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France

Vote Poutou – and prepare for confrontation

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Philippe Poutou and activists in the Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA) continue to receive messages of sympathy and support, directly or on social media, for what Philippe said and did on the panel of the “Grand Débat” of April 4, 2017 (the televised debate among candidates for the French presidency, where Poutou tore into the Front National leader, Marine Le Pen and the main right wing candidate, François Fillon, for corruption).

Many journalists have also hailed his salutary “rant”, the breath of fresh air which ran through this debate thanks to him. On the other hand, the usual valets of the political and media world and its codes, both sartorial and verbal, have incessantly denounced Philippe for the blasphemies they hold him guilty of. [\[1\]](#)

From popular anger...

We can only rejoice at these revealing reactions. Philippe has simply said out loud what the popular classes think about the political world, this immense majority which has only its wages or meagre benefits to live on, as against a small minority which lives on our backs, whether they are capitalists, rentiers or professional politicians.

The words are those of a worker, a wage earner, sweeping aside the agreed on respect to firmly put Fillon, Macron and Le Pen in their place. The latter was hit directly in the Achilles heel of the Front National. A big bourgeois, daughter of the millionaire Jean Marie Le Pen, the so-called candidate of the people, of the workers opposed to the system, was directly put in her place as a bourgeois politician who profits from the political system and from public money.

Philippe is the spokesperson for popular exasperation, for the millions of people who, at least for this, recognize themselves in him. But he is not in this campaign to be simply the spokesperson of anger and exasperation. Because, too often in recent years, the ruling class and the media it controls has perpetuated the idea that, certainly, there is great exasperation, which often leads to the rejection of politics or to votes for “populists”, but that there is no alternative to the austerity policies followed in Europe, that we can only soften them or postpone them for a little while.

... to social mobilisation

Opposed to this discourse which distils impotence, Philippe Poutou echoes the social struggles, all the big social movements which show the way to action and popular mobilisation. Where the other candidates say “I” or “me, president”, Philippe talks about collective strength, about the popular mobilisation which can alone change things. As shown recently by the Spanish and Polish women blocking reactionary attacks against abortion rights, or the mobilizations of the Romanian and Korean peoples against corruption, or the hundreds of thousands of people in the streets of Barcelona demanding the admission of migrants.

Philippe Poutou doesn’t say “Count on me” but rather “Count on ourselves” to take things in hand, fight for our rights, for jobs, for open frontiers, against police violence and useless projects.

Confronting the real power, the system

Philippe and the NPA are not fighting for a cosmetic clean-up. The message is clear: we need a clean sweep to end social injustice and corruption, the arbitrariness of the bosses, the racist and reactionary turn, the discrimination, the seizure of wealth by a minority. This clean sweep requires an attack on the capitalist system itself, on private ownership of the means of production, without which any attempt at reform will come up against the real power, that of the capitalists and bankers.

The programme Philippe defends in this campaign (and on the media when he is allowed to do so!) takes up the demands of all the social movements which confront the system, those of the women and men who struggle in the workplaces and popular neighbourhoods. But also he defends the need to construct, starting from all these social struggles, a solid and united political force, not only to sound off but above all strong enough to impose the clean sweep we need.

On Sunday April 23, a vote for Poutou will have this meaning, that of a gesture of agreement with these popular demands and this programme, but also that of a collective undertaking to mobilise ourselves, affirming that, all together, we can get things moving and confront the system.

PS:

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[1] Unlike the other male candidates Poutou did not wear a jacket and tie, he was not smoothly shaved, and he spoke of the other candidates by their family names without "Madame" or "Monsieur".