

In online poll, Mélenchon supporters reject both candidates in French runoff election

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In an online poll conducted this week, members of the Unsubmissive France (UF) movement broadly rejected support for either candidate in the French presidential runoff election. The two candidates are the former Rothschild banker Emmanuel Macron and the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen.

The vote was an implicit repudiation of the position taken by defeated UF presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who has stressed his political sympathies for Macron and even proposed to become his prime minister. Mélenchon received nearly 20 percent of the vote in the first round of the election amid a historic collapse of France's main political parties.

In the consultative vote held by UF, only 34.83 percent of members advocated a vote for Macron, the favorite of France's ruling Socialist Party (PS). Calls for a blank vote received 36.12 percent, and for abstention, 29.05 percent. UF had indicated that a vote for Macron's opponent in the runoff, Marine Le Pen of the neo-fascist National Front (FN), was not an option in the vote, in which roughly 200,000 of UF's 440,000 members took part.

The vote underscores the political significance of the call by the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES) for an active boycott of the second round, opposing both reactionary candidates. It also highlights the dangerous role played by Mélenchon in seeking to block opposition in the working class to the next president. The PES stresses that workers and youth can place no confidence in Mélenchon. Strikes and struggles must be organized independently of his organization and on a perspective of revolutionary struggle against whichever reactionary candidate wins the next election.

Last Friday, Mélenchon said he would vote, but refused to say for whom he would vote. He offered no political lead, refusing even to say how he thought UF

members and voters should vote in the runoff. He thereby aligned himself with the political and media campaign by the PS, the right-wing The Republicans (LR) and the main newspapers and TV channels, all of which insist that voters choose Macron as a "lesser evil" to Le Pen.

This campaign is a political fraud. Macron is not a "lesser evil" to Le Pen. The neo-fascist candidate undoubtedly poses a mortal danger to workers, but so does Macron. He says he wants to maintain the state of emergency imposed by the PS, which he intends to use to crush opposition to bringing back the draft and remilitarizing France and the European Union (EU), as well as imposing anti-worker measures by decree, using the PS's regressive labor law.

What is emerging is an attempt by the entire French ruling class to impose a lasting authoritarian regime in order to prepare for major wars and destroy the social rights workers in France and Europe won over generations of struggle during the 20th century.

This is provoking deep opposition among workers and youth, and the PES has advanced the call for an active boycott, strikes and workers' struggles to prepare a revolutionary mobilization of the working class against capitalism.

The large majority of the forces Mélenchon recruited via the Internet to promote his election campaign—which won in many urban and working class centers, including Marseille, Toulouse and the working-class Seine St. Denis suburbs of Paris—is hostile to Macron. They want to give their votes neither to the FN nor to a militarist candidate aiming to impose deep austerity in alliance with Berlin and the EU. Like a broad majority (69 percent) of the French people, they understand that whoever wins the second round, the winner will prove to be a determined enemy of working

people.

Mélenchon's role is to sow as many illusions as possible and block growing awareness of the dangers of war and dictatorship facing workers and youth in France and internationally. He is silent on the danger that Macron, the ally of Berlin and the Democratic Party in Washington, could join in a war in Syria that would drag the NATO alliance into a military conflict with Russia. Nor does he say anything about Washington's growing conflict with North Korea, by means of which Trump is targeting China.

Despite the fact that most UF supporters oppose a vote for Macron, Mélenchon is working to entrap opposition to both reactionary candidates in the political straitjacket of a legislative and governmental alliance with Macron. This is the perspective that Mélenchon indicated in the course of an interview with TF1 television Sunday evening, during which he offered himself as an adviser to Macron and even declared his readiness to become his prime minister.

He began by insisting that Macron's militarist and authoritarian program is fundamentally different from that of Le Pen. "I say to everyone who is listening to me: do not commit the terrible error of casting your ballot for the National Front. Because you will drive our country into an all-out explosion of which no one can see the end, because it would plunge us from one day to the next into a type of war," he declared.

He then proposed himself as a potential prime minister under Macron, claiming he was "ready to govern this country if we conquer the majority" in the June legislative elections.

Asked if he could become "prime minister in a coalition government with Emmanuel Macron if he becomes president," Mélenchon replied: "He [Macron] will have to get used to the idea... As for me, I want to give him some advice before leaving you, because I also have to give a little help in this campaign. Instead of twisting my friends' arms and threatening them, why doesn't he make a little gesture to win them over?"

Mélenchon's announcement that he would participate in a government in which Macron would control foreign and military policy exposes the emptiness of his campaign promises. Macron is planning a brutal austerity policy combined with spending tens of billions of euros to bring back the draft, modernize

France's nuclear arsenal and bolster the armed services. A prime minister working under such a president would have none of the resources necessary to carry out even a small part of the social measures Mélenchon promised in his program.

Moreover, this proposition exposes Mélenchon's posture of opposition to some of the wars launched by NATO, especially those, such as in Syria, which pose the risk of escalation into all-out war with Russia. It also exposes his declarations that he is independent from Washington and Berlin. This is simply a pose, designed to exploit for electoral gain the broad opposition to war in the working class and the youth, without offering a revolutionary alternative to imperialism and capitalism.

Having declared that he has "nothing in common with The Republicans, nothing in common with the Socialist Party," Mélenchon spent much of his interview sending political signals to Macron, the candidate supported by both of France's traditional big-business parties.

He even offered Macron advice on how to win over UF members: "And I will tell Mr. Macron that he is wrong to be scornful towards the consultative vote I organized. Because almost as soon as I had organized it, instead of trying to convince them, he tried to compel them, under threat, first of all by insulting me—which did not help him win over my voters—and secondly to try to dismiss them as some sort of group of irresponsible people."

This interview underscores that the vast majority of UF members and Mélenchon voters are far to the left of Mélenchon, and are searching for an alternative to the political line he represents. Like the working class as a whole, they will find this alternative only in the call for an active boycott and the perspective of a revolutionary and internationalist struggle of the working class put forward by the PES.



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