

NPA tacitly backs the French ruling elite's campaign for Macron vote

Johannes Stern, Alex Lantier
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The class gulf separating Pabloite New Anti-capitalist party (NPA) and the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), could hardly be sharper. While the PES calls for an active boycott in the second round of the presidential elections to mobilize the working class against both candidates on an independent revolutionary perspective, the NPA intervenes to subordinate workers and youth to the banker Emmanuel Macron.

In the main election statement published on its web site, the NPA declares: "Marine Le Pen and the FN [National Front] are a mortal danger for the collective rights and the social movements. They want to suppress and ban social opposition, demonstrations, and trade unions and social opposition. This means even greater divisions of the oppressed between Frenchmen and foreigners, heterosexuals and LGBTI. It threatens women's rights."

While it admits that Macron is "the most direct representative of the free-market policies pursued over the last 30 years," it adds: "We understand the workers and youth who vote for Macron in order to block the National Front."

This is a cowardly evasion of fundamental political responsibilities raised by the historic crisis in France. Seventy percent of voters are angry at the choice between a neo-fascist and a representative of extreme austerity and European Union (EU) militarism; a poll of supporters of defeated presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon showed that two-thirds of them reject support for either candidate. Yet the NPA gives no indication of what workers should do to oppose an election that gives voters the choice between the plague and cholera.

Instead, the NPA says it "understands" why voters would vote for Macron against Le Pen's FN. Indeed, it is obvious who is pushing voters to back Macron: the ruling Socialist Party (PS), the right-wing The Republicans (LR), and the corporate media have all unleashed a massive campaign insisting that voters, whatever their reservations, are morally bound to vote for Macron against the neo-fascists. The NPA's own statement echoes this official campaign for Macron, which it clearly understands and agrees with.

There is no question that an FN government would be a mortal enemy of the working class. The NPA points out that it would seek to ban demonstrations, move to smash workers' basic social rights, incite nationalist hatreds, and threaten the democratic rights of women and sexual minorities. Yet for this to be an argument to support a Macron vote—or, as the NPA puts it evasively, to

"understand" a Macron vote—it would have to be that a Macron vote would produce a substantially different outcome.

But to imply that Macron is a lesser evil, because he would not ban protests, attack basic social rights, incite nationalist hatreds, or threaten democratic rights, is to blatantly falsify his record.

Macron is the former economy minister of outgoing PS President François Hollande. As such, he bears political responsibility for the PS' imposition of a state of emergency, which he intends to prolong as president. The state of emergency suspended basic democratic rights and was the pretext for massive police raids on France's Muslim community, as well as Hollande's legitimization of anti-Muslim racism with his repeated invitations of Marine Le Pen for talks at the Elysée presidential palace.

Macron's plans to militarize France and re-introduce the draft are clearly based on an intensification of the drastic PS austerity policies he helped plan under Hollande. In order to carry out these austerity policies and impose the PS' hated labor law, the PS banned protest marches and replaced them with stationary gatherings, and threatened to ban rallies altogether.

Macron's plans to use the labor law to impose drastic changes in social legislation via decree will doubtless provoke mass opposition and new attempts by police to ban and crush working class opposition. He has pledged to slash 120,000 public sector jobs, deregulate the labor market, and destroy the health and pension systems to make France more "competitive". Together with the draft, these policies aim to prepare France for an "epoch in international relations where war is again a possible outcome of politics."

As for any attempt to preserve the PS' gay marriage policy by voting Macron, this is a bankrupt strategy. The exploitation of gay marriage to attempt to give the PS' broader anti-worker policy "left" colors is reactionary and threatens the rights of homosexuals themselves. It simply fuels a right-wing backlash. Indeed, it was under the PS that the Christian right finally managed to build an anti-homosexual movement in France, the Protest for All, around opposition to the gay marriage and gender legislation of the PS.

In fact, the NPA itself admits that a Macron vote will not "block" the FN, but pave the way for it to come to power and potentially impose the violently right-wing social views represented in its ranks. Discussing Macron in its statement, the NPA declares: "His program? Ending the 35 hour work-week, smashing Social Security, cutting the number of public sector workers, going even further in smashing the Labor Code. ... The

policy he wants to implement is precisely the one that helps the National Front grow, by constantly accelerating the destruction of our social rights.”

In other words, the NPA is orienting to Macron, fully aware that he advances right-wing and anti-working class policies and supports him on this basis.

For anyone familiar with the political history of the NPA, this reactionary orientation is hardly a surprise. Speaking for the interests of affluent layers of the middle class hostile to revolutionary Marxism, the NPA has been oriented to the PS’ anti-social and pro-war policies since its founding in 2009.

Already in the runoffs of the 2012 presidential elections, the NPA called for a Hollande vote and thus gave its support to one of the most reactionary governments in French history. On the international stage, the NPA supported the pro-austerity Syriza government in Greece and played a key role in promoting NATO imperialist interventions in Libya and Syria.

Calls for military escalation have been at the heart of the NPA’s 2017 election campaign. At the party’s final election rally in Paris last month, NPA spokeswoman Christine Poupin launched a hysterical attack on European and US imperialism for not having intervened more aggressively in Syria to topple President Bashar al-Assad.

Prior to the meeting, NPA presidential candidate Philippe Poutou issued a statement defending Trump’s April 7 missile strike on Syria and slandering opponents of the war for regime change as defenders of Assad. In recent days *International Viewpoint*, the web publication of the Pabloite international to which the NPA is affiliated, ran articles and interviews with titles such as “Assad must fall” and “Trump’s unbelievably small attack on Syria.”

To support pro-war policies while at the same time seeking to keep in check mass social anger between the two rounds of the elections, the NPA is now launching yet another pro-capitalist regroupment project including discredited forces from the PS and its periphery.

A recent statement (“Defeat Le Pen, fight Macron, and rebuild a vibrant Left”) published on *International Viewpoint* calls for the building of “Beyond that, Ensemble!” The movement “stands for common candidacies of the forces of the Left (France insoumise, Parti de gauche, French Communist Party, Ensemble, NPA, the Greens, dissident Green and PS activists, grassroots activists...) on a platform that breaks with social-liberalism, for a majority opposing Macron’s policies, and for a front against the far-right and the rights. We seek to implement this orientation nationally, as well as locally with due consideration for the diversity of local situations.”

The statement calls for “voting and defeating Le Pen on May 7”—that is, voting for Macron. It praises the campaign of Jen-Luc Mélenchon, which has served to channel social anger back into the political establishment, calling for this campaign to “get strong, but also broader.”

Workers and youth looking for a way out of the dead-end of the presidential election and French parliamentary politics must reject this perspective.

What the working class needs to build is a genuine Trotskyist party, not another broad “left” ally of the PS that will only betray

the workers, impose austerity and war, and ally with anti-worker, pro-austerity parties like Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and the Left Party in Germany. These parties have been in power at various levels of government for many years—holding the position of prime minister in Greece and joining regional governments in Berlin and major Spanish cities including Barcelona. They imposed austerity and crushed strikes called in opposition to their reactionary policies.

In France, the bankruptcy of the perspective of building “broad left” parties is precisely the lesson of the experience of the PS itself. The PS, founded nearly a half-century ago, was the original model of a “broad left” party. Hollande’s presidency and his right-wing government, which paved the way for both Macron and Le Pen, is the end product of the project of building a “broad left” party, instead of a proletarian vanguard party in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky.

In its election manifesto, the PES characterized the PS as follows: “The PS was founded in 1971, after the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) discredited itself by refusing to take power during the 1968 general strike. It was not a socialist organization, but a tool of the most reactionary social forces. A loose coalition of social democrats, social Catholics, ex-Stalinists, ex-Trotskyists and former officials of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime, it functioned as an electoral vehicle for a leading ex-Vichy politician, François Mitterrand. In 1981, Mitterrand became France’s first PS president.”

Since Mitterrand’s “austerity turn” in 1982 and the restoration of capitalism in the USSR by the Stalinist bureaucracy in 1991, the entire Green and pseudo-left milieu historically oriented to the PS has shifted ever further to the right. The PS’ collapse in the 2017 elections is the outcome of the bankruptcy and anti-working class character of its perspective.

The struggle of the PES to build a genuine Trotskyist party in the working class will take place in a ruthless struggle against all attempts by the NPA and others to set up yet another trap for the working class.



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