

# France's New Anti-capitalist Party denies Trump's fascist coup in Washington

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Millions of people worldwide are shocked and alarmed by the scenes on January 6 of a fascist mob whipped up by billionaire President Donald Trump storming the Capitol in Washington. In France, stunned news anchors are acknowledging this event was historically unprecedented.

The Socialist Equality Party (US) has called for a full, public and live-streamed investigation of this attempted fascist coup. The key task is to alert and politically mobilize the international working class. In contrast, pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class like France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) are reacting by trying to lull the working class to sleep, denying that a coup was attempted and promoting President-elect Biden's Democratic Party.

The NPA's *Permanent Revolution* web site published an article titled "The storming of the Capitol and the decadence of American imperialism," loosely translated from its US affiliate, *Left Voice*. It denied that a coup attempt had occurred and attacked those warning of a coup as "bourgeois," writing:

The storming of the Capitol building wasn't an insurrection or a coup as members of the bourgeois press insinuate, but it does show a Far Right that, far from accepting defeat after November 3, has in fact been emboldened during the transition. It is the same Far Right that mobilized against Black Lives Matter protests this summer, against COVID-19 restrictions, and for recount votes in key battleground states during the election.

The NPA's weekly *The Anti-capitalist* reassured its readers: "The far right is growing slowly. The far right is still marginal in the United States." It claimed not to know who organized or led Trump's far-right riot: "The rioters were expelled before counter-demonstrations could be organized. While many were members of far-right groups like the Proud Boys, no group seemed to lead the operations. The media called the rioters 'insurrectionists.'"

Even as videos emerge of Capitol police opening gates and waving on far-right thugs to storm the building, the NPA reassured its readers the threat of fascism is minimal. It unblushingly asserted that Wall Street, the Pentagon and US police reliably support democracy:

The democratic system remains in place, even if it is under a heavy pressure. No sector of the capitalist class or the state machine supported Trump's attempts to sweep away the electoral and judicial system. Over 100 CEOs signed a document that opposed any questioning of the November 3 election results, and the armed forces firmly rejected calls to intervene. Trump had to face up to the fact that control of the government does not give absolute control over the levers of state.

These shabby attempts to deny the growing turn of the American bourgeoisie towards fascistic rule are based on lies. The coup was organized and led by President Trump, who spoke to the mob before it passed through Capitol police to seize the building. Trump has pursued this strategy ever since launching an attempted coup during the mass, international protests against the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in June—when he appealed to far-right militias and attempted to illegally deploy the US military against protesters in America in a first attempted coup.

Trump had the backing of hundreds of Republican lawmakers as he falsely denounced heavily-Democratic mail-in ballots as fraudulent in order to deny the legitimacy of the election. His associates worked closely with far-right groups like the Proud Boys to intimidate and threaten election officials in key states. Far-right operatives were arrested before they tried to storm the Michigan state capitol in Lansing, planning to kidnap and murder Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

While continuing to deny the November 2020 election results, Trump announced he would mobilize his supporters to protest outside the Capitol on January 6, as Congress met to formally certify the election outcome. A number of far-right protesters in the Capitol were found with plastic ties with which to tie up hostages they could have taken from among the lawmakers in the building. Significantly, Pentagon officials initially refused desperate appeals from representatives and senators to deploy National Guard forces to take back the Capitol from Trump's mob.

After this, the NPA's claim that Trump has no support in the American capitalist class or state machine for a fascistic policy is not only ludicrous, but criminally complacent.

Trump has only been able to retain office, despite his multiple violations of the US Constitution his oath of office requires him to protect, because powerful forces on Wall Street and in the US military and intelligence agencies are debating whether to set up a fascistic dictatorship. The ruling class unanimously supports his murderous "herd immunity" policy on COVID-19. As a result, Wall Street stock indexes ended up comfortably on January 6, even as a far-right mob seized the Capitol.

Having advanced a false, complacent line on Trump's attempted coup, the NPA attempts to cover up its reactionary politics by posturing as an "anti-capitalist" organization, critical of both Trump and the Democrats. *Permanent Revolution* continued:

The Left has to draw conclusions quickly [and] support all resistance against capitalist austerity and racist oppression with a program that aims to defy capitalism as a whole. Subordination to the Democratic Party is a cancer that affects much of the US left: there is room for the construction of an organization of the working class and the oppressed completely independent of the Democratic Party.

Biden's moves to cover up a fascist coup and defend the Republican Party expose the bankruptcy of the Democrats and middle class groups, like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), that have sought to subordinate workers and youth to the Democrats and downplay the coup. Biden reacted to the coup by appealing to Trump to get on national television and call off the coup that Trump was in the middle of launching. He also praised co-conspirators of Trump like Senator Mitch McConnell and claimed America needs the Republican Party to be "strong."

This also exposes petty-bourgeois parties like the NPA, however, who mouth a few criticisms of the Democrats while working in alliance with them. Indeed, in its article, *Permanent Revolution* promptly turned to applauding a "progressive" faction of the Democratic Party that it asserted would turn to the left in response to unnamed future crises. It wrote:

...the Democratic Party is confronted with its own internal crisis between the establishment wing, led by Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, and the progressive wing embodied in the Squad (lawmakers considered more left-wing led like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib) and Bernie Sanders, who are the political expression of growing discontent with the Democratic Party's leadership. This insurgency has managed to contain a growing left movement in the United States and reinvigorate the Democratic Party, but as the Democrats are likely forced to implement austerity measures in the future, these tensions will likely come to a boiling point.

The NPA applauds Sanders, DSA member Ocasio-Cortez and allied Democrats because—despite its fraudulent calls for "independence" from the Democrats—it works with these figures, who have aligned themselves with Biden's cover-up of the fascist coup. NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot frequently publishes interviews and articles in the US magazine linked to this wing of the Democratic Party, *Jacobin*. Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez have maintained a deafening silence on the broader support in the ruling class and the state machine for the coup.

This makes the NPA complicit in an ongoing cover-up of the significance of the January 6 coup. In fact, all the wings of the Democratic Party—whether around Biden, or around the forces labeled "progressive" by the NPA—reacted to Trump's coup by seeking to downplay it. The Democratic faction that the NPA dubs "progressive" was advocating just as complacent and idiotic a policy as Biden's impotent appeals to Trump and the Republican Party.

*Jacobin* editor Bhaskar Sunkara similarly denied that Trump had attempted a fascist coup and tried to downplay the issue. He tweeted: "What's the advantage of saying 'this is a coup'? I just don't understand the advantage in finding the most extreme labels for bad things."

The "advantage" of stating that "this is a coup" is that this is true, and that it alerts the working class in America and internationally to the clear and present danger of fascism. It is not an "extreme label," but a political characterization that points to the essential task in this situation: to mobilize the international working class in an irreconcilable struggle against the advanced state of preparation for authoritarian rule by the financial aristocracy.

The coup in Washington is an urgent warning not only to the American but also to the international and in particular the European working class. The 30 years since the Stalinist regime dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991 have seen an accelerating legitimization of fascism by the ruling classes in every country. Now, as working class anger mounts against decades of European Union (EU) austerity and now the EU's murderous "herd immunity" policy on COVID-19, it is widely admitted that plans for

fascist coups and mass killings are at an advanced state of preparation across Europe.

In Germany, where right-wing extremist professor Jörg Baberowski has publicly rehabilitated Hitler as "not vicious," neo-Nazi networks are acknowledged to have assembled lists of politicians for execution by far-right death squads. The far-right murder of one person, conservative politician Walter Lübcke, already took place in 2019. In France, after President Emmanuel Macron hailed fascist dictator Philippe Pétain as a "great soldier" amid "yellow vest" protests, General Pierre de Villiers is now also agitating for military rule in the far-right press.

Perhaps the most overt case is in Spain, where the eruption of protests against "herd immunity" policies led to widespread planning in the army for a fascist coup. Hailing the 1936 fascist coup of General Francisco Franco that began the Spanish Civil War, groups of Francoite officers began writing letters to the king demanding he support them against the elected government. In WhatsApp chats leaked to the press, these officers hailed Franco's coup and called to murder "26 million people," their estimate of the number of left-wing voters in Spain.

It is impossible to oppose fascism without fighting for an international mobilization of the working class, politically independently from bourgeois parties and on a socialist perspective.

This requires a conscious, principled break with the entire international layer of pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class like the NPA. For decades, they have sought to block an independent political movement of the working class, insisting the working class had to be tied to alliances with imperialist or Stalinist parties that offered them political influence and power. When former 1968 student protest leader Alain Krivine and his Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) founded the NPA in 2009, Krivine proposed a political platform that declared:

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. [It has had] participation of comrades from various components of the social movement, of the anti-globalization left, of political ecology, of comrades from the PS [the Socialist Party, a social-democratic party of austerity and imperialist war] and the PCF [the Stalinist French Communist Party, the PS's main coalition partner], from the anarchist movement, from the revolutionary left. Without becoming bland, the NPA has everything to win by opening itself even further.

The WSWP explained at the time that the LCR was founding the NPA in order to break whatever tenuous association it retained to Trotskyism, which it viewed as an obstacle to the swing to the right it was preparing with the PS, the union bureaucracy, and the rest of the political establishment.

This assessment was rapidly borne out by events. In 2011, in response to revolutionary uprisings of the working class in Egypt and Tunisia, the NPA hailed NATO wars for regime change in Libya and Syria—led by the Democratic Obama administration, and waged in alliance with Al Qaeda—as "democratic revolutions." It also supported the NATO-backed, fascist-led coup 2014 in Kiev that ousted a pro-Russian president and plunged the country into civil war.

Also, in 2014, as part of the "broad left party" perspective of allying with imperialist parties that underlay its foundation, the NPA supported the founding of Podemos—a "left populist" party in Spain set up by a group of Stalinist professors around Pablo Iglesias and the NPA's Spanish affiliate, *Anticapitalistas*. It hailed the election of the Greek ally of Podemos, Syriza ("the Coalition of the Radical Left") in 2015. As for

Podemos, it ultimately came to power in 2019 in a coalition government with the big-business Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE).

The entry of these pseudo-left parties into positions of power and influence in the capitalist state ended in disaster for the working class. Syriza formed a coalition government with the far-right Independent Greeks (ANEL) party that utterly betrayed its election promises to end EU austerity, imposed billions more in social cuts, and set up concentration camps for Middle East refugees across the Greek islands.

During the 2017 French presidential elections, the Socialist Equality Party (France) fought to warn the working class of the far-right policies of Macron. When a second round emerged between Macron and neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen, it called for an active boycott by the working class, warning that Macron was no alternative to the neo-fascist regime Le Pen would seek to establish. This was subsequently confirmed by Macron's hailing of Pétain and his vicious crackdown on mounting protests and strikes against austerity and police violence.

The NPA, however, refused to take a public position on the election, bowing to the predominant calls in pro-PS media for a Macron vote.

As for Podemos, which is now in power, it is pursuing the same policies of austerity, war and "herd immunity" as other governments across Europe, and furiously downplaying the danger of a fascist coup against its government. In Spain, coup plotters have the support of Santiago Abascal, the leader of the fascist Vox party, who traveled last year to meet Trump in Washington. The January 6 coup attempt and the pathetic response of the Democratic Party are emboldening these forces.

Yet Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias dismissed calls among hundreds of top retired and active-duty Spanish officers for a fascist coup, code-named Operation Albatross, as irrelevant. He insisted that the working class did not need to take any action: "What these gentlemen say, at their age and already retired, in a chat with a few too many drinks, does not pose any threat."

In fact, the threat is enormous. Iglesias and Podemos oppose mobilizing the working class against it not because the threat is exaggerated, but because a political movement in the working class would lead to mass protests against their own policies of austerity, war and "herd immunity."

The January 6 coup attempt in Washington is an irrefutable warning that broad sections of the financial aristocracy are determined to establish a fascist regime. There is deep, historically rooted opposition in the working class against this policy, and rising militancy and willingness to struggle. However, warning and mobilizing the working class requires consciously opposing the pseudo-left as it moves to demobilize the working class. Its downplaying of the preparation of fascist coups on both sides of the Atlantic is not only complacent and false, but politically criminal.



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