French NPA seeks to strangle opposition to draconian surveillance law

Anthony Torres
15 May 2015

The French parliament's adoption of a draconian electronic surveillance law exposes the political bankruptcy of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), whose support for the Socialist Party (PS) government assists its strategy to build the infrastructure of a police state. Despite its superficial criticisms of the law, the NPA is complicit in the construction of this apparatus.

An article by the NPA's Jean-Philippe Divès, titled "Facing spiraling state repression," lists various crimes of the PS government: "It has been three years that we have had a 'socialist' government.… And that government is not only constantly expanding its military interventions in Africa and the Near East, but it bans protests in solidarity with Palestine, it uses repressive methods that cause serious wounds, and even death (in the case of Rémi Fraisse)."

Turning to the surveillance law, Divès writes: "Exploiting the pretext of a struggle against the jihadist menace, this text whose articles are inspired—the denials of leading government officials notwithstanding—by the USA Patriot Act, in fact opens the way for generalised surveillance of the population by the secret services."

And what has been the role of the NPA and the rest of the pseudo-left? In 2012, these parties helped PS presidential candidate François Hollande to get elected, calling for a PS vote in the second round of the presidential elections. Since then, they have blocked struggles by the working class against the policies of austerity and war of the PS government. The imperialist wars in the Near East, which Divès hypocritically criticises and which play a critical role in escalating police-state measures in France, have received the NPA's unstinting support.

In Syria, the NPA supported and actively participated in the proxy war by France, the United States and their allies against the Assad regime, carried out by Al Qaeda-linked forces. In 2011, at a meeting in Sweden, the NPA's Gilbert Achcar met with Syrian National Council (SNC) officials, a collection of assets of US and French intelligence, to debate the best strategy to pursue the war and minimise popular opposition against it. The forces that Achcar met in 2011 were bound up to the Islamist networks whose forces carried out the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hyper Cacher kosher grocery store.

The PS's reaction to the terrorist attacks was not to end its support for the Syrian war, which has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and forced more than 10 million people to flee their homes. Rather, the PS is exploiting the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hyper Cacher to accelerate attacks on democratic rights including the surveillance law, which were already in preparation.

This bloody and reactionary strategy is continuing behind the backs of the working class in France and internationally. It is based on the strategic needs of French imperialism, which fears a possible loss of its influence in the Middle East and rising opposition to workers in France to the PS's reactionary policies. By supporting the imperialist war in Syria and hiding these calculations from the population, the NPA is thus helping create the political conditions for the PS to build the infrastructure of a police state.

The NPA's support for this policy reflects its class interests: it represents affluent layers of the middle class deeply hostile to the working class. These layers fear that a loss of imperialist influence in the Middle East would be a disaster for their stock portfolios, as would be an uprising of the working class against the PS and the union bureaucracies. As a faithful servant of the state, utterly impervious to democratic sentiments, the NPA does not feel itself in any way threatened by

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the surveillance law.

Its weak criticisms of the surveillance law, like its unconvincing calls for a mobilisation against the law, only aim to keep alive what illusions remain that the NPA is an oppositional party. By that, it aims to prevent the formation of political opposition to the PS, and thus to the NPA, in the working class.

In "Law and order: putsch against our freedoms, an attack on our rights," NPA spokeswoman Roseline Vachetta aimed impotent complaints at the state: "Only three months have passed since the horrible attacks of January 7 and 9, and the enormous protests to commemorate the victims and defend freedom of expression.… And yet the parliament is set to adopt on May 5 the surveillance law!"

Vachetta's indignation against the state is both false and reactionary. She is promoting the state-organised demonstrations after the *Charlie Hebdo* and Hyper Cacher attacks on January 7 and 9, respectively.

These were not demonstrations "to defend freedom of expression," but parades with which the PS sought to stoke the flames of nationalism and win support from voters of the neo-fascist National Front (FN). This is why Hollande publicly invited FN leader Marine Le Pen to the Elysée Palace a few days before the demonstrations, a fact that Vachetta declines to mention.

A political straight line connects the stirring up of such law-and-order, or even far-right, hysteria, which Vachetta applauds, to the passage of a law that creates the surveillance infrastructure of a police state.

Having detailed certain surveillance techniques permitted by the law, Vachetta writes that "it is indeed our fundamental rights to a private life and to the protection of our data, to free criticism and to demonstrate, that is, to question state policy, to revolt. Against this liberty-killing government, mobilisation!"

This empty and ambiguous call for a "mobilisation" without programme, without saying what forces should be mobilised, against a government that the NPA continues to defend after having helped get it elected, is just an evasion.

Vachetta is proposing to mobilise social layers that, like the NPA itself, are in the PS's political orbit, in demonstrations without perspective, in which the questions raised by the Syrian war and the danger of police state rule in France are hushed up. That is, these demonstrations would mobilise no real opposition to the law, and would in fact be right-wing. Unsurprisingly, no protests have emerged from Vachetta's call for demonstrations.

The surveillance law and the NPA's fictitious opposition to it constitute a serious warning to the working class. The defence of democratic rights requires an independent political struggle of the working class against the PS government, based on a socialist and revolutionary perspective. To struggle against the PS and its law, workers will also find themselves in struggle against the NPA.

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