

# France: After the election, what perspectives for socialists?

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**The new political situation puts two demands on the agenda: unity to resist the plans of Sarkozyism and a new workers party. [The French original of this article is much longer than the English version below. Click on "translation in the left column to get it].**

**1) Unity first.** It is a capital issue. A number of observers have compared Sarkozy to Thatcher. There are differences linked to the specific history of the right wing in each country, but one can see a strategic similitude between the dynamic of "Thatcherism" and of "Sarkozyism". Both have come to power following a clear electoral victory. But their electoral victory, by itself, cannot resolve the problems posed by neoliberal counter-reform in each of the countries.

To apply an ultra-Thatcherite programme, it is necessary to transform the electoral victory into a victory on the terrain of the class struggle. It is necessary to seek social confrontation on one or two key questions and seek to inflict a major defeat on the world of labour and the trade union movement. As André Slama has indicated in one of his thunderings in "Le Figaro" on May 7, the day after the electoral victory, "it will be necessary to inject social conflict".

The choice of Sarkozy by the bourgeoisie is the choice of confrontation, the choice of sharpening of the class struggle. It is necessary now to meet the challenge, prepare for the coming struggles. In this perspective, the preparatory phase is decisive, the choice of terrains of confrontation, rallying, the accumulation of new energies through partial mass struggles; in short it is necessary to take the measure of the stakes to come.

That will be difficult; Sarkozy holds the cards in his hand, but he can also overestimate his strength. Electoral victories are not automatically social victories... The resistance to neoliberalism which exists in this country are still as live and the new government can also break its teeth faced with the social tenacity which is one of the trademarks of the country. For that mobilisation, size and unity of the whole of the forces of the social and political left of the country is necessary. Which will only be possible by resting on the forces of resistance of the social left to weigh on the traditional political and trade union left.

**2) The second demand is the construction of a new anti-capitalist party.** The leadership of the Socialist Party no longer makes a mystery of it, Royal and Strauss Kahn in particular wish to "renew social democracy" by a more systematic adaptation to neoliberalism and by the search for a new alliance with the centre. There are still many unknowns in the construction of a new project of transformation of the PS. "New social democratic party", "Democratic Party" in the US style. A whole series of formulas will now appear in the discussion.

Already voices are raised in this direction. Hollande has launched an appeal for a new progressive party. Julien Dray states that "the PS of the congress of Epinay is obsolete". Others call directly for the construction of a new "democratic party" We used to evoke the Italian situation, the choice made

by the Italian reformists, socialists, and centrists. Will the French situation allow a consummation of this project? The question is now posed.

But what is sure is that the leadership of this is proposing a huge rightward shift, of course under the cover of modernity!! In such a situation, intermediary formulas can appear which reflect a certain *résistance* to this movement to the right... but experience shows us that these “left reformists” cannot go to the end in the rupture with social liberalism. They remain prisoners of the dominant social liberal and institutional horizon.

Thus the leaders of the Links Partei in Germany have judged that Schroeder was going too far in terms of social liberal integration, and have constituted a new party with Oscar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi of the east German PDS, but it is to continue to govern with the SPD in the Land as in Berlin!

On the radical left, the discussion has also developed on whether a consistent project of construction/reconstruction of the workers movement, an anti-neoliberal or anti-capitalist left is or is not compatible with alliances, parliamentary support or governmental participation in coalitions with social-liberalism and the centre left. This debate has already divided the left in Italy and Brazil. This question was at the basis of the divisions of the anti-neoliberal left during the French presidential election.

The dynamic of the campaign and the post-campaign period have confirmed these strategic divergences. The PCF has opened negotiations with the PS leadership for these parliamentary elections. The inconsistency of Bové is revealed in his appeals for a government with Hulot, and more seriously in his rallying to the politics of Royal, even accepting an assignment on food sovereignty!!

These overall evolutions - social-liberalisation of social-democracy, incapacity of the PCF, Greens, alternatives to represent a truly independent social force - now open up situation where the formulas of unity of the anti-neoliberal left including the leadership of the PCF and the Bové current are obsolete, bypassed by the situation of these recent weeks.

Also to be noted is an “acceleration” of the decline of the PCF. With less than 2% in the presidential election, the PCF will now experience tendencies to break up, on the one hand under the pressure of currents sensitive to the appeals of Hollande for a new party - this is the meaning of repeated interventions of Gayssot - and on the other of the current which wishes to reaffirm the identity “PCF”, an identity which no longer has great historic meaning.

All these evolutions put on the agenda the construction of a new force which renews with the best traditions of the socialist and communist movement, which defends an anti-capitalist programme, and affirms its strategic independence in relation to reformism ancient or modern: a new “workers’ party” which draws the lessons of the main experiences of recent years.

Indeed, in the political conditions of France in 2007, on the basis of the social liberal evolution of the PS and the collapse of the post-Stalinist party, it cannot amount to building a hybrid party which tries to mix “radicalism” and subordination to social-democracy or the centre left, a party which tries to render compatible the struggle and the framework fixed by the dominant social liberal left.

Our objective is not to constitute a force of pressure on the PS, to push it “further to the left”. It is to win socialist or communist militants to an independent perspective. From this viewpoint, the success of the campaign of Olivier Besancenot is a decisive point of support to create the conditions of advance towards this new party. The axes of Olivier’s campaign already constitute the skeleton of

the programme of this new force: at the centre of the social question – in its multiple dimensions: feminist, ecologist, youth rights, challenge to capitalist logic – and democracy – defence of all democratic rights, a break with the Fifth Republic, election of a constituent assembly, control by the people, power to assemblies elected in the communes and enterprises.

Its method: the struggle against the capitalist system, the logic of profit, its substitution by the satisfaction of social needs, incursions in the right of ownership to generalise the public and social appropriation of the main sectors of the economy. Its perspective: the redistribution of wealth, social equality, socialism. Its strategy: unity, class independence, socialist democracy and workers power. Such a party will address all those who wish to build or rebuild a new genuinely left political force.

Such a party would not settle all the tactical and strategic questions. A series of debates would remain open, but this new political force will be strongly tied to the class struggle; it will have clarified on the basis of certain political experiences of key strategic questions, notably the central role of self-emancipation and of the self-management of the population in social transformation, the relationship to the institutions subordinated to the activity of the social movement, independence in relation to the state and its central institutions in expressing clearly the refusal of all “ministerialism” through support to or participation in governments of management of the state and the capitalist economy. To all these projects of management of the system, we counterpose a break with capitalism and the constitution of a workers government.

Finally, this party should function on the principles of a centralised democracy which combines effectiveness in action and right of expression for diverse viewpoints, with tendency rights, a party which ensures that the elected leaderships are under the control of the militants, through the rotation of leaders at all levels, a party which gives to each their place in the common fight.

The constitutive bases of this party flow from our entire political struggle: the defence of an anti-capitalist programme, strict independence in relation to the PS, and democracy; an organised national and democratic political framework, drawing international links with the international anti-capitalist left.

The question which is now posed to us is to discuss how to build this new party. A party which is open, bringing together all the militants, currents, experiences who identify with such an approach. It is in this spirit that we should engage in the coming weeks and months in dialogue with the forces which are ready to act with the LCR in this direction, starting with the sectors of youth and the world of labour which are most advanced in anti-capitalist combat.

We will also propose this discussion to the currents which have emerged from the crises of the PS and the PCF, to anti-neoliberal activists, to all revolutionaries. This force will not be the product of a random construction, combining apparatuses – big or small – self-proclaimed personalities or regroupments according to the contours and rules of hazy functioning. It is the product of the best experiences of the class struggle in recent years: it is addressed to all those who wish to build this new anti-capitalist party with us.

The LCR is the main instrument in the construction of this new party. Some hundreds of young people and workers have just taken the step of joining it, and it also must transform itself to respond to the new situation. But we think that in this new political situation, where the French left will experience major political upheavals, we can and should do better, attempt to organise thousands of new militants, go beyond the LCR, advance towards a more implanted force, broader, more open which brings together and allows a new advance in the construction of a force in the service of the exploited and oppressed.

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**P.S.**

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