, they refused to mobilize the working class against an election that was widely seen as illegitimate. Instead, they claimed that backing Chirac would halt the rise of fascism in France.

They rejected the ICFI’s call for an active boycott of the election as the basis for developing an independent political movement of the working class against the social attacks and wars that were certain to come under

a Chirac government.

The upwards trajectory of the FN over the past decade and the shift of the NPA towards ever more open support for reactionary forces confirms the correctness of the ICFI’s position, and the bankruptcy of the NPA’s orientation to France’s bourgeois parties.



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