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France

Punishment of the SP, rise of the FN... A leftwing response is urgent!

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The second round of the local elections in France on Sunday 30 March confirmed the trends seen in the first round on 23 March, as outlined in this article from *l'Anticapitaliste* (weekly newspaper of the NPA) of 27 March 2014.

The first round of municipal elections in France on 23 March was marked by record abstention, massive rejection of the SP government, and a rise of the far-right FN. All significant indicators of a deep crisis.

This is a historic victory... for abstention. It increased from 30% in 1995 to 38.62% in 2014, which is a lot for an election that traditionally mobilizes voters. This massive abstention is not homogeneous, and affects working-class and popular areas most: it is 62 % for example in Roubaix or Vaulx-en-Velin.

It confirms the radical break between a sector of citizens and government at all levels. It is a deep resentment against institutions that do not provide answers to concrete problems of the majority of the population (employment, housing, equal rights, quality of life...). This reflects the views of all those who do not hope for any improvement in their situation in the act of voting right or left.

Sordid affairs, scheming, lies did the rest and many voters no longer want to participate in this charade of democracy. The Leftist particularly disappointed, is the one who has the most boycotted the election.

Crushing defeat of the government

The NPA explained in this campaign that local and national issues were related because government decisions to reduce grants to municipalities, cut public services, disengage the national government from policy from policies for which it is responsible, for example education, weigh heavily on people. Distrust of an SP government carrying out rightwing policies was total.

On the evening of the first round, that's what the results reflect : 6 mayors elected for the left in government 16 for the right and 1 for the FN! [\[1\]](#) There was a political collapse of the SP, which fell by 5 to 20 points depending on the city.

Popular disgust with politics is also reflected in good results for non-party lists, not only in small towns but also in medium-sized cities. They may play an important role as arbiter for the second round. They suggest that for voters, it is better to choose managers who seem honest and do not display ambitions other than "good governance" of their community. It is the very idea of politics that is receding !

In the vast majority of large cities, the SP has to face a second round even where its list won in the first round in 2008, or it is even in third place behind the National Front, as in Marseilles.

Dangerous thrust of the National Front

Its strategy of rooting itself in localities has paid off : it has risen from 118 lists in 2008 to 597 lists presented in 2014.

In the first round, it came first in 7 cities and can already boast of having won 473 members of municipal councils, from the first round alone.

It has created strongholds in the North, to some extent in the East and the South East, in cities and localities where residents are particularly hard hit by the social crisis and political despair. It took the city of Henin-Beaumont in the North, and improved its score in Lille by 11%.

Riding on the popular rejection of corruption scandals that have affected both the SP and the UMP, it now wants to be a respectable party, close to the people, capable and efficient in responding to people's needs. Its success is built on the defeats of institutional parties and no "republican front" [2] will prevent it.

And now back on the street!

The NPA was present on 87 lists, including 54 as a united lists, with different parties (sometimes the PG (Left Party of Jean-Luc Mélenchon), the PCF (French Communist Party), the Alternatifs, Ensemble (an organization member of the Front de Gauche (Left Front) created by the fusion of several small organizations including Gauche Anticapitaliste), MOC, local associations...). In all cases, these lists have gathered far more than the party members. If we have not been able to capture the popular discontent, we were present to offer a clear anti-capitalist political alternative; to build a left opposition to this government; and to give a clear alternative discourse to that of the National Front, that of the right and of the "left" government is only leftwing in name.

This struggle for another society free of profit in the service of many, will be won by our struggles and mobilizations. To do this, we must take the streets, coordinate our struggles to unite all those who come in resistance. This is the meaning that we want to give the united-front initiative on 12 April : "Maintenant, ça suffit" (Enough is enough).

[1] The municipal elections in France are on a two round system. However if one list (the head of the list is the future mayor) wins over 50% of the vote then the elections is definitive and there is no second round.

[2] The "republican front" is an alliance of the traditional left and right parties to keep out the National Front. The SP called in the second round for SP lists in areas where there was a "tirangular" second round with the FN present to ally with the traditional right to block its success. Local SP lists which did not do so would be stripped of their official SP label.