

French unions use May Day marches to cover for Hollande government

Antoine Lerougetel
30 April 2014

A coalition of four union confederations, backed by pseudo-left allies of the ruling Socialist Party (PS), is organising May Day demonstrations throughout France on Thursday, aiming to divert mass anger against PS austerity policies.

The joint statement for the Paris demonstration was issued by the greater Paris sections of the Stalinist Communist Party (PCF)-led CGT (General Confederation of Labour), the majority union in education, the FSU (Unitary Trade Union Federation), FO (Workers Power), and Solidaires. They cynically criticized the Medef, the main employers association, with whom they are in fact negotiating the PS' cuts. They fraudulently claim that they are pressuring the PS government for pro-worker policies, and that "[o]ur mobilisation can change everything."

The unions' claim that the PS' policies are dictated by "political deafness" is a cynical lie. The PS, which has been a bourgeois party since its foundation, openly carrying out anti-worker policies since then-President François Mitterrand's "austerity turn" in 1983, knows perfectly well what it is doing. It is attacking the working class at home and waging imperialist wars abroad.

The New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) tried to glorify the role of the unions, praising them for their unity: "In the Paris region, for May 1 FO is calling for a demonstration alongside the CGT, the FSU and Solidaires for the first time since 2002." It also praised PS-affiliated yellow unions, such as the CFDT (French Democratic Federation of Labour), for "assembling alongside them....That expresses doubtless a profound aspiration for unity to fight."

What empty lies! No, this expresses the profound desire of the union bureaucracy and its pseudo-left supporters, like the NPA, to negotiate PS cuts and continue blocking any independent struggle of workers against the PS and against capitalism. The main obstacle to such a struggle is

the pseudo-left forces themselves, which promote the false and demoralized claim that their toothless protests and their alignment with the PS represent the only possible form of left politics.

It is these rotten, petty-bourgeois politics that allow the neo-fascist National Front (FN) to posture as France's only opposition party and win increasing support.

Similarly, the pseudo-left *Lutte ouvrière* (Workers Struggle) group calls on workers to march to pressure the unions to fight: "A strong participation by workers in these days of action...That's the only thing which can bring the trade union leaders to make other proposals of action, the only thing above all which can make the government retreat."

This is simply absurd. Not only does the government have no intention of retreating, but the union bureaucracy is actively engaged in planning and negotiating the austerity policies with the PS. They do not intend to make the government "retreat," but to help the PS carry through its attacks in the face of broad opposition in the working class. The PS' Responsibility Pact, with its €35 billion tax break for the employers and €50 billion spending cuts, was signed with the unions and the employers on March 5. The CGT and FO declined to sign it, but they made clear that they did not oppose it. While the pact was being negotiated, CGT leader Thierry Lepaon pledged that his organization would be mobilizing not "against the Responsibility Pact, but on wages, jobs, and the financing of social security."

Terrified of an uncontrollable social explosion under conditions where the PS is totally discredited, these unions and their pseudo-left supporters are cynically trying to promote the PS.

After nearly two years of attacks on the working class by the PS government, the Left Party (PG) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the NPA were on lists in the municipal elections together with the PCF, which was allied in

hundreds of towns with the PS. The elections produced a debacle for the PS and a significant advance of the neo-fascist FN.

Hollande—who is at an unheard-of 12 percent approval rating—responded by appointing Manuel Valls prime minister on a pro-austerity, law-and-order platform. Mélenchon claimed that the very parliamentary deputies who massively endorsed Valls’ government in parliament could form an alternative government. He stated on TV on Sunday, “I want [Manuel Valls] to be put in the minority, then for another majority to be made with the same [deputies].” He reminded viewers that the deputies had been elected on his party’s recommendation “by the Left Front voters, the Greens’ voters and PS voters.”

At a joint meeting on April 11 in Paris, Mélenchon launched the Party of the European Left’s (PEL) European election campaign together with Alexis Tsipras, the leader of the Greek Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and PEL nominee for President of the European Commission. Tsipras, far from repudiating the sovereign debt, which is being used as a battering ram to smash the living standards of workers, reassures the banks that it will be largely repaid but wants to renegotiate the terms. He has pledged to defend the EU and the euro.

The NPA has called for a joint campaign with these parties in the European elections. It has also given full support to the Hollande government’s actions in partnership with the German and US governments in establishing a pro-EU government in Ukraine in a fascist-led coup.

Only by a break from all these “left” props of big business and imperialism by the working class and the youth and the formation of new fighting organisations can the workers defend their rights and social gains. All readers are invited to attend the ICFI’s European Election meeting in Paris on Sunday May 11. For details, click [here](#).



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact