

Jean-Luc Mélenchon quits leadership of France's Left Party

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Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the former Socialist Party (PS) minister and founder of the Left Party (PG) in 2009, announced on Friday that he was stepping down as PG co-chairman. The decision marks another milestone in the disintegration of France's bankrupt bourgeois "left."

On Friday, at a press conference at PG's summer school in Grenoble, Mélenchon said he wanted to "be at the forefront of the formation of a movement for a Sixth Republic," that is, for a marginal legal-constitutional modification of France's existing Fifth Republic. He improbably claimed that "there is neither a crisis, nor anything" motivating his decision to step down from the party he founded only five years ago.

As one would expect from someone with Mélenchon's history, his statement is a political fraud, aiming to deny the manifest crisis of the French bourgeois "left" provoked by the political collapse of the PS. President François Hollande is deeply discredited due to his austerity measures and unending imperialist wars. A recent poll found that over 80 percent of voters have no confidence in him, and rage is mounting against the PS.

Despite the economic collapse produced by austerity measures and tens of billions of euros in handouts to big business and the banks, Hollande pledged last week to blindly continue and even accelerate his austerity measures.

Petty-bourgeois pseudo-left groups like the PG or the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA)—who for decades worked to suppress working class opposition to the PS, and endorsed Hollande in the 2012 presidential elections—are shocked and terrified by rising mass anger at the PS. In response, Mélenchon is trying to cover his tracks and prepare a shift into the camp of the right, should this become necessary to salvage his

political career.

Undermining his own ludicrous claim that there is no crisis of France's bourgeois "left," Mélenchon continued: "We do not accept that the left and all hope will be buried together with François Hollande, the gravedigger of the left and of our plans for the future."

Claiming that the PS' goal was "to ruin" France and "to strangle those who cannot defend themselves," he added for good measure that Hollande was "worse" than his predecessor, right-wing President Nicolas Sarkozy: "Mr. Sarkozy meant retiring at 62, Mr. Hollande means retiring at 66. Mr. Sarkozy and [Sarkozy's Prime Minister] Mr. Fillon gave 35 billion [euros] to the bosses in two austerity plans. If you add up the concessions this government has made, it's 90 billion."

This indictment of the PS also constitutes an indictment of his own pseudo-left politics. Two years ago, Mélenchon unconditionally endorsed Hollande against Sarkozy in the May 6 run-off in the 2012 presidential elections, while acknowledging that Hollande would carry out austerity measures. Hollande even thanked Mélenchon for not asking the PS for anything in return for his support.

Last year, as the PS' collapse in the polls began to seriously worry the pseudo-left parties, Mélenchon offered to serve as prime minister for Hollande, who Mélenchon now says is "worse" than Sarkozy.

Mélenchon epitomizes the political bankruptcy and corruption of the affluent and anti-Marxist petty-bourgeois who have for decades dominated official French "left" politics. Their empty criticisms in word and their constant defense in deeds of reactionary PS governments has now enabled the neo-fascist National Front (FN) of Marine Le Pen to posture as the sole effective opponent of Hollande's austerity program.

The FN secured significant electoral victories in the recent municipal and European elections.

Significantly, Mélenchon himself is now considering orienting himself towards the FN and far-right politics. He acknowledged that Marine Le Pen “has chances” in the 2017 presidential election, adding: “She will make it ... because society is hollowing out, because society is getting to the point where people say ‘throw them all out.’ And when that point is reached, everything blows up all at once.”

Calling for a “great popular movement,” Mélenchon said he would work to build a “collective with people who do not work together.” He added, “It is the rules of the game that must change. The French people must go to the very end with their disgust and the rejection of the ruling caste.”

Based on such diffuse populist appeals for political unity against undefined elites, making no reference to either the struggles of the working class or to socialism, Mélenchon could easily work not only with the entire pseudo-left, but with the FN.

Indeed, there are already forces around the Left Front, the alliance formed between the PG and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), who are establishing political collaboration with sections of the FN. According to the business daily *Les Echos*, the entourage of Left Front economist Jacques Sapir includes at least one researcher who has joined the FN, which is using Sapir’s work to help them design a policy for a French exit from the euro currency.

Mélenchon’s flirtation with the neo-fascists marks the culmination of his evolution to the right ever since entering into politics after the 1968 general strike.

Having started out in student politics, Mélenchon briefly joined the Internationalist Communist Organization (OCI) in 1972, a year after the OCI had broken with the International Committee of the Fourth International and Trotskyism. At the time, the OCI was working on the false perspective that it could build a mass revolutionary movement by pressuring Stalinist French Communist party (PCF) and the newly-formed PS to joint together to form a “Union of the Left.”

Mélenchon left the OCI and joined the PS in 1977, becoming a staunch supporter of François Mitterrand, the former Vichy regime official and future PS President of France. Mélenchon became a Senator after Mitterrand as president carried out his “austerity turn”

against the working class in 1983, then a minister in the PS-led 1997-2002 Plural Left government of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, also a former OCI member inside the PS.

After the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2008, Mélenchon left the PS and founded the PG aimed at preventing the working class from turning to independent revolutionary politics. He formed the Left Front, comprising the PG and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), serving as a “left” cover for the PS and a bridge between the PS and the NPA, founded a few days after the PG in 2009.

As the accelerating collapse of the PS pulls apart the political foundations of these organizations’ pseudo-left politics, they are turning ever more towards an alliance with the far right.



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