

At the invitation of the Left Party

The NPA's Alain Krivine speaks in Germany

By Dietmar Henning
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On March 17 Alain Krivine spoke in the German city of Bielefeld at the invitation of the “Rosa Luxemburg Club,” which is affiliated to the German Left Party. The 69-year-old Krivine is a founder and long-time leader of the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, which dissolved itself in February of last year into the “New Anticapitalist Party” (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, NPA).

The audience consisted of around 40 Left Party supporters as well as some lecturers and workers at the city's university where, one day later, Krivine took part in a workshop devoted to the theme of the students' revolt of 1968.

The evening with Krivine made clear the extent to which the NPA is prepared to integrate itself into bourgeois politics against the working population—alongside the Socialist Party (PS), the Communist Party (PCF), the Greens and the trade unions. Krivine also directly expressed his rejection of Marxism.

His lecture and the subsequent discussion were held under the title “Rage—organize the anger! On the state of the left in France.” The lecture concentrated on the French regional elections of March 14 and 21. According to Krivine, “the right had been swept aside” in the first round of the election. He was referring to the ruling UMP led by President Nicolas Sarkozy. The fact is, however, that the extreme-right National Front led by Jean-Marie le Pen was also able to notch up a relatively high share of the vote, while Krivine's NPA received just 2.4 percent—a clear decline compared to the 6.1 percent won by the party in the European election last year.

Krivine reacted by seeking to blame the working class for this result and promised in future to co-operate even more closely with bourgeois “left” forces.

The “resignation” prevailing in the population was responsible for the result, he declared. In particular, “youth and the ordinary population” did not turn out to vote. “Last year millions took part in demonstrations in France. Now that movement has ebbed away just at the time we founded the NPA,” he complained.

Krivine placed part of the responsibility for this “resignation” on the trade union bureaucracy. It had dissipated the movement by isolating individual actions and wearing down militants with a succession of one-day general strikes. Krivine made no mention, however, of the role of the NPA, which closely supported the trade union bureaucracy in its tactics and held back at the time from any criticism.

Krivine made clear that the NPA sees its main task in redirecting disillusioned workers and young people back into the ranks of the Socialist and Communist parties and the trade unions. He went on to describe the efforts made by the NPA to form an alliance with these parties, despite the fact that under the leadership of François Mitterrand and Lionel Jospin these parties had governed France for many decades, winning the scorn and anger of many workers for their right-wing policies.

He reported that just recently the NPA “had invited all left parties to put forward common demands on the pension question.” Those invited included the PS, the Greens and the PCF. Together with these organizations the NPA is seeking to oppose the planned increase in retirement age. This despite the fact that only recently the SP chair, Martine Aubry, had made her own call for a longer working life. The PS turned down the NPA invitation and the PCF and the Greens responded by arguing that the issue of pensions was a job for the trade unions.

A further demand of the NPA is the call: “Take to the

streets on March 23”—a day selected by the French trade unions for a one-day general strike. Krivine stressed that in “all struggles he was for the unity of the left.... We do not act like a sect and say that all the others are traitors.”

Under conditions of a radicalization of the working class in France and other European countries the NPA covers the flanks of the discredited workers’ bureaucracies in order to demoralize the mass movement and run it into the ground.

In the course of the evening Krivine expressed his contempt for Marxism. At its founding the NPA had already ditched Trotskyism, socialism and internationalism so as to open up the organization to all sorts of vehemently anti-Marxist currents. Inside the NPA alongside former members of the LCR can be found anarchists, supporters of Che Guevara, feminists, trade unionists and a number of former PCF and Green members. In addition, Krivine noted, were thousands of members without any sort of political background.

This is why, he added: “We do not have any debates over the questions: What was the Soviet Union? What is dual power? Kronstadt and similar issues.” It was no longer a question of agreement over the past and discussing who is right. The only thing that is important is agreement on what has to be done now and in the future.

Inside “the LCR there existed very close limits,” which are now no longer necessary, he continued. “We gave up many things in the NPA.” When one participant at the meeting, the translator Manuel Kellner, also a member of the Pabloite United Secretariat, interjected: “including Leninism,” Krivine retorted, “Yes indeed.”

In the course of the evening Krivine did not mention the word socialism once. Even when asked a question about transitional demands he responded evasively by declaring: “Our desired social system is characterized in the first place by the just distribution of goods.”

“Interventions into private property” could also be contemplated, he said, but that must be done democratically. In the NPA there was unanimity that capitalism had to be overcome, “As to how, however, that is what we are discussing.”

When asked why the NPA describes itself as “anti-capitalist” if it seeks at the same time alliances with the PS, PCF and the trade unions, which all

support capitalism, Krivine was once again evasive. He reported that “some in the NPA” were against such alliances, while others accused such elements of being sectarian, because many more alliances would have to be formed—“and I stand somewhere between both groups.”

Krivine also refrained from any criticism of the German Left Party, which governs in the German states of Berlin and Brandenburg and has implemented a series of major social cuts. Krivine made clear that there are no basic differences between the NPA and the Left Party, which had invited him to speak in the first place. Krivine merely remarked there was also a discussion over whether the Left Party should participate in government.

According to Krivine, participation in a party is not based on principles but rather the number of members it has. “If one is a small group, then one has to consider joining larger parties,” he said. He justified this argument with reference to the experiences made by the Pabloite group Sinistra Critica (Critical Left), which worked for many years inside Rifondazione Comunista (Refounded Communism) in Italy. The group eventually became a component in the government of Romano Prodi, whose attacks on the working class over the space of just two years paved the way for the return to power of Silvio Berlusconi. Krivine justified the participation of Sinistra Critica in the Prodi government by arguing the organization had begun with only 150 members, but now had 1,000.

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