

Confronting the Extreme Right: A Challenge for the Left Lessons Learned From the 2012 Elections in France

The upsurge of the extreme, nationalist and xenophobic right has become general in Europe.¹

“Established at the core and not at the margins of societies, they have become factors that count not only in political and ideological confrontations but also in constituting governing majorities, in countries with very varied political traditions and life conditions”.²

Dealing with this sort of right wing is unquestionably a challenge for the alternative left. Taking up this challenge means first of all grasping the specificity of the extreme, nationalist, xenophobic and authoritarian right; and, second, it means correctly analysing the realities on whose bases these parties have built their influence as well as the paths pursued in doing so; third, it is a matter of understanding the function these parties fulfil at a given moment in the political system of their countries. It is starting with these issues that the alternative left can try to define the terms of a counter-offensive. The paths and results of the construction of a counter-offensive today constitute a fifth area of reflection. The analysis of the Front National (FN) in France, especially in the spring 2012 electoral season, forms the basis of the following reflections.

On the nature of the FN

If from 1990 to 2000, the FN and other parties of its political family were often qualified as being “populist” right, there was in fact a need to demonstrate that what was emerging in the last decades of the 20th century was a new type of formation of the extreme right at the core of societies, some of which are marked by extreme right, even fascist traditions. Thus in the FN, as in other parties, one could see a permanent tension between the maintenance of an extreme right heritage and the wish to escape marginality and play a role at the heart of the political systems. It was necessary to demonstrate that these parties, some of which rapidly acquired a large and enduring audience, did not in any way resemble little extreme right groups but were aiming at a new hegemony by presenting themselves as the only “anti-systemic” forces. Currently, in a country like France where Sarkozy and the UMP have taken up a good number of the issues and elements of political discourse previously only developed by the FN, the labelling of the FN as “populist right” does not permit a suitable characterisation of the differences between the forces of the right. Moreover, the use of the adjective “populist” – an evolving concept – has shown its limits and shortcomings in regard to what needs to be described. What is more, the right which is called “classical”, like the UMP in France under Sarkozy, has taken up “populist” accents, all the while shaping them in a right-wing way from the point of view of the issues and contents proposed, with an aim to siphon off the FN’s following. This orientation of the UMP in the context of the repeated electoral contests between Sarkozy and the FN against the background of the acute crisis and the sharpened social

¹*Transform ! european journal for alternative thinking and dialogue* 08/2011 and 09/ 2011 are two issues analysing the populist and extreme right in Europe. See www.transform-network.org (and for the French edition www.espaces-marx.net).

²Walter Baier / Elisabeth Gauthier, “Crise, Europe et success de la Droite populiste et extrême”, *Temps modernes* 2012

confrontations has made the totality of the right-wing forces shift increasingly to the right. The time when Jacques Chirac opted for a “cordon sanitaire” strategy vis-à-vis the FN is well and truly over.

The presence of the extreme right in France has assumed massive dimensions since the 1980s. The FN has found very favourable conditions for gaining a foothold in national politics, notably thanks to the working class disillusion with the policies of the “governmental left” which has taken hold since Mitterrand’s neoliberal turn in 1983.³ The weakness of the radical left has become structural. Other factors may be cited such as the trivialisation of the FN by a great part of the forces present and the borrowings from the extreme right by Sarkozy and those near him. With the deepening of the crisis, the FN can rely on the divisions within the subaltern classes, which are constantly aggravated by neoliberal policies, as well as on the growing malaise created by the EU structure. In a context in which anger and exasperation find no positive political expression, resentments can easily gain the upper hand and become usable by the xenophobic and nationalist right.

In 2012, with 17 %, the FN achieved a record in the presidential elections for the second time since 2002. In 11 of 22 regions as well as 43 départements, Marine Le Pen got more than 20 % of the votes. Through its political positioning as the alleged “anti-system party” and despite Sarkozy’s attempts to address FN voters with his continually more rightist discourse, the FN could garner more votes than ever before in a presidential election. The FN succeeded in setting the political issues, and in this often got help from Sarkozy’s camp, for example when the government launched campaigns on issues such as “France’s national identity”, the deportation of Roma and the alleged contradictions between Islam and the Republic. Although 77 % of French people polled cited unemployment as their biggest concern, 53 % the question of purchasing power and the quality of the health system, 49 % the school system and the quality of instruction, and only 15 % the integration of the different social components of society, the question of immigration was continually accorded a disproportionately large space in the political debate.

The vote total of all candidacies in the left spectrum in the first ballot was 43.6 % in comparison to 36 % in the 2007 elections. The total of the whole “left part of the left” was almost 13 % (as against ca. 8 % in 2007), in which the Front de Gauche (11%) represents a pole with a new political quality. The UMP with Sarkozy (27.2 %), the FN (17.9 %) and the (rightist) Bayrou Centre were weakened. Under the influence of the Front de Gauche’s offensive, the left / right polarisation was sharpened. As a whole, vis-à-vis 2007 the weight has shifted from right to left, and at the same time Sarkozy himself has become more “rightist” and the FN stronger. Not just in the electoral campaign but during his entire time in office the president has shifted his language and politics to the right, even striking an unequivocally Pétainist tone. The “Bloc of People Willing to Work”, which Sarkozy put together in 2007 under the influence of large sections of radical right voters, has rapidly fallen apart and could not even be saved through the role of the “president as defender against the crisis”.

Marine Le Pen made it publicly known that in the second ballot she would vote for neither of the two candidates,⁴ that “the battle for France has just begun” and that in the future the FN would be the “party of patriots” – whether of the left or the right. She interprets the FN’s votes not as protest but as “a vote supporting protectionist policies”. While the UMP, after its failure, will fight over the successor to Sarkozy,

³A number of studies, such as those of Michalat / Simon, have shown that the popular classes and especially left-wing workers tend increasingly towards abstentionism, while those on the right tend to radicalise themselves within the right.

⁴Only 50 % of FN voters (in contrast to 70 % in 2007) voted for Sarkozy in the second ballot, a sixth abstained and a third voted for Hollande.

Le Pen will become the leader of the opposition, according to her campaign manager. For the FN the moment has thus come to turn Sarkozy's failure into the collapse of the UMP with the aim of playing a central role in the recomposition of the right.⁵

The crisis and the extreme right's rhetoric

Compared to the last election in 2007, Marine Le Pen this time was able to speak to broader layers of the electorate. In this sense, on the one hand, she promised a turning away from Sarkozy's policies and, on the other hand, apparently moderated her father's discourse. Thus she and her cohorts promise, for example, a "strong state" and a rescinding of the very unpopular reforms in the public services introduced in 2007, which resulted in massive job cuts in the public administrations. In questions of domestic security and immigration FN's positions remain staunchly radical right. Sometimes formulations milder than those of her father are used: She has rephrased his favourite slogan "préférencenationale", the privileging of French people in the allocation of jobs and social services, as "priorité nationale", but the meaning is the same.

Nationalism mixed with xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia and, always and still, antisemitism characterises the extreme right's discourse. At the same time, we see the extreme right adapting to the contradictions that generated the great crisis as they adopt a discourse described as "**neo-social**" without in the least abandoning their liberal positioning on the economic level. In this period of the sharpening of the social crisis, such that from now on it involves not just the working classes but also entire sections of the middle classes, this "neo-social" discourse is based on the neoliberal concept of "meritocracy". It is no longer principles of solidarity nor of social and democratic rights, which underlie social action; rather aid has to be *individually* merited and is justified by belonging to the "community". Certainly, the growing insecurity is acknowledged within this outlook, but only while displacing the points of conflict. The intention is to make people forget all that has to do with social conflict, class conflict, to make everything an individual issue, in conformity with the concept of meritocracy and neoliberal ideology. It is an attempt to represent "those below" while simultaneously capturing the resentments of the better off strata and sharpening the divisions in society. The conflict between "us" and "them" has multiple expressions according to countries or political moments, with racist and xenophobic attitudes hostile to any kind of "minority", but also increasingly based on a distinction between the "deserving" and the "freeloaders", the "slackers", the outsiders of all sorts devoid of any merit. This posture is not too different from what the UMP developed in France around the idea of "the subsidised" (as a social group). In the framework of austerity policy, unheard of social regression, social and political confrontation around the issue of public debt, such "neo-social" discourse can have great resonance. This type of programme of exclusion seeks at the same time to rehabilitate "demands for authority, law and order and work and meritocracy that are not just fundamental values of the reactionary right but are an integral part of a workers', or at least a popular, culture with conservative, authoritarian and often ethnocentric leanings".⁶

If the FN's electorate cuts across all social layers, its core base is often composed of working class milieux threatened by modernisation, of artisans and storekeepers and, increasingly, of middle strata threatened with social insecurity. Up to 2007 the FN had always won influence among the popular strata and right-wing workers and since 2007 this has not changed. However, we can see a class effect on the right when the choice is between the classic and the frontist right. The "class preference in favour of a 'rupture right',

⁵The dike between the electorates of the FN and Sarkozy has broken; now 54 % to 70 % of the UMP voters and 68 % to 77 % of the FN's voters are, according to polls, in favour of official electoral accords between the two formations.

⁶Jean-Yves Camus, "New Aspects of the Radical Right". In: *Transform !* 08/2011.

to the detriment of centrism or of a 'government' right, is particularly appreciable in the more working-class section of the population".⁷

In recent years, the FN's electoral results increasingly reflect an approval of the solutions it proposes in articulating "préférencenationale" and the rejection of immigrants. Protest has mutated to be adherence to these supposed solutions. The FN vote crystallises social anxieties and in 2012 is making inroads into the urban peripheries, reaching people of modest background, workers, employees, youth without degrees, excluded from the cities where living has become unaffordable, finding themselves isolated, facing at times insurmountable transportation problems, far from public services, with a growing sense of abandon. Social fragmentation is from now on accompanied by spatial fragmentation, with a "France périphérique" that has been discarded by the big cities several dozen kilometres away and living beyond the banlieues.⁸ Here too, criticism of the European Union is also one of the mobilising factors along with the criticism of "globalisation" developed around a "national-social" cocktail. But nothing justifies characterising the FN as being close to a right-wing "anti-capitalist" option. Certainly, those near to the FN are "much more favourable to raising taxes on large assets, much more worried by the increase in unemployment or the danger of the disappearance of public services" than are UMP voters, but "their rebellion seems to stay within a respect for a social, economic and societal order to which they hardly seem less attached than the sympathisers of the non-frontist right".⁹ The level of sympathy for the FN grows when "the difficulties experienced and the feeling of revolt that they spark" are attributed "to the omnipresence of immigrants who cost 'us', taking 'our' jobs, multiplying acts of incivility and violence and whom 'our' policies give and permit everything, while 'no one' is doing anything for 'us'".¹⁰ A poll¹¹ shows that the elements of "anger" and "protest" in the FN's vote go hand in hand with strong indifference to society, reflecting a deep "social selfishness".

Political system and the function of the FN

To be more effective and create a true left counter-offensive, the critique of the FN has to be brought up to date. In a country like France it is important not just to look at the FN's language and its impact on the electorate but also the function the FN has in the political system. Only on the basis of all these observations will it be at least possible for the left to conceive of a counter-offensive, a new dynamic which could end by gaining the upper hand on the FN.

For years, if not for decades, the constituents of the alternative / radical left in France have worn themselves out in developing a vigorous but more effective critique of the FN. The moral, republican critique was dominant as well as a strategy dubbed the "republican front" which assumes the establishing of an alliance of the socialist and communist left with the republican right when the FN threatens to win a parliamentary mandate in one of the electoral wards. Thus the FN was more criticised as a menace to the Republic than as an adversary in the class conflict. When the integrating function of the Republic weakens and erodes, when it itself – far from ideal of the Social Republic – takes on the function of excluding whole populations on the social and citizenship levels, then the arguments criticising the FN as anti-republican or dangerous for the Republic naturally lose their force.

⁷Guy Michalat / Michel Simon. *Le peuple, la crise et la politique. Etude éditée par la Fondation Gabriel Péri*, La Pensée - Supplement to issue 368 (2011), p. 94.

⁸ChristopheGuilly, *Fractures françaises*, 2010.

⁹Michalat / Simon, p. 105.

¹⁰Michalat / Simon, p. 107.

¹¹Published by *Libération* April 25, 2012.

The absence of a proportional electoral system in the presidential and legislative elections creates certain perversions. In this context the FN is used as a foil to drum up votes for one of the two principal parties in the framework of a majoritarian electoral system. The PartiSocialiste (PS) is thus a past master in the art of appealing to electors to cast a “useful vote” in giving their vote in the first ballot to the biggest party on the left.

In fact, since the 2002 presidential elections, when as a candidate Jospin (PS) was eliminated in the first ballot, with only Chirac (on the right) and Le Pen standing in the second ballot, this argument has worked perfectly. Once the FN is present, and not just at the level of the presidential election, but at that of many electoral wards,¹² the fear is widely fanned that if the vote is dispersed in the first ballot, the 2002 scenario could be repeated. Many voters who share a left critique are thus led to vote – often without conviction – for the PS already in the first ballot. In this way the PS and the media raise the spectre of the FN as a threat to the political system¹³ without deepening their critique of the FN.

Moreover, when the political system itself is largely contested and perceived as something external and alienating, a critique of the FN in this context loses its effectiveness. Quite the contrary, everything that feeds knee-jerk reflexes instead of appealing to reason cannot but favour the position of the FN, which is trying to present itself as “anti-system”.

On the one side, the FN benefits from this situation, and, on the other, fear of this party contributes – at least for now – to stabilising a two-party system, that is, the dominance of the pillars of the political system whose social and political base is progressively eroding. At the same time, the disintegration of democracy and the emergence of a new oligarchy as the power centre feed the critique of the “system” that the FN is building.

The FN is developing a language of systemic critique without actually taking up the basic questions of the economic-social conflict. Thus, for the political right and corporate milieu it plays the role of a “useful devil”, which through its performance and the reactions it calls forth deflects debate away from the real problems or the nature of the conflict and thus hampers the development of class consciousness.

In a period characterised by “post-democracy” phenomena and the transition to forms of oligarchic governance, the FN constitutes a sort of barrier against the political discontinuities and reconstructions of great breadth that could really put on the agenda a calling into question of the mode of domination and a break with it. From this point of view it is intriguing to see how intense the efforts of the dominant forces and the media are to equate genuine Neo-Nazis with SYRIZIA, the radical left formation which has just become the first party of the left in Greece in the wake of the austerity attacks on the Greek population. Attempts have become more frequent in different European countries to stir up the voters’ fears of “dangerous extremists” of all sorts to the benefit of parties called “reasonable” but which have been largely delegitimised.

¹² In the legislative elections, people vote in the 577 electoral wards according to the model of the presidential elections: The two candidates who are on top in the first ballot can present themselves in the second ballot. Moreover, when a candidate achieves 12.5 % of those registered (that is, not of the eligible voters, not of the electorate), he can stay for the second ballot even if he has come third or fourth in the first ballot. Thus if the FN scores well (more than 20 % of voters), three-candidate elections at the second ballot could make a candidate lose, who in the case of a two-candidate election would have won.

¹³ In the last days before the 2012 presidential elections fear of Le Pen was energetically stoked once again – for example, by means of a front page in *Libération* three days before the election with a giant photo of “Le Pen as a Threat !!” – this in order to mobilise the voters' reflexes in favour of Sarkozy or Hollande. Sarkozy was not, however, able to absorb the FN's votes.

The offensive of the Front de Gauche

Recognising not only the danger the FN represents for democracy and social justice but also the double barrier it represents in blocking the political system and raising powerful obstacles to the formation of a modern class consciousness, the Front de Gauche, and in particular its presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has decided to take up the challenge – after years of renunciation and political weakness on the left – the goal being that of preventing the FN from sterilising a part of the popular anger, working for a rebirth of the will for change through a left perspective. What is involved is countering “apolitical resentment” (André Tosel), which is the political motor of the FN. The latter has in fact captured a minority of the French majority that no longer identifies with either left or right.¹⁴ In the context of the crisis, which is no longer an abstract concept but a phenomenon of daily life, a breaking point seems to have been reached in the evolution of consciousness: The vision which is opening up is no longer that of a France with two or more speeds, but the picture of two Frances, which are moving away from each other by developing in opposite directions.¹⁵

To counter the class war that the rich are in the course of winning, “the Front de Gauche’s campaign around Jean-Luc Mélenchon has rehabilitated in public discussion the existence of social classes, their struggles and their consciousness”.¹⁶ Indeed, remaining at a level of discourse that criticises inequalities tends to valorise the consumer and not the citizen, masks antagonistic class conflict and makes room for divisions which impede the formation of a social bloc for change. Contrary to the recommendations of a political foundation close to the PS, which proposed it mould its politics even more to the middle strata and those with higher-education degrees, the working class milieu being too distant from the left, the Front de Gauche has opted for the opposite position. For it there is no question of slighting these first victims of the crisis. What this involves is an attempt at an ideological reconquest, pushing back support for the FN’s simplistic, dangerous and destructive “solutions” to the crisis, and convincing people of the possibility of radically different crisis outcomes based on solidarity, equal rights and collective progress. It is indeed this approach concretised by Mélenchon in his “educational meetings” that interested people and drew crowds, the aim being to substitute resentment with reason, feelings of impotence and withdrawal with hope and divisiveness with a solidaristic approach – to show the potential force of a “mestizo society” in the face of the domination of financial milieu, to counter despair and exasperation, on whose bases the FN thrives, by proposing a left political ambition founded on a different logic with the programme “human beings first” and a strategy of breaking with the dominant logic in order concretely to change the course of things.

The central slogans “la place au peuple” (the streets to the people) and “prenez le pouvoir” (take the power) were given concrete content. Thus the theme on March 18 was the “Sixth Republic” contrasted to the increasingly dysfunctional and excluding Fifth Republic. On this basis it was possible to link the idea, strongly anchored in the French left, of a social republic to the need for a new egalitarian and integrative social model. A study has shown that “prenez le pouvoir” was the most effective of all the electoral slogans this season. Mélenchon was able to counter the initially very intense accusations of populism by this offensive that tied “la place au peuple” to a class standpoint. It was thus also possible on this terrain to attack Le Pen directly point by point with political (and not moralising) arguments showing how much Le

¹⁴ Christophe Gully, *Le Monde*, May 25, 2011. A poll in 2010 (Sofres/CEVIPOF) estimates at 67 % the number of those in France who no longer have trust in either the left or the right, a particularly strong phenomenon in working class milieux.

¹⁵ Alain Mergier / Jérôme Fourquet. *Le point de rupture. Enquête sur les ressorts du vote FN en milieux populaires*. Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2011.

¹⁶ Monique Pinçon-Charlot, sociologist and co-author of the bestseller *Le Président des riches*, in *L’Humanité*, April 27, 2012.

Pen does occupy a class standpoint, indeed precisely the polar opposite one. In so doing, the attempt of the FN to appear to be outside of the system, against the system and outside the right / left dichotomy, crumbled. Voter migration figures show that there is no movement from Le Pen voters to the Front de Gauche whose content and dynamic has clearly caused difficulties for Le Pen, though without up to now being able to stop his dynamism.

It is really the Front de Gauche's campaign that furnished the basis of the effort frontally to oppose Marine Le Pen's offensive. Only the Front de Gauche exposed FN's system-supporting character. It is interesting to observe that Le Pen's ideological discourse only works as long as it does not have to answer precise arguments; when it does, however, it becomes visible that she is in fact on the far right. In order to avoid such a situation Le Pen, in a TV debate, refused to address Mélenchon, who was sitting right in front of her, a tactic which, however, turned against her.

The positioning of the Front de Gauche's campaign, on the one hand, contributed to a revitalising of the left / right cleavage and thus made impossible any rapprochement of the PS with the centre. On the other hand, the FN increasingly appeared as a party situated on the right of the right and one which lauds liberalism on the economic and social level. As a consequence, the FN's long-time strategy aiming at blurring the left / right cleavage has also failed.

The simmering anger often has difficulty in defining its object and in finding exactly whom it should confront, which is a cause of exhaustion and renunciation. The sharpening of the crisis has simultaneously reinforced anger and impotence. The lack of the power of interpretation as regards capitalism's large-scale transformations, the lack of the power of intervention and the obstacles to uniting tend to generate resentments that are easily reusable and manipulable – as we currently see in Europe – by the forces of a radicalised populist right presenting itself as the defender of certain social gains for a limited population. Combative language, through certainly necessary, is not enough to make these resentments subside. To succeed in doing so, it is indispensable to open up broad public spaces to talk about the power of interpretation, of intervention and the power to unite.

It seems quite realistic to characterise the current period as one poised between anger, protest and sometimes rebellion, on the one hand, and feelings of impotence, on the other. Tendencies to the disintegration of societies, the divisions this produces, including at the heart of the subaltern classes, do not favour the perception of what could constitute the common interest among the poorest, those less poor and those who still know a certain stability that they are in risk of losing. The constitution of a new social bloc able to transmit the demand for a political change must, under current conditions, necessarily be very complex. At the same time, the crisis process makes more visible the nature of the conflict and the oligarchy that is pulling the levers, which could encourage a more common vision among the different groups of the population.

The renunciation on the part of governments to exert political power in the face of the growing weight of the financial markets, banks and large shareholders has brought politics and the "political class" into disrepute and caused a withdrawal from the electoral sphere, notably on the part of working class milieu. Added to this is the problem that the political "alternances" in the different European countries have prevented a change away from the prevailing logic to the extent that the social democratic parties in government are equally propound economic "constraints" or, more precisely, neoliberal dogma. The growing insecurity calls for a more determined political intervention, notably on the part of the most weakened populations. In France, the FN is trying to benefit from this situation by trying to make credible a sort of promise of reconquest of sovereignty.

It is certain that it is the duty of the left to oppose at all times and with forcefulness the nationalist tendencies and hatreds which are developing at the heart of European societies. However, it will be decisive for the future that the alternative left is able not only to contribute to “organising resistance” but also to respond to the call for politics in proposing a real change of policy.

Europe: new forms of authoritarianism¹⁷

At the moment of the crisis of the neoliberal model and the dramatic impasse in the European construct, the parties of the radical populist right have succeeded in occupying a sometimes considerable political space, shifting the right further to the right. When neoliberal hegemony erodes, when the governments in power opt for super-austerity and the dismantling of democracy, when institutions are increasingly less based on popular sovereignty and political choices on a social contract, a political space opens up that is or can become very advantageous for these parties. They not only benefit from this situation but also become one of its driving engines.

Moreover, in the last four years the management of the crisis at the European level has been accompanied by the establishment of an increasingly authoritarian mode of “governance”. With the “troika”, the “Franco-German couple” revived for the needs of the moment, the emergence of an oligarchy made up of some political and economic decision-makers surpasses traditional forms of lobbying; it is not a matter of legislative or executive powers. In this period, when the crisis can prove to be uncontrollable in the existing political and institutional framework, we are entering into a new period in which we need to be prepared for very different scenarios, both at the country and the European level. The new European “regime of authoritarian stability”,¹⁸ modifying the power structures in order to restrict national decisions, leaves no room for the exercise of popular sovereignty and creates considerable risks for democracy, for the legitimacy of those governing at the national and European levels. The replacement of the Greek and Italian governments “from above” shows the direction taken. One sees that in the enormous arm wrestling in which – in the period of financialised capitalism – economic power is opposed to what remains of political powers in European countries, democracy has lost a lot of terrain in recent years. Within this logic, with the state apparatuses disconnecting themselves from society, “bonapartist” regimes can benefit from these opportunities.

The forms that the dismantling of democracy is taking in the crisis of the present system are not like those which characterised the 1930s. Can we put forward the hypothesis that after more than 30 years of neoliberal offensive, of the individualisation of social relations, the erosion of organisations of the labour movement and the political left, new authoritarian arrangements can rely on the effects of this ideology and of this policy and therefore do not – or at least for now do not – need to have recourse to a terrorist dictatorship nor to mass movements – with the risks that these would entail for the elites – to impose their law? All the more so that social-democracy does not fundamentally oppose the “constraints” of financialised capitalism’s logic, and the radical left at present lacks the forces necessary for imposing another logic. The ruling elites are currently trying to establish, within the framework of existing institutions, a new type of authoritarianism – “post-parliamentary”, “post-democratic” systems – to find a way out of the crisis. The extreme populist right which we are addressing in this article functions as an

¹⁷ The following three paragraphs are taken from an article by Walter Baier / Elsiabeth Gauthier, “Crise, Europe et success de la Droite populiste et extrême”, *Temps modernes* 2012.

¹⁸ In Germany “das neue Regime autoritärer Stabilität”, Hans-Jürgen Urban, in *Europa im Schlepptau der Finanzmärkte* [Europe in the Tow of the Financial Markets], Hamburg 2011.

element of pressure, as a gadfly, but could also represent a strategic potential in the event of a failure of the modes of “governance” now in place.

In this context the Front de Gauche sees as the only practicable strategy that of projecting a large-scale ambition: voting Sarkozy out and at the same time opening up the perspective of another politics – and not only a change of majority (alternative instead of alternance). Only such a perspective of a radical change of perspective can simultaneously introduce actual changes, prevent massive disillusion and in so doing represent a real way of pushing back FN’s offensive.