

France's New Anti-capitalist Party orients to Socialist Party critics of Hollande

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France's pseudo-left New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) has responded to last month's reshuffling of the Socialist Party (PS) government by orienting to PS "dissidents" critical of President François Hollande. Amid the accelerating collapse of the PS, to which the NPA has been oriented for decades, the NPA is seeking to reforge a "left" alliance centered around this despised party of finance capital.

The cabinet reshuffle came after Hollande fired two ministers who denounced Germany and the unpopular austerity measures of Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls as dictated by Berlin. This prompted widespread remarks that France faced a crisis of rule. The NPA, however, complacently dismisses this idea, suggesting instead that "dissident" elements of the PS can lead an uprising against Hollande by staging a parliamentary revolt.

In its recent article, "Hollande-Valls or the implacable logic of free-market adaptation," the NPA complacently writes, "To talk today of a 'crisis of rule.' as [the daily papers] *Le Figaro* and *Libération* have done, is somewhat exaggerated. France's political institutions are still functioning. For them to break down, the 'dissidents' would have to dare to oppose the government and thus put it in a minority on the budget and on the new law 'for growth.' As they are not ready to risk their positions in early parliamentary elections, we aren't there (yet?)."

The NPA is attempting to prop up France's tottering bourgeois establishment by promoting crude illusions in the PS "dissidents," who are pillars of France's discredited political elite. With Hollande collapsing to 13 percent support in the polls, the majority of the PS "dissidents" predictably voted for Valls' openly free-market government in the National Assembly, though 31 abstained.

The NPA's denial that there is a crisis of bourgeois rule is contradicted even by its own description of the political situation. It directly compares the crisis facing the PS to the collapse of Greece's social-democratic PASOK party—which went from being Greece's main bourgeois "left" party of rule to a minor political force after pursuing catastrophic austerity measures despite mass popular opposition.

"Under these conditions," the NPA writes, "a further collapse and political marginalization, like what the PASOK underwent in Greece, is becoming a credible hypothesis ... The entire political apparatus that has served the bourgeoisie since the 1980s is being shaken."

Nonetheless, for the reactionary so-called "anti-capitalists" of the NPA, this does not constitute a crisis of capitalist rule!

Whether or not the NPA cares to admit it, a crisis with revolutionary implications is developing. French capitalism has been shaken to its foundations by the global economic crisis and the threat of global war emerging from NATO's confrontation with Russia over Ukraine and wars across the Middle East and Africa. With the PS and the entire European Union (EU) ever more discredited by their austerity policies, Hollande has turned to militarism and war—in Syria, Mali, the Central African Republic, Ukraine, and now in Iraq—to boost profits and distract growing popular discontent.

In its reactionary onslaught against the international working class, French imperialism enjoys the full support of the affluent petty-bourgeois layers represented by the NPA. They endorsed French intervention in Libya and demanded that Hollande arm Western-backed opposition fighters in Syria, which he did. From the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, the NPA supported the Maidan protests led by fascist groups that spearheaded the Kiev putsch and the civil war in eastern Ukraine.

The NPA not only backed Hollande's agenda of imperialist war overseas, but also his agenda of war against the working class at home.

Raising the example the Hartz IV attacks of the German Social Democratic government of Gerhard Schröder, the NPA's recent article notes: "From the French (and even international) bourgeoisie's point of view, this was from the beginning the expected function of a left government: to do the dirty work that [the previous right-wing President Nicolas] Sarkozy could only sketch out, in order to resolve French capitalism's lack of competitiveness compared to its rivals. It remains to be seen if Hollande-Valls can complete this project."

The NPA knew and supported Hollande's class-war policies when it endorsed him in the 2012 French presidential elections, claiming he could be pushed to the left. Its presidential candidate, Philippe Poutou, who got 1.2 percent in the first round, called for a Hollande vote in the run-off: "On May 6, we will accompany those who want to prevent Nicolas Sarkozy from having a second term. We say clearly, we must throw out Sarkozy and his whole gang by voting against him."

These comments confirm the *World Socialist Web Site*'s analysis of the NPA's role at the time.

As the WSWS wrote, "The NPA's attempt to dress up a vote for Hollande behind opposition to Sarkozy is an act of political bad faith. It is well aware that the PS's basic program is to make hundreds of billions of euros in cuts to social programs, continue France's participation in NATO, and escalate its war drive in the Middle East—with wars last year in Libya and now in Syria. It aims to disorient the working class by campaigning for a reactionary PS government." (See: "France's New Anti-capitalist Party backs Socialist Party candidate in May 6 run-off")

This violent shift to the right by the pseudo-left parties against the working class is an international phenomenon, reflecting the deepening class gulf between the working class and the affluent pseudo-left forces. In Germany, Die Linke is backing the return of German militarism and encouraging German participation in the bombing of Iraq and Syria. In regional government in Berlin with the Social Democrats, they pioneered wide-ranging austerity programs.

After meeting with top officials in Berlin and Paris and traveling to Washington to audition with the CIA, Alexis Tsipras of Greece's pseudo-left SYRIZA party has pledged to repay Greece's extortionate loans to international financial markets, should it come to power. It has also signaled that NATO basing deals with Greece will be safe under a SYRIZA government. With the backing of key forces in imperialist politics, SYRIZA has benefited from popular anger with PASOK, recruiting PASOK members and taking over much of its voter base.

The NPA appears to be orienting itself to building a rotten coalition of the SYRIZA type with the "dissident" layers of the PS, together with various elements in the Stalinist-led Left Front. Its forty-year-old strategy of orienting to the PS is in ruins. Grasping at straws, it sees some light at the end of the tunnel: "The organization of dissidence through the new [PS] faction 'Long Live the Left' illustrates the fact that the crisis of the PS is not over despite the limitations of the 'dissidents,' including from their own Keynesian bourgeois point of view that they never get beyond."

The NPA's implicit claim that it can work out a progressive alliance with various PS factions is a reactionary

fraud. What is the program of the PS "dissidents" the NPA is promoting? Former Economy Minister Arnaud Montebourg stressed that he supported Hollande's budget cuts. "We must not challenge the 50 billion in cuts," he said. "We must rather use them the right way, to give them back to the French people." Montebourg—like the NPA—wanted more bank bailouts and looser credit to pay off key constituencies in the French ruling class and affluent petty-bourgeoisie.

Montebourg's anti-German hysteria reflects rising fear in the French bourgeoisie over German remilitarization and the prospect that, with its intervention in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, Berlin will establish unchallengeable economic hegemony over Europe.

Forces like Montebourg put forward an alternative strategy for French imperialism: develop the split between France and Germany within the EU and mobilize other southern European governments, such as Italy and Spain, to side with France. This places them somewhere between Hollande's rigid orientation to the European Union (EU) on the one hand, and the neo-fascist National Front (FN), which calls for France's exit from the EU and from the euro, on the other.

Ultimately, however, the positions of pseudo-left groups like the NPA have an objective political logic. Hostile to the working class and the struggle for its international unity, utterly convinced of the viability of capitalism and the unviability of socialism, they are aligning themselves with nationalist positions inside a ruling elite that is hurtling to the right and towards the FN. In the social struggles that will emerge against the PS and the EU, they will emerge as bitter enemies of the working class.



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