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Tunisia:

A new stage in left regroupment

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In the days following the fall of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali, left political and Arab nationalist organisations, whose activists had played a motor role in the revolution, regrouped under the name of the January 14 Front. This rapidly broke up and each organisation then acted alone. The ability of these organisations to intervene in the struggles was reduced. Their dispersion at the October 2011 elections seriously marginalised them.

Since spring 2012, the Tunisian political landscape has been marked by a growing bipolarisation between two main poles.

- ▶ the first is constituted by the Islamists of Ennadha, the CPR of President Marzouki and Ettakatol, led by the social democratic president of the constituent assembly, Mustapha Ben Jafaar [1]
- ▶ the second groups diverse forces, essentially the 17 parties originating from the breakup of the parties of Ben Ali and Bourguiba which, in the logic of "Anything except Ennadha", have fallen behind Nidaa Tounes (Call to Tunisia) led by Caïd Essebsi. The latter had occupied central positions inside the state under Bourguiba, then more briefly under Ben Ali. Essebsi was a prime minister from February 27 to December 24, 2011.

Negotiations began in late spring 2012 between Essebsi's party, and forces which had participated in the Ghannouchi governments just after the fall of Ben Ali, like for example those originating from the ex-PDP who have come together under the name of the Parti républicain (Republican Party) and Eurosoemodernists around the former Ettajid (the name adopted by the former Communist Party in 1993). [2] The first objective of Essebsi is to bring together the former leaders and activists of Ben Ali's party, the RCD, dissolved after January 14, 2011).

Simultaneously, discussions have taken place to reconstitute a January 14 Front on new bases, open to other parties as well as independent activists. The aim is to set up a third political pole opposed to the other two, which are both located within the framework of neoliberal capitalism.

A first agreement was announced on August 13, 2012 between the 12 parties listed below. To aid identification, the names of the most prominent party leaders are given in brackets.

From the Marxist-Leninist tradition

- ▶ Parti des travailleurs [Workers' Party] - ex-PCOT [Communist Workers Party of Tunisia] - (Hamma Hammami)
- ▶ PTPD (Mohamed Jmour)
- ▶ Mouvement des patriotes démocrates (Movement of Democratic Patriots - MOUPAD - (Chokri Belaïd)
- ▶ Les Patriotes démocrates (Democratic Patriots) (Jamel Lazhar)
- ▶ Parti de la lutte progressiste (Party of Progressive Struggle) - PLP - (Mohamed Lassoued)

From the Trotskyist tradition

- ▶ Ligue de la gauche ouvrière (Workers' Left League) - LGO - (Jalel Ben Brik Zoghلامي)

Other party of socialist orientation

- ▶ Parti populaire pour la libert  et le progress (Popular Party for Liberty and Progress) - PPLP -(Jalloul Ben Azzouna) cf. Ben Salah

Pan-Arab Marxist

- ▶ Front populaire unioniste (Unionist Popular Front) (Amor Mejri)

Nationalist and Nasserite

- ▶ Mouvement du people (Movement of the People) - Hrakat Echaab - (Mohamed Brahmi)

Baathist Arab nationalist

- ▶ Mouvement Bath (Baath Movement) (Othmane Belhaj Amor)
- ▶ Parti de lâEuros"avant-garde arabe et d mocratique (Party of the Democratic Arab Vanguard) - PAGAD - (Khereddine Souabni)

Green

- ▶ Tunisie verte (Green Tunisia) (Abdelkader Zitouni)

From the press:

Hamma Hammami (WorkersâEuros" Party, ex-PCOT): âEuros This coalition is a political front and not essentially electoral. It will work for the realisation of the objectives of the revolution and constitutes a third pole of opposition to the ruling troika and âEuros Call to TunisiaâEuros . The official announcement of the creation of the popular front, its structure and its leadership is planned for next SeptemberâEuros .

Mohamed Brahmi (Mouvement du Peuple): âEuros We are based on about a dozen parties as well as independents and components of civil society which have been created in the regions following the example of the December 17 Front set up in Sidi BouzidâEuros .

[1] Ettakatol is the new name for the FDTL, which was an observer member of the Socialist International at the time of Ben Ali and became its official section after Ben Ali had been expelled on January 17, 2011

[2] In April 2012, Ettajid joined together with the Parti du travail tunisien (Tunisian Labour Party) led by Bedoui, and some independents from the "Modernist Pole" inside a new formation called El Mass r