

Socialist Party promotes Hollande in run-up to 2017 French presidential election

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A little more than a week before the Socialist Party (PS) Congress of June 5-7, newly elected PS general secretary Jean Christophe Cambadélis gave a long interview to the daily *Le Monde* outlining the PS's strategy in the run-up to the 2017 French presidential elections.

Cambadélis was elected as general secretary on Thursday, May 28, with 70 percent of the vote in an internal election that only mobilised 60,000 PS members—merely half the membership. Half of the voters were members of the PS bureaucracy itself.

Voting on the different resolutions on the general political orientation took place on May 21. Cambadélis's motion received the greatest number of votes (60 percent). This motion, approved by President François Hollande and endorsed by Prime Minister Manuel Valls and the majority of his ministers, supported the government and its policies.

The purpose of Cambadélis's interview was to present to the financial aristocracy the reasons why they should support the re-election of Hollande for a second term in 2017.

He said, "François Hollande brings people together better than Nicolas Sarkozy, this will be his strength if he's a candidate in 2017. He is a better president to govern in troubled times than Mr. Sarkozy.... He has always tried to find a way that leads neither to social explosions nor to the sanction of the financial markets. He's walking a tightrope in a protective and progressive way, it is now bearing fruit."

For Cambadélis, Hollande's great merit is that he has stifled all working class opposition against PS austerity measures demanded by the financial markets. The PS worked closely with the trade union bureaucracies and the pseudo-left parties to rapidly end strikes and nip in the bud all expression of popular opposition to

Hollande's policies.

This is why, even though Hollande is the most unpopular president since World War II, he has been able to avoid until now an open crisis, like the general strikes of 1936 and 1968.

Cambadélis knows better than anyone that the capacity of the PS to defend order in "troubled times" depends on the pseudo-left and the unions. He himself left Pierre Lambert's movement, the Internationalist Communist Organisation (OCI), in 1986 to join François Mitterrand's PS and was offered better career prospects in terms of obtaining top positions in the bourgeois state.

In the interview, Cambadélis advocates bringing together what he calls a "Popular Alliance" including the Greens, the Stalinists (French Communist Party, PCF), supporters of ex-PS minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement, and perhaps centre-right parties. This would be a repeat of PS prime minister Lionel Jospin's "Plural Left" coalition—the political response of the ruling class to the mass strike led by workers in the public services in 1995 against the right-wing government of President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé.

There again, pseudo-left organisations like the forerunners of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) played a key role in allowing the PS to take over from Juppé in coalition with the ecologists and the PCF.

To legitimise his "progressive regroupment" project and justify a vote for the PS, Cambadélis and the PS in general cynically use the neo-fascist National Front (FN) as a scarecrow. The argument goes: Voting for the PS is the only way to avoid the danger of fascist dictatorship in France.

Referring to FN leader Marine Le Pen, Cambadélis writes: "French people like to protest with her but not

to govern with her. Make no mistake, however; her ideas will be at the centre of the presidential elections. That's why we have to build a big progressive movement to answer the questions that many French people are asking themselves."

This call to vote for the PS as an organisation of "progressive republicans" is false and reactionary. First, the PS has taken up the FN's reactionary law-and-order agenda, including the ethnic cleansing of the Roma. The PS in no way differentiates itself from the FN on these issues; moreover, PS policies of austerity and war push people into the arms of the FN, which reaps the electoral benefits.

In the *Le Monde* interview, Cambadélis accuses the UMP (recently renamed The Republicans, LR) of using "republicanism" as a fig leaf to promote the same politics as the FN. He says: "The defence of the Republic is a convenient fig leaf for picking up the policies of the National Front."

In fact, this is exactly what he and the PS do, as well. The republicanism of the PS is the fig leaf it uses to promote law-and-order hysteria, the growing use of the police and the army, and electronic spying by the intelligence agencies on the population in France and of the entire world.

In putting forward the "defence of the Republic" against the Roma or the defence of "republican secularism" against the Islamic headscarf or the burqa, the PS and its pseudo-left allies consciously sought to poison the political atmosphere in France. All of that was done as "a convenient fig leaf" to use racist and populist campaigns to demoralise the population, and push through deeply unpopular wars and austerity measures.

It is impossible to stop the ever-more obvious emergence of the structures of police-state rule in France by voting for PS against the FN. The PS is an integral part of the political setup through which the ruling elite builds its surveillance infrastructures and the military and police intervention units. The only way forward is to politically mobilise the working class against the PS and the entire ruling class.

What must be rejected is the PS and the pseudo-left's simplistic and reactionary schema that the only danger is "the rise of the FN," and therefore that the PS and its policies are the "lesser evil" and the only alternative. It is the entire French ruling class that is imposing these

policies. It is from the ruling elite itself that comes the danger of world war, of a vast pauperisation of the population and the emergence of a racist and authoritarian dictatorship.



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