

French Left Front makes hypocritical criticisms of Hollande's policy in Ukraine crisis

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Having endorsed the fascist putsch in Kiev that toppled the elected pro-Russian government of President Viktor Yanukovich in February, the Socialist Party (PS) government of French President François Hollande is again lining up behind Washington and Berlin. It is supporting the Kiev regime's troops and its fascist allies in the Right Sector militia in their crackdown on pro-Russian forces in east Ukraine, escalating the risk of a military confrontation with Russia.

While the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) directly endorsed the putsch as an uprising for “democracy”, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a leader of the Left Front and former PS minister, is making hypocritical criticisms of PS foreign policy and its alignment with the Ukrainian fascists.

In an April 24 blog post titled “Ukraine, the collapse of political reason,” he wrote: “The United States and Europe, in its wake, have launched an absurd strategy of escalation with Russia.” He noted that the EU is supporting a regime in Kiev that comprises, “as we know, neo-Nazi ministers of the Svoboda party.”

He cited the EU 2012 resolution calling on “democratic parties in the Ukrainian Parliament not to associate with the Svoboda party, nor to approve or form coalitions with the latter.”

Mélenchon's criticisms of the PS are empty demagogy. While the points he raises show that the French ruling class is engaged in a deeply criminal and reckless policy, they are above all an indictment of Mélenchon's own reactionary role.

As the PS backs fascists in Ukraine and stokes a stand-off with Russia that could end in global war, it has the support of the Left Front—which consists of long-time

PS allies like the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), Mélenchon's Left Party (PG), and various NPA split offs. Mélenchon himself called for an unconditional vote for Hollande in the final round of the 2012 presidential elections.

A left-wing figure making Mélenchon's criticisms of the PS would warn of the risk of world war and fascism, and seeking to mobilize working class opposition to capitalism and to the PS government. Mélenchon and the other reactionary petty-bourgeois demagogues of the Left Front, on the other hand, do everything they can to tie the working class to imperialism. Well aware of the terrible dangers raised by Hollande's policies, they support the PS.

Mélenchon has remained totally silent on Friday's massacre of pro-Russian protesters in Odessa carried out by the imperialist-backed, neo-fascist Right Sector militia.

Mélenchon specializes in making cynical, limited criticisms of government policy, remaining entirely within the boundaries of pro-imperialist politics. He complains, “François Hollande's alignment on the international policy of the United States has made France largely inaudible in the Ukrainian crisis.”

After France deployed war ships in Black Sea in a provocative move aimed at Russia, Mélenchon wrote: “This French military escalation in the wake of the United States is a political error. I condemn it. It is absolutely contrary to the interests of our country and to the nature of our relations with Russia.”

Mélenchon's posturing as a wise, pacifist statesman is a repulsive fraud. Despite his frequent bouts of chauvinist anti-American rhetoric, which demonstrate his hostility to the unity of the international working

class, Mélenchon has defended all the wars that US and French imperialism have jointly waged in the recent period.

He was a minister in the unpopular, PS-led “Plural Left” government when France joined the NATO invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. More recently, he supported both the 2011 NATO war in Libya and the French invasion of Mali in 2013 under Hollande, carried out with logistical and intelligence assistance from Washington.

As the Mali war began, Mélenchon criticized Hollande from the right, calling on him to frankly state that France's war aims were to plunder uranium from its former colonies. He said, “We are there because we cannot allow other countries in the region, on whose uranium supplies French nuclear plants depend, to be put in danger. We must say this!”

The successive wars launched by Paris have only whetted Mélenchon's appetite to serve in PS governments. Last year, as Hollande collapsed in the polls after the Mali war began, Mélenchon offered to become his prime minister: “Hollande had the chance to do something good, he missed it. He can make it up ... He can name me prime minister, I'm not scared.”

With Hollande even more unpopular now than a year ago, Mélenchon is terrified that the PS' decision to stoke a conflict with Russia over Ukraine could trigger an explosion of opposition in the working class. He is making his empty criticisms of Hollande, above all, in a desperate attempt to block the development of opposition in the working class to the PS and to forces on its periphery, including Mélenchon himself.

It also reflects his concern that, amid the deep discrediting of the right-wing policies of the PS and the entire French “left” establishment, the positions of the neo-fascist National Front (FN) are winning over a layer of Left Front members and allied union functionaries.

Visiting Russia last month, FN leader Marine Le Pen said that Russia is being “demonized”, and that a campaign against Russia has been cooked up in Europe with US support. “I am surprised a Cold War on Russia has been declared in the European Union,” she declared.

The FN has denounced the EU and the euro currency, calling for a return to the French franc, while criticizing the PS's alignment with Washington in the Ukraine

crisis. It has downplayed its ties with the Svoboda party, a fascist party that works inside the US puppet regime in Kiev.

Since the signing of the Maastricht treaty creating the EU in 1992, and particularly since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, France's bourgeois parties of rule and its pseudo-left parties have all carried out a major shift in policy. Uncharacteristically, given the traditions of French imperialist politics, they are now publicly and closely aligned on US wars and on the EU's hard-money policy, based on a strong euro. Opposition to this alignment has come primarily from the FN.

Mélenchon's role is to echo, from within the orbit of the PS, such nationalist opposition to PS policies.

His criticisms are empty and reactionary. His main enemy remains the working class, and his main concern is how to prevent it from mobilizing in struggle against imperialism.



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