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Algeria

The PST in the legislative campaign

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The following three articles are reports which appeared in the Algerian press of a press conference held by the Socialist Workers' Party (PST, Algerian section of the Fourth International) during the campaign for the May 10 legislative elections

The PST recognizes that “citizens are not interested in the electoral campaign”

The general secretary of the Socialist Workers' Party (PST), Mahmoud Rachidi slated the economic programme of Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, leader of the Party for Democratic National Rally (RND). Invited on Channel 3 on Wednesday April 25, Ahmed Ouyahia spoke about “cleaning up Algerian companies through the Stock Exchange”. The PST retorts: “the programme of Ahmed Ouyahia aims at massive privatization of national enterprises, pocketing public money along the way”.

The PST, which is taking part in the legislative elections of May 10 with six lists, considers that “liberalism is more than ever threatening Algeria. Its advance since the 1990s has led the country to an economic disaster”.

Moreover, in his assessment of the campaign, the general secretary of the socialist party considered that “if Algerians have deserted electoral campaigns it is because the political field is very closed, and as a result people lose interest in elections and in political life, and we have seen this in meetings”.

The PST, as its general secretary explained, is in favour of measures to sanction “foreign companies which have been able to acquire phenomenal interests in our country”.

Mahmoud Rachidi declared at a press conference in Algiers: “We demand the immediate closing down of the Algiers Stock Exchange, we are against importing a workforce which does not benefit Algeria, and we are against importing luxury items”.

Every sector is affected by the capitalist offensive: water, airports ... “This is a danger for the sovereignty of the country”, he considered.

“They are engaging in a war of words with respect to France. When he spoke to the media Abdelaziz Belkhadem [\[1\]](#) declared that France had to present its excuses for its colonial crimes in Algeria. These declarations are completely incoherent with reality. If we examine closely what the present government is doing with the economy, we will see that this nationalist rhetoric is really out of place”.

“We are against the banks and the private insurance companies...”, continued Mahmoud Rachidi. What is certain for him is that “with its present economic strategy, Algeria is saving the economies of the countries who invest in the various economic sectors and bringing the country to its knees”.

The mayor of Barbacha (in Bejaia wilaya, or province) Mohand Sadek Akrouf, who heads the PST list in the same wilaya, and who was also present at the PST press conference, considered that the crisis in Algeria is making itself felt on all levels: “a tangled-up crisis whose principal cause is economic interests”.

“Up to now the present government has not adopted any policy and is satisfied on every occasion with buying social peace” added the mayor of Barbacha.

“Agriculture has not been spared, nothing is done to encourage the fellah (peasant)” says the leading candidate of the PST in Bejaia. “Algeria has billions of dollars, intended for a well-defined class, to the detriment of the people.

The general secretary of the PST concluded by expressing the party’s support for the demands of the workers of Cevital in Bejaia. He also took up the defence of the workers of the Draa Ben Khedda dairy who are opposing privatization.

“We want the renationalization of national enterprises such as Asmidal, we are for the withdrawal of the licence from Orascom”

Hamida Mechaie

El Watan, 26 April, 2012: <http://www.elwatan.com/actualite/le>

Declaring its opposition to the liberal policies of the government, the PST demands the nationalization of big enterprises

The general secretary of the Socialist Workers’ Party (PST), Mahmoud Rachidi, firmly denounced the statements made on the radio by the general secretary of the RND, Ahmed Ouyahia, who declared that his programme envisages spending billions to make state enterprises profitable in order subsequently to privatise them.

At a press conference yesterday, Mr. Rachidi explained why this declaration meant “we take money from the Treasury in order subsequently to distribute it to a caste of private individuals who have backers in the government”, and that “the profitability operation aims at making it possible for them to get their hands on these enterprises”. He made it clear, on the other hand, that his party is favourable to cleaning up the balance sheets of state enterprises in order to build a strong national economy. Furthermore, the general secretary of the PST expressed his solidarity with the sixteen workers of Cevital who were sacked, he said, “for having demanded an improvement of their working conditions and the application of the industrial legislation, in particular regarding the creation of a union branch”.

Intervening halfway through the campaign for the legislative elections in which his party is standing in six wilayas, the principal spokesperson of the PST, before presenting the party’s economic programme, declared that “the liberal policies imposed by the government in the 1990s were responsible for the catastrophe that the country is going through on the economic and social level”, before pointing out that hydrocarbons account for 98 per cent of the country’s revenues, whereas its imports amount to 50 billion dollars annually. The country needs everything, roads, dams, industries, and so on, he affirmed, adding that “Algeria has monetary reserves of almost 200 billion dollars and is the least indebted country in the Middle East and North Africa region, but its people are the poorest”.

Warning against the external dangers which threaten the country, he underlined the need to constitute a “solid internal front” to face up to them.

After having called on the top of the party list in Béjaïa, Mohand-Sadek Akrouf, currently president of the APC, who teaches economics at the university and who analysed the multidimensional nature of the crisis and denounced the “rentier and clientelist policy of the state”, Mahmoud Rachidi demanded, in the name of his party, a plan for the nationalization of big enterprises, citing the El Hadjar and Asmidal complexes and the El Ouenza and Boukhadra mines. He furthermore demanded a stop to privatizations and the taking back into public ownership of hundreds of enterprises, including the Draa Ben Khedda dairy, and also demanded that retaliatory measures be taken against foreign companies who have made colossal profits at the expense of Algeria, in particular the withdrawal of the licence from Orascom and the taking back by the state of the Lafarge cement factories.

In addition to demanding the imposition of the sovereignty of the state over financial institutions in order to protect them from the negative effects of capitalism, the PST demands the closing down of the Algiers Stock Exchange and a stop to the importing of luxury items, as well as products that compete with national production, in addition to the urgent taking back into state management of public services, water, ports and airports.

It demands, moreover, the cancellation of the agreement on association with the EU and of the project of joining the WTO and the Arab Free Trade Zone (ZALE). In another chapter of its programme, the PST argues for the development of a productive agricultural sector, noting the absence of planning and calling for action against the informal circuits of distribution of agricultural produce.

Amar Rafa

La Tribune, 26 April, 2012: <http://www.latribune-online.com/eve...>

For full-scale renationalization

Socialist Workers' Party

For Mahmoud Rachidi, the general secretary of the party, which yesterday organized a press conference, it is the fundamentally liberal character of this economic strategy which is at issue since, according to him, it is the source of the present catastrophe, with its fatal consequences on the social level.

It is based on a rentier policy based on clientelism which has led to selling off public property at bargain prices, associated with the not very solvent course of action of buying social peace through temporary measures without any major impact in the long term.

Mahmoud Rachidi adduces as tangible proofs of this situation, the import bill for last year, estimated at 50 billion dollars, which is a first since the country became independent, underlining that 98 per cent of the country's revenues coming from hydrocarbons.

This is just one more paradox, according to the PST leader, for whom it is not an acceptable state of affairs for a country such as ours, whose leaders take pride in having enormous reserves, almost 200 billion dollars' worth. He regretted that nearly a third of these reserves are held in US banks at a ridiculous rate of interest of one per cent, and raised the question of the non-revaluation of the national currency which is, according to him, the second element of national sovereignty after the national emblem.

A sovereignty that Mahmoud Rachidi said is being seriously abused by the fact, he argued, that many sectors of the economy that are related to national sovereignty, or are at the very least of strategic importance, are in the hands of foreign companies, particularly French ones.

"How can we speak about sovereignty when the distribution of water in our main cities, our ports, and our airports are run by foreign companies? What remains of this sovereignty that they never stop telling us about in their speeches?" he asked.

Having said this, the general secretary of the PST did not remain at the level of describing the situation, he went on to propose an alternative.

Such an alternative could not be implemented, according to him, without the state taking back control over the strategic sectors of the national economy by, he suggested, the renationalization of all the privatised enterprises, in both industry and services, the recovery of as much agricultural land as possible and the abandonment of the agreements on association with the WTO and the EU, agreements which, according to him, by no means benefit our economy, weakened by large-scale privatizations. Mr. Rachidi denounced, very relevantly, Prime Minister Ahmed

Ouyahia who, yesterday morning on Channel 2 of National Radio affirmed that the state would in the near future begin the reorganization of economic entities before ceding them to potential private investors through the Stock Exchange. This is another aberration, said the main leader of the PST, for whom it is senseless for a government to justify the recurrent state of disorder in the distribution circuit by the “argument” of the invisible hand of the market imposing its laws.

A timid electoral campaign

On the purely political level, the general secretary of the PST admitted that the campaign for the May 10 legislative elections was raising little enthusiasm among ordinary citizens.

For Mahmoud Rachidi, this disinterest is due to the closing of the political field and the media blackout in recent years. “After that, we shouldn’t expect the public to be enthusiastic about politics”, he said.

The PST leader does not have too many illusions about the result his party will get in these elections, where it is presenting six lists.

“We are taking advantage of these elections to make ourselves better known and to popularise our ideas”, he said, affirming that his party is far from being electoralist, which is why, he pointed out, “we centred our campaign on local meetings with the people”.

The PST intends to pay homage to the recently deceased party activist and nevertheless emblematic figure of trade-union action, Redouan Osman, on May 1.

This homage will be followed by a meeting with trade-union organizations, following which a platform will be produced and made public. The same day, a popular march will take place in Béjaïa.

M. Kebci

Algiers, *Le Soir*, 26 April, 2012: [1] » <http://www.lesoirdalgerie.com/artic>

[1] Belkadem is general secretary of the National Liberation Front, FLN, and Personal Representative of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika