

Pabloite NPA backs pro-war New Popular Front in French snap elections

Anthony Torres**28 June 2024**

By joining the New Popular Front formed by Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed party and the big-business Socialist Party (PS) after President Emmanuel Macron's calling of snap elections for July 7, the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) has again exposed itself as a tool of imperialism. It is pushing the workers behind the political trap set by Mélenchon and former PS President François Hollande, who aim to intensify war with Russia abroad and class war at home.

The NPA justifies its support this for alliance, arguing it will build left unity against the danger of the neo-fascist National Rally (RN) coming to power. The RN now has growing support in the ruling class, particularly in the faction of the The Republicans (LR) party around Eric Ciotti that calls for alliances with the RN. The NPA states:

“At this time, as the RN and its allies are in a position to take power, the Popular Front is giving hope for the social and political left, against neo-liberal reforms, for the antiracist, ecological, feminist, LGBTI struggles and for all movements for the equality of rights.

“The victory against the far right and Macron is only possible on condition of a large mobilization of the population, notably in workplaces, popular neighborhoods and youth. The trade union movement, the environmental struggles, the feminist movement, the movement of solidarity with Palestine, the decolonial and antiracist struggles, must profoundly nourish the program of the Popular Front. They must constitute its living force.”

But the New Popular Front is not a great hope for the left. By supporting it, the NPA is joining in the right-wing restructuring of the ruling establishment that Macron aims to carry out via the snap elections. Macron called his snap elections for July 7, shortly after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called snap elections for July 4, to prepare the ruling establishment for a massive escalation of the war against Russia and of the class war at home.

The newly-elected British and French governments will send officials to the July 9 NATO summit in Washington that is preparing to send troops to Ukraine for war with Russia—a policy that Macron has repeatedly advocated. NATO's war calendar is in fact dictating the election calendar in France and Britain, as well as

the NPA's political maneuvers.

The NPA's claim that the New Popular Front is nourished by anti-colonial struggles is a political lie. It is an alliance with forces like Hollande, an undisguised enemy of the working class who brutally repressed social protests at home while waging neocolonial wars from Syria to Mali. The New Popular Front's program calls to build up the French military police and intelligence services and to send troops to Ukraine, ostensibly as “peacekeepers.”

The New Popular Front is not the Popular Front of 1934-1938. The Popular Front was not, it must be said, an anti-colonial force. It was an alliance of Stalinist and social-democratic parties with the liberal bourgeois Radical party. The price of the alliance with the Radicals was not only to renounce socialist revolution, but also to acquiesce in France's rule over its then-vast colonial empire, stretching from Indochina to Syria and Algeria. The Popular Front was, nonetheless, far to the left of the New Popular Front.

Today's New Popular Front, unlike its predecessor in the 1930s, does not contain any party with a mass base in the working class and does not even have the pretense of proposing major social reforms like the 8-hour day or paid vacations. It is a pro-war alliance that, if it formed a government under a Macron presidency, would slash workers' living standards to arm and prepare France for “high-intensity warfare” with Russia.

In the 1930s, the Trotskyist movement could enter into the mass working class base of the French social democracy to openly carry out political work opposing imperialism, colonialism and capitalism.

The NPA's decision to join the New Popular Front today testifies to its deep-rooted hostility to Trotskyism. It is joining an alliance with the PS, a big business party founded in 1971 and that since then has been one of French imperialism's main parties of rule.

The PS lead candidate in this month's European elections, Raphaël Glucksmann, publicly denied the genocide in Gaza and called to arm Ukraine against Russia. Indeed, the PS is at the heart of imperialist war intrigue in Ukraine. Under Hollande, for whom Macron was economy minister, the PS worked with Washington and Berlin to topple pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in a far right coup that triggered a conflict in Ukraine that now is rapidly escalating to nuclear war.

The NPA's emergence in an open alliance with the PS is the outcome of its support, ever since its foundation in 2009 based on

an explicit rejection of Trotskyism, for the military adventures of French imperialism and NATO. It backed wars in Libya, Syria and Mali and also the 2014 putsch in Ukraine. Shortly after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war two years ago, NPA leader Olivier Besancenot went to Ukraine. On his return to France, he promoted NATO's arming of the Ukrainian regime and financial sanctions against Russia as anti-fascist resistance, declaring:

“We understand that Ukrainians are demanding weapons deliveries, especially defensive weapons that allow to have control of the skies. Those with whom we spoke over there stress that they do not plan for forces other than theirs to substitute themselves for the Ukrainian resistance. On the question of economic sanctions, we are fighting for sanctions against the oligarchs, but we are still falling far short. In Britain, in Cyprus, we are at only 1 percent of what could be done.”

This brief for war with Russia is a pack of lies that exposes the anti-fascist pretenses of the NPA and the entire New Popular Front. The Ukrainian regime is not a democratic, anti-fascist regime but a far-right dictatorship. Its president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has suspended elections and rules based on a network of intelligence agencies and far-right militias led by operatives loyal to the memory of the Ukrainian Nazi-collaborationist Stepan Bandera.

Against the NPA's utterly fraudulent presentation of their Ukrainian war policy as a “hope for the left,” workers and youth can only orient themselves by turning to the history of the great struggles of the Trotskyist movement. A class gulf separates Pabloite support for NATO wars from the International Committee of the Fourth International's (ICFI) Trotskyist opposition to both NATO imperialism and the post-Soviet Russian capitalist regime.

Pabloism emerged in an international split with the ICFI, the defenders of the continuity of Trotskyism, in 1953. Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel rejected the Marxist conception of the working class as an independent revolutionary force and called on the Trotskyist movement to liquidate itself into Stalinist, social-democratic or bourgeois nationalist movements. After the 1991 dissolution of the USSR by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which the Pabloites had previously promoted as revolutionary, it oriented to support for imperialist war, in line with the interests of their affluent middle class base.

The NPA's evolution since its founding in 2009—during which the Pabloites publicly liquidated its predecessor, the *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire*—has confirmed the assessment made by the ICFI at the time on the WSWS. In 2009, it explained:

The LCR's real target in liquidating itself is, in fact, Trotsky's political heritage: an insistence on the complete political independence of the working class, revolutionary internationalism, and an irreconcilable opposition to collaboration with the bourgeois state, the Stalinist and

social-democratic bureaucracies, and all brands of bourgeois nationalism and petty-bourgeois radicalism. The LCR's selection of anti-capitalism as its guiding ideology is, in the context of European and especially French politics, a colossal step backwards and to the right, towards the cheapest coin of the realm. Politically indistinct, it embraces all manners of social discontent, regardless of class basis or orientation. It is a term that can be embraced in large sections of the petty-bourgeoisie, both left and right—everything from the anarchism proposed by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the mid-19th century to the violent right-populist protests of Pierre Poujade of the mid-20th.

The escalation of NATO and Macron against Russia will provoke explosive mass opposition. After polls in February showed 68 of French people opposed Macron's call to send troops to Ukraine, a Eurasia Group poll showed 88 percent of Western Europeans oppose escalation and want a negotiated settlement of the Ukraine war. But these events are an urgent warning. A movement against war and dictatorship can only be built from below, mobilizing rank and file workers independently of labor bureaucracies tied to pseudo-left parties like the NPA.

The political basis of such a movement is a struggle for Trotskyism against Stalinism and the New Popular Front. This requires above all building the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the ICFI, as the Trotskyist opposition to the New Popular Front and the NPA. Just as there can be no socialism without democracy, there will not be democracy without a Trotskyist struggle by workers in France and internationally for socialism.



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