

French Left Front's "Fiscal Revolution" aims to block anti-austerity movement

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Amid rising popular opposition to the reactionary wars and austerity policies of France's Socialist Party (PS) government, the Left Front held a "March for a Fiscal Revolution" on December 1 in Paris. The initiative was a political fraud, in which the Left Front sought to give political cover to the latest manoeuvres of the deeply unpopular PS.

In order to block the spread of anti-tax protests from Brittany ongoing since October and reverse its collapse in approval ratings to 15 percent, the PS government had launched talks on November 27 on reorganizing the tax system. Employers' groups and France's union federations, including the Communist Party (PCF)-dominated General Confederation of Labour (CGT), attended.

The Left Front—consisting of the Left Party (PG) and the Stalinist PCF, parties which both have long-standing ties to the PS and supported PS President François Hollande's election—sought to mobilise forces from across France in the context of these talks. The march was called ostensibly to encourage "revolutionary" changes to France's tax code.

In fact, only a few thousand protesters attended, well short of the 100,000 claimed by Left Front leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

The slogan on the lead banner in Paris was "Against fiscal injustice, tax capital, no to the raising of value-added tax [sales tax]."

Speaking at the rally, Mélenchon declared: "Let's propose a simple principle...Here it is: everyone pays and each person pays progressively more according to his means....For my part, if they invite me, I'm ready to put forward this idea and the means to put it into practice before the commissions of both chambers, the head of state and the Prime Minister."

Similarly, PCF chairman Pierre Lauren indicated that

he wanted to send "a strong message to the government."

Despite characterising the Paris march as pro-PS, the pseudo-left Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle, LO) and New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) sent delegations to it. Mélenchon spoke while surrounded by their flags.

The event itself testifies to the reactionary, false and degraded politics of French Stalinism and its political satellites, the social-democratic forces in Mélenchon's PG and the pseudo-left parties. They demagogically advance various reformist tactics and demands, while insisting that they will achieve these demands through a policy of alliance with and pressure on the PS.

Mélenchon has repeatedly asserted that it is "not my intention" to "force François Hollande out before the end of his term." In the context of the Left Front's May 5 demonstration, Mélenchon even offered Hollande his services as prime minister.

Broad layers of workers sense, however, that the PS will make no significant shift in its policies of austerity and war, reflecting the enormous class gulf separating the working class from the bourgeois "left" parties. This situation, which points to the deep crisis of working class leadership and the yawning vacuum on the left, finds one reflection in the miserable turnout at the Left Front's rally.

The fraudulent character of the protest's pretensions to being part of a "revolution" against the government was further exposed by the decision of the PCF to participate in joint lists with the PS in the municipal elections next March.

The Left Front is deeply hostile to mobilizing the working class against the reactionary Hollande administration and terrified by rising social anger in the working class with the PS and the union bureaucracy.

The PG's François Delapierre expressed his dismay

at the record low ratings for the PS: “This government is stuck in its impasse, like [conservative President Nicolas] Sarkozy before it. However, Sarko kept his social base.”

Another PG leader, Alexis Corbière, worried that, “We are in a period when there is a risk of the workers in the private sector breaking from the traditional organisations of the labour movement.”

He absurdly claimed that the Left Front had “shaken up Hollande’s plans, and also the claim that opposition to the government would only come from the far right.”

It an opinion poll published on October 9, the far-right National Front (FN) was forecast to receive 24 percent of the votes in the European elections in May 2014, in first place in front of Sarkozy’s Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) at 22 percent and the PS at 19 percent.

In fact, it is precisely events like the Left Front “March for a Fiscal Revolution”—which are widely sensed to be political charades played by operators who have sold out to the financial aristocracy—that allow the FN to pose as the only opposition to Hollande.

The Left Front, the NPA, and LO unconditionally supported the PS in the elections which brought it to power last year. Under conditions where masses of workers no longer see these parties as oppositional, since they have functioned for decades in the political orbit of the PS, the FN is able to pose as the only force opposing the PS government’s policies of austerity and war.

Interviewed on TF1 television, Mélenchon pointed out that Hollande was continuing the policies of tax breaks for the employers, increased taxes for the masses and cuts in pension rights of former conservative President Nicolas Sarkozy.

He insisted, despite the electoral alliances being arranged between the PCF and the PS, his policy towards Hollande was, “Now we have to force this one out.” He absurdly said he was “calling to beat the government’s lists” in the 2014 municipal and European elections—many of which will be running jointly with candidates from his own organization.



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