



# New anticapitalist party: on what basis and on what programme?

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Over a year ago, when the LCR declared that a new anticapitalist party was necessary it was greeted with widespread interest both in France and more widely in Europe. The LCR's 17th Congress, meeting from 24 to 27 January, decided to launch an initiative for the creation of a 'new anti-capitalist party'. The LCR announced this would involve a constituent process, culminating in the founding of a new party by the end of this year. The statement affirmed:

"There is a desperate need for an instrument promoting convergence among struggles that is able to put the powers that be on the retreat and change the balance of power. There are many among us who want such an instrument: a party meeting the needs of contemporary mobilisations. A party to prepare a radical, revolutionary change in society, in other words, the end of capitalism, private property of the means of production, the pillage of our planet and destruction of nature."

The League for the Fifth International and its supporters in France agree with this aspiration. We too believe that the French workers face a decisive struggle, which has enormous importance for the working class movement across Europe and beyond. This is because the French working class has not yet suffered decisive defeats in its struggle to defend its social gains. Indeed it has won major victories like the struggle over the CRE and the rejection of the neoliberal EU constitution. But now, armed with a strong parliamentary majority and a reformist left in disarray Nicolas Sarkozy has commenced a programme to destroy these historic gains and demoralize the French unions, especially vanguard sectors like the cheminots.

In addition the attacks on the school and university system, on the youth of the banlieues and the sans papiers are mounting. Effective as the resistance has proved insufficient to repulse the overall attack and finish off the attackers. The reason quite simply is that the militant workers and youth have need of a political instrument of struggle. In short what is needed is a revolutionary party but not a tiny sect masquerading as one.

To be worthy of the name it must have in its ranks the best fighters of every battle against exploitation, state harassment, racial, women's, youth and gay oppression. It must be armed with a strategy i.e. a programme - which leads from all the burning necessities of today's struggles to measures that enable the workers and the users of services take democratic control of the economy. The clear goal of this programme must be the taking of power by working class through working class democracy, by the overthrow of the power of the bosses.

Of course today only a small minority even though not an insignificant one - already agree with this programme. But such a programme should not be presented as an ultimatum, to be accepted or rejected en bloc. It should be discussed, debated, subjected to the test of practice; and the experience of workers, youth, those who endure racial oppression brought back into the discussion. Such a process could make the adoption of a programme an organic development.

What should those who believe they have an outline of such a policy do? Certainly they should not keep silent on what their views are and wait for a programme to emerge. We in the League for the Fifth International believe that such a programme must be a revolutionary one, a transitional one that marks out the route to as the LCR says: a radical, revolutionary change in society, in other words, the end of capitalism, private property of the means of production, the pillage of our planet and destruction of nature.

We can draw one urgent conclusion from the debacle of the reformist Left in France and indeed in other countries like Italy and Britain; that the working class needs a 'new type of party', a combat party working in all the various sectors, in the trade unions, social movements and so on. Only then can a party, not only be active in various movements, but also fight for a revolutionary leadership for these movements.

We believe too that certain methods and traditions those of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky in particular are a vital guide for us today, not only on the question of programme but in the question of creating a democratic structure for a fighting party. Yet the LCR is very equivocal to say the least on this issue. In fact it seems to be ruling out precisely the key lessons of the last 90 years - i.e., that since 1914/1917 a reformist and a revolutionary strategy are incompatible.

In an interview Olivier Besancenot given at the time of the LCR's congress, replying to the question of whether a new party should be revolutionary he said:

"Probably not, because otherwise it would simply become a larger version of the LCR. Even if much is left unclear, on this much the LCR is perfectly clear: the new party will not be "Leninist" or "Trotskyist", even though it will be "ecological", "feminist" and even "Guevarist".

The LCR refuses to propose any specific programme for the Party, as this should come from below. Rather the party should be confined to a few limited principles such as those cited above. What the LCR has in mind is clearly a party that tries to be both reformist and revolutionary at the same time; that rejects even the idea of making a decision on this strategic issue. But these two strategies are incompatible because they represent the positions of opposing classes. The peaceful, gradual improvement of the existing system, which might end in 'socialism' is, as Rosa Luxemburg said, in Reform or Revolution, not just a slower more peaceable way of getting to the same goal but one leading to a different goal, the preservation of capitalism indefinitely.

The other strategy is based on class struggle leading to the revolutionary overthrow of the rule of the capitalist class, the smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus and its replacement by the rule of councils of the working class, in short the dictatorship of the proletariat. In our view an organization built to cover over such a contradiction, cannot meet the demands of the class struggle, of any major upheaval. Today to defeat Sarkozy means either to either grope around for a reformist government which will end in further betrayals or taking the road leading to revolution and workers power.

Here lies another of the major weaknesses of the LCR. Despite the excellent work of its militants in the trade unions in the student movement, the LCR does not lay down a clear strategy and tactics to fight for a revolutionary Leadership.

With this method, it is impossible to break the dominance of the trade union bureaucracy linked to the SP and CP. This is naturally not possible for a party, which itself wavers back and forth between reform and revolution, i.e. one which has a centrist character.

Today the leadership of LCR has taken an initiative in France, one that has the potential to attract tens of thousands of militants. To the extent this provides for uniting action and providing a forum for debating a new revolutionary programme and party structure we welcome it. Unfortunately the strategy the LCR advocates for such a party, the idea of the hybrid party, represents an obstacle to realising this potential.

That is why our supporters will be arguing for a revolutionary action programme and for a debate on the full implications of reform and revolution with the widest number of militants. We believe that in the context of a united struggle against Sarkozy's attacks they can be convinced, on one condition: that the revolutionaries remain true to their ideas and try relentlessly to convince them.