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From the LCR to the NPA

This contribution was written as part of preparations for the January 2009 congress of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR). The congress agenda includes the political “self-dissolution” of the LCR, to set the stage for the new challenge of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA). The authors of this piece belong to the generation of activists from the 1960s and 1970s; so while principally addressed to members of the LCR, it may be of interest to many others.

For 20, 30 or 40 years now, we have built the LCR.

Today, we are fully part of the constituent process leading to the launch of the NPA. We approach this new enterprise with confidence thanks to – and not in spite of – what the LCR has accomplished over these past few decades. This is a momentous development; the LCR’s decision to dissolve itself in order to take up a broader challenge is a rather exceptional event in the history of the French working-class movement.

We are able to take this gamble because we are not beginning from scratch. It is no accident that – of all the groups within the French and even international revolutionary Left – it is the LCR that has taken such an initiative. We are the product of a particular history of the revolutionary movement – the fusion of a current of Trotskyism with the youth radical-

ization of the 1960s. We are a non-dogmatic current of revolutionary Marxism that has been able to preserve fundamental elements of continuity in the history of the working-class movement, particularly in relation to Social Democracy and Stalinism. These include the defence of a program of demands that are both immediate and transitional towards socialism; a united-front policy that aims for mass mobilization of workers and their organizations; a policy of working-class unity and independence against any type of strategic alliance with the national bourgeoisie; opposition to any participation in governments in the advanced-capitalist countries that merely manage the State and the capitalist economy; and unflinching internationalism.

Unlike other currents, we have endeavoured to incorporate a wide range of new factors into our political tradition: the post-war evolution of capitalism; active solidarity with the anti-colonial revolutions and with the anti-bureaucratic movements in the Eastern bloc; an analysis of the new social movements such as the women’s movement and, today, growing eco-socialist awareness in the face of the ecological crisis; and, above all, ongoing examination and enrichment of one of the key points of our program, socialist democracy.

This is a trademark of the LCR. The LCR has been able to ensure the continuity of the Left Opposition’s struggle against Stalinism. What is more, unlike most currents of the revolutionary Left in France and in a whole host of countries, it has also upheld the principles and practical application of democratic and pluralistic organization and functioning. Throughout its history, taken together, our sensitivity to this question and our democratic and pluralistic internal functioning have enabled the LCR to provide a home for a series

of currents and organizations with different origins and political cultures. And it has meant that the LCR is now in a position to build something with other forces and to embrace the new challenge of the NPA.

The NPA is the result of the political work of recent years, especially of our contribution to the renewal of the social movements and of the success of the presidential campaigns of 2002 and 2007 around Olivier Besancenot. But the idea goes back much further than that.

Beginning in the early 1990s, the collapse of the USSR and of the Eastern-bloc countries, combined with neo-liberal capitalist globalization, brought one historical cycle to a close and opened another. “New epoch, new program, new party”: this was a three-pronged approach towards thinking about the new historical period. Political action would be framed by a new set of parameters. It would henceforth be possible to overcome the divisions that had separated the many revolutionary and anti-capitalist currents born in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Of course, we were uncertain about the new organizational forms, characteristics, limits and dynamics. But the question was posed, on both the international and national level. Internationally, we took initiatives through international conferences and went through a number of experiences, each with its own specificities: the PSOL in Brazil, after the experience of the PT; Sinistra Critica in Italy, after the experience of Rifondazione Comunista; Respect in Great Britain and the Scottish SSP, before the splits in these two organizations; the Left Bloc in Portugal; and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark.

In each one of these processes, some questions were settled – especially around the matter of the relationship with political power and

participation or not in centre-Left and social-liberal governments. These questions led to the split of PSOL from the PT and Sinistra Critica from Rifondazione Comunista. They also underlie our differences with the leadership of Die Linke in Germany, which has declared its support for parliamentary and governmental alliances with Social Democracy.

The NPA will be clearly defined politically. Its preliminary documents set out some unmistakable terms: class struggle and support for all the struggles of the exploited and oppressed; unity in action of workers and their organizations; a break with the capitalist system; an eco-socialist project; opposition to any policy of managing the capitalist economy and the central executive powers of capitalist institutions; the struggle for a workers' government; the revolutionary transformation of society; socialist democracy; and an internationalist program and practice. To be sure, a number of questions will remain open: the nature of revolutions in the 21st century; problems of the transition to socialism; and a whole range of other questions having to do with the reformulation of the socialist and communist project. But we are not beginning from scratch; and the NPA will collectively determine its own positions on the basis of new common experiences.

It is therefore not a matter of building a revamped LCR. We don't only want to build a broader party; we want to build a party that is a new social and political reality. It will be pluralistic. It will take the best of all the revolutionary traditions of the working-class movement and of other movements such as eco-socialism. Its goal is to bring all anti-capitalists under one roof.

The NPA will be an internationalist organization, in charge of its own policies on international matters. It will not be a section of the Fourth International (which is a specific international political current). As a pluralistic party, the NPA cannot join the Fourth International (FI) as such. The process of building a new International – which has always been and remains our goal – will be long and complicated. The building of anti-capitalist formations in individual countries will not take place in synch with the building of a new international grouping. As allowed for by its statutes, we remain members of the FI, with ties to the LCR comrades elected to its leadership bodies. Given the role the LCR plays within the International, we have proposed that the NPA continue to shoulder a number of tasks for which the LCR was responsible within the FI.

We are also proud to have passed on to a

new generation not only a part of our political heritage but also the full range of leadership responsibilities – without the turmoil and crises of succession that most parties experience. Credit for this goes equally to the older generation, the youth and those somewhere in between. As the LCR dissolves into the NPA, though, we make a specific appeal to the sense of responsibility of LCR members. Their experience and training are vital to the building of the NPA. They are among the preconditions for the new party's success, and for the successful synthesis of new and old. Everyone should get fully involved, as we have decided to do ourselves. Without a doubt, this will be a remarkable exercise in learning to speak with broader sectors, in paying special attention to the vocabulary we use, in learning to listen to and respect others, and in learning from them without underestimating what we bring to them ourselves. After the NPA founding conference, every comrade from the LCR should get involved in building this new project, for which we have fought for so many decades.

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