

New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) election meeting in Paris: The dead end of the pseudo-left

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Major political crises remorselessly reveal the class character and orientation of the various political tendencies.

The current situation, characterized by a growing rift between US and European imperialism following Donald Trump's election, Brexit and the collapse of France's Socialist Party (PS) government, is rapidly exposing the petty-bourgeois orientation of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). The organization is horrified by and angry at French workers' growing radicalization and disillusionment with the political establishment.

This is what emerged from the NPA's meeting on the French legislative elections held Tuesday night in the Paris suburb of Villejuif, featuring Alain Krivine, the former student protest leader in May-June 1968 and long-time head of the NPA, the leading section of the international Pabloite, anti-Trotskyist movement. Krivine delivered an embittered tirade, during which he berated workers for not supporting the trade unions and the NPA and claimed there was a broad shift to the far right among the masses.

Krivine's role lends his remarks particular significance. He is not merely a well-known politician in France, but the senior spokesman for all the NPA's middle-class Pabloite allies who broke with Trotskyism and developed as part of the student radicalization of the 1960s. These elements have long played a key role in what passes for the "left." They not only helped build the PS in France and government parties such as Brazil's Workers Party, *Rifondazione Comunista* in Italy and Podemos in Spain, but worked closely with Germany's Left Party and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States.

The class gulf separating these forces from the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its French section, the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), becomes ever clearer. The ICFI anticipates a resurgence of revolutionary struggles in the working class and fights to build itself as the Trotskyist vanguard. The Pabloites, integrated decades ago into official politics and basing their work on postmodernist and anti-Marxist academia, prop up the ruling elite, pour scorn on the masses and insist that internationalist opposition to capitalism will find no support.

"There is confusion everywhere in all countries among a great majority of the people," Krivine said in Villejuif, "either because in most countries when the left was in power it carried out right-wing policies, or when the right was in power it carried out right-wing policies. The result is that everyone is clueless, clueless. Look at the elections, it's impossible to predict anything ... because people are not voting *for* a candidate, but *against* the others."

Krivine referred to the recent presidential election in France, which pitted Emmanuel Macron against Marine Le Pen of the neo-fascist National Front (FN), Jean-Luc Mélenchon of Unsubmissive France (UF) and NPA candidate Philippe Poutou. He said, "We saw it in France recently, people didn't vote for Macron or Mélenchon. People didn't vote

for Poutou, that is obvious. They tell us, you're nice, but you're not credible."

Krivine insisted that it was not the opponents of capitalism, but neo-fascists and the political right who would benefit: "Who profits? Nuts like Trump in the United States, nationalists like the Brexit supporters in England, fascistic nationalists like the National Front in France, all-out Nazis like Golden Dawn in Greece. But everywhere, who is profiting from the crisis of capitalism? It is not the anti-capitalists, it is not us."

Krivine explicitly added that for the foreseeable future, there was no perspective for internationalist opposition to capitalism—let alone for socialist revolution, which he did not even mention.

He said, "Here are some conclusions. One, unfortunately, we are perhaps the only internationalists today in an era when that's not good. Two, we are militant and anti-capitalists in a period when, provisionally I hope, we are very isolated, it's no use denying it. Three, we had a presidential candidate who made enormous strides, Philippe Poutou ... but people say we won't vote for you, you're not credible."

Krivine offered nothing but despair. Since the discrediting of Barack Obama and the Democratic Party, the European Union (EU) and the PS government was followed by the election of Trump, Brexit, and disaffection with the NPA, Krivine concludes that the situation is hopeless and arrogantly dismisses the majority of the world's population as "clueless." This is false from top to bottom.

The election of Trump on a program of nationalism and war, along with the discrediting of EU austerity policy and now the latter's call for an independent military policy from the United States are all signs of an enormous crisis of world capitalism with revolutionary implications. The international capitalist order that emerged from World War II and the Stalinist bureaucracy's restoration of capitalism in the USSR in 1991 is collapsing. Various forces that long suppressed the class struggle—in France, the union bureaucracy and the entire political periphery of the PS—are losing their influence.

The ICFI's perspective has been confirmed: the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR, against which Leon Trotsky had warned, did not signify the end of the era of socialist revolution. The insoluble contradictions of capitalism have again led to a revolutionary crisis. Already in 2011, mass uprisings of workers in Egypt and Tunisia toppled two dictators.

Growing political disaffection and social anger after decades of austerity and economic crisis are signs of approaching revolutionary crises in America, Europe and internationally. The support Bernie Sanders evoked among millions of American workers and youth, claiming that he wanted "socialism," the mass struggles of youth and workers in France against the PS labor law, and deep opposition to war and the draft in Europe are all signs of mounting opposition. Nearly ten years after the 2008 crash, the social and economic prerequisites for socialist revolution are being

fulfilled.

Krivine could not and did not even try to explain why, in this explosive situation, the right has benefited. Above all, he was silent on the NPA's own role. His remarks brought to mind the response Trotsky gave, shortly before his assassination in 1940, to those who blamed the working class for the fascist victory in the Spanish Civil War.

"The historical falsification consists in this, that the responsibility for the defeat of the Spanish masses is unloaded on the working masses and not those parties which paralyzed or simply crushed the revolutionary movement of the masses," Trotsky wrote, adding: "This impotent philosophy, which seeks to reconcile defeats as a necessary link in the chain of cosmic developments, is completely incapable of posing and refuses to pose the question of such concrete factors as programs, parties, personalities that were the organizers of defeat. This philosophy of fatalism and prostration is diametrically opposed to Marxism as the theory of revolutionary action."

The role of the NPA has not been to advance a revolutionary policy, but to carry out petty-bourgeois policies blocking popular opposition to war, austerity and attacks on democratic rights. To justify his demoralized reading of the world situation, Krivine was compelled to pass over in silence the counter-revolutionary role of his own organization.

Undoubtedly, among the greatest dangers facing the working class are war and nationalism. Referring in indignant tones to those responsible for the terror attacks of the Islamic State (ISIS) militia, Krivine said: "In the Arab peoples, religious fundamentalism is gaining ground, and in the Western population, it is organizations like Marine Le Pen's ... those who did Brexit are gaining ground, not us. So we have to face up to the question: who today allows nationalism to grow? And there we'll see that Macron, Hollande, Trump are all jointly responsible for the war that is developing."

Krivine's outrage is rank hypocrisy. Responsibility for the ISIS terror attacks rests with the forces who promoted the NATO wars in Libya and Syria from which ISIS emerged—that is, not only the imperialist governments in France, the United States and other NATO powers, but with the Pabloites and their "left" co-thinkers. The NPA in particularly loud and enthusiastic tones demanded imperialist intervention to arm opposition militias dominated by right-wing Islamist forces.

In the run-up to the illegal US invasion of Iraq in 2003, millions of people in the United States, in European countries participating in the invasion and around the globe rallied against the war. A decade later, the Pabloites did not call protests, but demanded imperialist intervention, working with the CIA. NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot demanded on television that France arm "rebel" forces, and Professor Gilbert Achcar demanded NATO bombings to save opposition forces in the Libyan city of Benghazi and then met with the CIA-linked Syrian National Council to plan war in Syria.

The CIA-backed Islamist networks that brought recruits and weapons to the wars in Libya and Syria not only spawned ISIS and similar Islamist terror groups. While they continued to enjoy the support of the NPA, who helped suppress opposition to war by presenting these reactionary networks as revolutionary fighters for democracy, the Islamists helped strengthen far-right forces in Europe by launching a series of terror attacks across the continent.

The ringleaders—the Kouachi brothers who attacked *Charlie Hebdo*, ISIS Facebook recruiter Abdelhamid Abaaoud who led the 13 November 2015 attacks in Paris, the Bakraoui brothers who led the March 22, 2016 bombing in Brussels, and Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi—were all operatives well known to and closely followed by European intelligence. They could prepare their attacks under intelligence protection because, as tools of NATO policy, they were allowed to move about freely. This geopolitical reality, however, was hidden to masses of people.

The NPA joined the media and the political establishment in covering

up the responsibility of imperialism for the attacks. This allowed the ruling elite to exploit popular fear of terror attacks, blame the attacks not on the war but on Muslims and demand stepped-up police state measures. In France, the PS imposed a state of emergency that Macron now intends to make permanent by law—allowing police to detain individuals, carry out searches and seizures and confine individuals to house arrest independently of any judicial process.

Predictably, the greatest political beneficiaries of these policies were far-right forces like France's National Front—for whose rise the NPA bears significant political responsibility.

Despite Krivine's posturing as an internationalist and an anti-capitalist, the NPA is an upper middle class party pursuing pro-imperialist policies. Its demoralized and hysterical reaction to the collapse of the PS in France and the broader discrediting of the ruling elites internationally reflects the fact that the NPA is itself one wing of the collapsing political establishment.

Turning to French conditions on Tuesday night, Krivine made a summary survey of the crisis of the PS and its allies, including the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF). "The PCF is completely in a mess, it doesn't know where it's going, its members don't know where it's going. The Greens are completely divided," he said, continuing: "As for the PS, let's not even mention it, they say that it's a left party but let's not even mention it. It's so bad that every faction inside the PS is working to found its own party."

Krivine did not evince hostility toward the PS—an attitude historically rooted in the close collaboration between various petty-bourgeois tendencies that broke with Trotskyism in the foundation of the PS in 1971. After the Pabloites broke with the ICFI in 1953, the OCI (*Organisation communiste internationaliste*) of Pierre Lambert broke with the ICFI and with Trotskyism in 1971 in order to join the Pabloites in helping build the PS. The OCI based itself on the false perspective that a Union of the Left between the PS and the PCF could build a workers government. As a result, the PS is staffed to a large extent with former Pabloites and OCI members.

Krivine referred jokingly to the Socialist Party as a place where many political tendencies can come together and maneuver. Referring to the current factional struggles in the PS, Krivine said that party's First Secretary Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, who came from the *lambertistes*, "understands it very well. They all come from the *lambertistes* or from us, so that shows that it's a place you can meet up." He drew no balance sheet of Hollande's presidency and said nothing about the dangers posed by Hollande's successor and former advisor, Macron, to the working class.

This is a dangerous falsification of the history and class role of the PS. It was formed from a section of petty-bourgeois renegades from Trotskyism, as well as a layer of social Catholics, ex-Stalinists, and former Nazi collaborationists—the most prominent of whom was the party's first leader and first French president, François Mitterrand. The Socialist Party was from the start a reactionary party of finance capital, closely linked to the financial aristocracy and recruited largely from academia and the state machine.

The Pabloite and *lambertiste* elements who provided the PS with a "left" cover built a Frankenstein monster that turned viciously against the working class, carrying out policies of austerity and war, every time it was in power. In 2012-17, the PS under President François Hollande shifted French politics far to the right. By introducing the state of emergency and a labor law designed to eviscerate the labor courts and France's Labor Code, while repeatedly inviting FN leader Le Pen to the Elysée, Hollande set the stage for a turn to dictatorial forms of rule by his successor, Macron.

Armed with the powers to arbitrarily ban protests and detain protesters under the state of emergency, Macron intends to impose sweeping social

cuts in France by decree and reintroduce the draft in the face of mass opposition. As the old political order collapses, and in anticipation of an all-out confrontation with the working class, Macron is seeking to establish a dictatorship in France in all but name.

Krivine's remarks in Villejuif must be taken as a warning: the NPA does not intend to mobilize the working class in revolutionary opposition to this agenda. It speaks for privileged social layers in France who have been integrated into the PS over the course of nearly a half-century, and who are largely insulated from the impact of its policies on the workers. For decades, it sought to promote and build relationships with the PS instead of building a revolutionary party.

Indeed, when the Pabloites re-founded their movement as the NPA in 2009, it explicitly insisted that it was seeking to recruit and develop ties with PS members. The political platform presented to the NPA founding congress stated: "The NPA does not claim a specific relation to Trotskyism, but continuity with those who, over the last two centuries, have confronted the system all the way. The NPA is a pluralistic and democratic party. [There has been] participation of comrades from various components of the social movement, of the anti-globalization left, of political ecology, of comrades from the PS and the PCF, from the anarchist movement, from the revolutionary left. Without becoming bland, the NPA has everything to win by opening itself even further."

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), on the other hand, explains that the disaffection of the workers with the NPA and the trade union bureaucracies is itself the sign of coming revolutionary struggles, in France and internationally. Workers are seeking a way to fight austerity and social inequality and oppose the drive to war. However, as even Krivine's report made clear, workers no longer believe that even the limited social demands contained in the NPA's election program can be won without a determined struggle against the PS and Macron. This means a break and a struggle against the NPA as well.

The conclusion of Krivine's meeting was devoted to the difficulties the NPA has in mobilizing workers in its presidential campaign and for trade union activities. Krivine complained that workers tell Poutou, "What the hell are you doing in these elections, you are ridiculous. You are not credible. Everything you propose is really good, but it's not credible in the current situation."

The NPA is aware and deeply concerned by the disaffection in the working class with its policies. Krivine said that Poutou, a CGT delegate at the Ford factory in Blanquefort near Bordeaux, "has a really hard time to get Ford workers to mobilize in solidarity with this or that struggle, and even to struggle at Ford, which is threatened with a plant shutdown."

After Krivine's remarks, a WSWs reporter asked Krivine if he could explain why workers do not view the NPA as credible. Krivine did not answer the question, but instead allowed two other NPA members to answer in his place. Both of them pointed to the fact that trade union struggles supported by the NPA have failed to halt a wave of plant shutdowns and a staggering rise in unemployment in France since the 2008 crisis.

"There were waves of mass layoffs since 2008 that went ahead, though sometimes there was violent resistance like at Continental [auto parts plant in Clairoux], but all of these struggles ended with the closure of the plants involved," one said.

The other NPA member suggested trying to reconcile striking workers with plant shutdowns by making clear to them, during the strike, that the plant faced economic problems: "Defensive struggles often end with a defeat, but depending on how the struggle takes place, the results are not the same. If the workers are happy with the struggle, if they went all the way, they understood what was happening, they saw the problems and felt they were actors in the events, it's still a defeat of course because the companies shut down, but it's not the same thing."

Such answers, after trillions of euros were plunged into rescuing the

banks, only show that the NPA has nothing to propose to workers and is a tool of forces hostile to the proletariat. As a revolutionary confrontation between the working class and the financial aristocracy draws nearer, the NPA is shifting ever further to the right, dismissing internationalism and opposition to capitalism as utopian and "not credible."

In the coming struggles, the working class will need not a trade union or a political ally of the PS, but the leadership of a Trotskyist party, fighting for an international socialist revolution. Workers will find no other way to combat the offensive of Macron and imperialist governments across Europe. That party is not the NPA, which is a corrupt and demoralized tool of the ruling elites, but the PES in France and the sections of the ICFI around the world.



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