

France's New Anti-capitalist Party backs fascist-led putsch in Ukraine

By Alex Lantier
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France's pseudo-left New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and its co-thinkers in the Pabloite United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) have applauded the February 22 putsch in Kiev that toppled Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. In what constitutes irrefutable proof of their passage into the camp of the blackest political reaction, they are integrating themselves into a pro-imperialist Ukrainian regime that is pressing for war with Russia, and that the Pabloites admit is led by fascist groups.

The USFI "Statement on Ukraine" makes a veiled reference to the fact that the regime in Kiev that emerged from the putsch aims to impose social austerity and stoke conflict with Russia and Russian speakers in Ukraine. Writing that "the mass movement itself has no progressive program on democratic, national, and social issues," it states: "The new ruling parties will continue social attacks with possible internal confrontation leading to the disintegration of the country."

On this basis, the USFI calls on its supporters to join the protests: "While the main organized forces are, for now, from the right and far right, we support the social and political forces which are trying to build a left opposition within that movement. In so doing, they have refused to stay outside the movement and to identify the whole movement with its far-right component."

To justify supporting the Kiev putsch, the USFI employs the same lie it used to back the CIA-led war in Syria waged by Al Qaeda-linked fighters. It claims that a small, right-wing movement supported by imperialism is a mass democratic uprising.

This lie is all the more flagrant in that the USFI's own accounts of events in Ukraine directly contradict it. In an interview with the NPA's *Hebdo Anticapitaliste* titled "A mass revolt for democracy," Zakhar Popovych of the Ukrainian Left Opposition group, which works inside the Maidan protests, maintains the pretense that they were a democratic revolution. Popovych's factual account undermines this claim, however.

He writes, "The first attacks against the anti-riot police of the Berkut were organized mainly by the neo-Nazis of Right Sector, who are even more radical than the far-right Svoboda movement." He notes that "people at Maidan [were] mostly Ukrainian-speaking people from villages in western Ukraine."

His account of the final campaign leading up to the putsch gives the lie to claims that a mass revolutionary uprising took place in Kiev: "Maidan, frequented on a 'normal' evening by a few hundred people, was invaded by several thousand people who stayed all night. This mass mobilization probably saved Maidan from the 'cleaning' which was clearly being prepared by police."

Claims that the Kiev putsch was a "mass revolt for democracy" are absurd lies. Unlike uprisings against pro-imperialist dictatorships in Egypt and Tunisia, which mobilized millions or tens of millions of workers, the putsch mobilized thousands or tens of thousands of people organized around cores of fascist fighters. There were no mass strikes or mobilizations of workers—the only progressive way Yanukovich's

reactionary regime could have been overthrown.

The far-right forces on the Maidan the NPA proposes to work with include Svoboda and Right Sector, which openly glorify the Nazi SS units that participated in the Holocaust.

The pseudo-left groups' support for a fascist-led putsch is a warning to the working class. Rooted in upper middle class layers fascinated by violence and convinced that fascist parties legitimately speak for social discontent, they are deeply hostile to the working class and to socialism. They are moving to support authoritarian forms of rule both in Ukraine and internationally.

Ilya Budraitskis, a leader of the Pabloite Russian Socialist Movement (RSM), hails the Right Sector in a piece titled "Ukraine's Protest Movement: is a Left Sector possible?" He writes, "Without the ultra-right proponents of a 'national dictatorship' from the Right Sector, there would never have been any barricades on Hrushevskoho or occupied ministries turned into 'headquarters of the revolution.' There would not be, full stop, any of the events that actually prevented the consolidation of a 'party of order' and the establishment of a 'state of emergency' from above."

Budraitskis' glorification of the fascists as leaders of an anti-establishment uprising is a vile fraud. The Ukrainian opposition received the support of the imperialist powers and of a section of Ukrainian oligarchs, in a bid to set up an anti-Russian regime prepared to carry out deep social cuts against workers.

The Independence Square (Maidan) protests were called on a reactionary perspective of joining the European Union (EU). They began last November after Yanukovich, fearing mass protests, suddenly abandoned an association agreement with the EU involving pension cuts and massive energy price increases.

During the protests, dozens of US and European officials toured the Maidan, calling for regime change. According to US Undersecretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Victoria Nuland, Washington spent \$5 billion in the decades since the dissolution of the USSR on funding Ukrainian opposition groups.

Completely dismissing the working class, Budraitskis lays out the reactionary and utterly pessimistic view that the victory of the far right is inevitable. He proposes building a "Left Sector," i.e., a pseudo-left version of the pro-Nazi Right Sector that works with far-right forces, as the model for building "left" parties in an entire epoch.

He writes, "I understand completely how vulnerable my reasoning will look, but I still feel that this conversation—about the possibility of a 'Left Sector' and its struggle for hegemony in the protest—is important not only in the Ukrainian context, but also for the future, in which we will face similar (if not worse) circumstances every time."

Budraitskis' comment that a "Left Sector" perspective is important beyond Ukraine and in the future underscores that the pseudo-left parties will apply his arguments to justify working with far-right forces internationally in the coming period. Within France, it would justify the

NPA's participation in protests alongside the rising neo-fascist National Front (FN), which also makes demagogic appeals and has mounted protests on various social issues.

Building a "Left Sector," Budraitskis writes, "would allow for the construction of radical left forces in the post-revolutionary situation—which will probably be in the near future—when finally the Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) puts a close to its ignominious existence. The current demand for a ban on the KPU (along with the Russian-speaking Party of Regions)—the protestors' call for which is growing louder all the time—is connected not only with the anti-Communist tradition, but just as much with the KPU's political program, which has linked its fate inextricably with the oligarchic clans and the reactionary pro-Russian lobby."

Budraitskis' call for the destruction of the KPU after the victory of the protests is chilling. The fall of the KPU envisaged by Budraitskis is not the collapse of a bankrupt, pro-capitalist Stalinist party amid a revolutionary upsurge of the working class; it is the liquidation of KPU officials and voters by the pro-Nazi forces to which the pseudo-left is orienting itself. The comments of Svoboda make this clear.

In 2010, Svoboda officials posted the following remark on a forum on the party's site: "To create a truly Ukrainian Ukraine in the cities of the East and South ... we will need to cancel parliamentarism, ban all political parties, nationalize the entire industry, all media, prohibit the importation of any literature to Ukraine from Russia...completely replace the leaders of the civil service, education management, military (especially in the East), physically liquidate all Russian-speaking intellectuals and all Ukrainophobes (fast, without a trial shot. Registering Ukrainophobes can be done here by any member of Svoboda), execute all members of the anti-Ukrainian political parties."

The subsequent victory of the Maidan protests has in fact led to numerous assaults on officials in Kiev and in pro-Russian eastern Ukraine by Svoboda and Right Sector thugs—most infamously the beating and forced resignation of Ukrainian National Television President Aleksandr Panteleymonov by Svoboda parliamentarian Igor Miroshnichenko, the deputy head of the new regime's committee on freedom of speech.

The NPA and its allies have continued to support the far-right regime in Ukraine as it has moved, with the support of Washington and the EU, to provoke a military confrontation with the Kremlin over Crimea. This is the content of a March 7 statement by their Ukrainian Left Opposition group, titled "Ukraine will be saved from intervention by solidarity."

While making a few *pro forma* criticisms of Ukrainian nationalism, the document directly aligns itself with the ultra-right forces that direct the regime in Kiev and their imperialist backers. Denouncing "Russian aggression," it unambiguously supports the fascist-led regime, writing: "Our government has been legitimized by the threat of foreign intervention."

Demanding the "withdrawal" of Russian forces, it warns Russian-majority areas of Ukraine not to resist the Kiev regime: "Workers of the East and South ... should understand that inflaming conflict simply puts off the prospects for improvements."

It even proposes to raise troops internationally to bolster the Kiev regime and help it win over the Ukrainian army to the position of the Maidan protesters and prepare for war against Russia.

Calling on Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians to "sabotage the mobilization and movement of occupying armies," it writes: "It is necessary to create international brigades to maintain lawful order, to oppose mutual chauvinisms, to defend strategic facilities, to conduct propaganda among troops, as well as to oppose the disarming of Ukrainian armies ... Organize detachments with those you trust, or whom you are prepared to elect! The Ukrainian army should act under citizens' control."

The NPA's decision to publish calls for collaboration with fascists and

the formal adoption of such positions in a USFI statement mark a political milestone. Escalating imperialist wars and social crises have shattered the political framework in which these petty-bourgeois groups postured as "left" while working with bourgeois parties to tie the working class to capitalism. With their endorsement of collaboration with fascist groups, the mask has slipped, revealing the right-wing reality underneath.

The evolution of the NPA—founded five years ago in order to cut off any empty symbolic association its predecessor, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), retained with Trotsky and socialism—has vindicated the WSWS' assessment at the time.

In 2009, the WSWS wrote: "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. ... [Its] 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."

In light of the NPA's calls for alliances with pro-Nazi groups, it could be added that there were elements even within the Nazi party itself that styled themselves anti-capitalist.

The NPA based its reactionary politics on a subjective, anti-Marxist view of history summed up by its leader, Alain Krivine, in an essay titled "The New Anticapitalist Party."

Calling for an organization capable of building "united fronts" with feminist, ecological, trade union, and pseudo-left groups, he wrote: "Unlike the LCR, the NPA however does not resolve some issues, it leaves them open for future Conferences, for example all strategic debates about taking power, transitional demands, dual power, etc. It does not claim to be Trotskyist as such, but considers Trotskyism to be one of the contributors, among others, to the revolutionary movement. Unwilling, as we had to do under Stalinism, to arrive at a policy by the rear view mirror, the NPA has no position on what was the Soviet Union, Stalinism, etc. Policy is based on an agreement on the analysis of the period and on tasks."

The NPA's orientation to Ukrainian fascists underscores the reactionary content of this wildly pragmatic and anti-Marxist outlook, which masquerades as a tolerant philosophy of broad unity. By dismissing the USSR, Trotsky's struggle for socialism against Stalinism, and all the class struggles in the 20th century, the NPA eliminated all political obstacles to creating the alliances that imperialism and the NPA's own petty-bourgeois social base might require. It could create "united fronts" with not only with other pseudo-left and Stalinist forces that supported the restoration of capitalism in the USSR, but also with the CIA, Al Qaeda and fascist parties.

Based on a narrow and ahistorical "agreement on the analysis of the period and on tasks," the NPA has collaborated with Ukrainian fascism, the EU, and Washington—with whom it agreed on the existence of a crisis in Ukraine and on the task of toppling Yanukovich.

This alignment reflects not only its support for imperialist intrigue, but its reactionary response to the deepening class tensions and political crisis of European capitalism. In country after country across Europe, the social democratic parties to which the Pabloite forces oriented themselves for decades are collapsing, discredited by austerity policies imposed after the 2008 Wall Street crash. Greece's PASOK, which imposed the most savage social cuts, has gone from being Greece's bourgeois "left" party

of rule to being a minor party polling at under 10 percent, working in a conservative-led coalition government.

In France, the NPA is staggered by the collapsing approval ratings of President François Hollande's Socialist Party (PS). It endorsed Hollande in the 2012 presidential election, cynically admitting that he would implement social cuts and free-market policies. Now, it is carefully watching the rise of the neo-fascist FN of Marine Le Pen—which postures as France's only opposition party, relying on popular disillusionment with the NPA and other pseudo-left groups—and calculating its impact on the NPA's future.

In his "Report on the International Situation" last July, the NPA's François Sabado admitted that his party's rock-solid faith in the durability of the bourgeois "left" had been shaken.

He wrote, "In France, the political and moral crisis is enormous. The policies of the Socialist Party are overwhelmingly rejected. We thought that the fate of the Greek PASOK—a total collapse—was a Greek singularity and social democracy could weaken but not collapse to that point. When we analyze the recent by-elections in France, we cannot rule out this type of collapse for the PS."

For a corrupt, petty-bourgeois party like the NPA, the prospect of a PS collapse does not hold out the possibility of building a mass revolutionary party in the working class, to which it is irreconcilably hostile. Rather, it threatens a terrifying loss of the positions of privilege and prestige the NPA has enjoyed.

The PS has overseen a political climate that suppressed revolutionary struggles by the working class and guaranteed sinecures in France's corporate-funded union bureaucracy, lucrative academic grants, and media access to NPA leaders. As the FN's influence rises within the bourgeoisie, the NPA is, through its Ukraine policy, sending out feelers to see how to deal with forces that one day might be its new masters.

Objections from the NPA or the USFI that its main principles would prevent any association with fascist forces would be cynical lies. In fact, the USFI boasts that it has no principles. As Bertil Videt, the head of the USFI's Danish section, wrote in the book *New Parties of the Left*, "We have no guarantee that an anti-capitalist party will not be tempted by the taste of power and give up on main principles, as did the Italian Communist Refoundation Party, which supported the Italian military intervention in Afghanistan and US bases in Italy."

With this reactionary statement and its support for the Ukrainian fascists, the USFI is signaling to the bourgeoisie that, in exchange for the right bribe, it will carry out any political crime, no matter how despicable, against the working class. In the revolutionary struggles of the working class that are to come, it will function as a far-right agent of social reaction.

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