

Mélenchon-Communist Party alliance for French legislative elections collapses

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Yesterday, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (UF) movement confirmed that it would present electoral lists independently from the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) in the June 11 and 18 legislative elections. The two main forces that together supported Mélenchon's presidential bid will thus run as opponents in the legislative elections next month.

The PCF is fielding at least 535 candidates, against 410 for UF, out of the 577 legislative districts represented in the National Assembly. PCF spokesman Olivier Dartigolles told the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*: "Discussions are still underway, but in a very tense atmosphere. We are working for the moment on a smaller list of electoral districts, about 20, in which there will be electoral alliances."

The conflicts between Mélenchon and the PCF underscore the correctness of the considerations motivating the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste's* (PES) call for an active boycott of the second round of the presidential elections. The PES fought to encourage workers' opposition to both candidates, Macron and the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen, to give an independent line for the workers from all bourgeois parties, and to outline a revolutionary perspective for the struggles that will emerge against Macron. It warned of the bankruptcy of calls to fight Macron with parliamentary maneuvers.

Macron's announcement of a violently right-wing policy after his election, and the bankrupt squabbling between his official "left" critics, including Mélenchon, the PCF and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), are yet more proof of the bankruptcy of an orientation towards Mélenchon and parliamentary combinations.

The perspective outlined by both Mélenchon and the PCF is collapsing. These parties both proposed to build a legislative majority in order to dictate Macron's

policy from within the Assembly. UF spokeswoman Martine Billard boasted that her party would be "the number one force in the Assembly." This was also the strategy Mélenchon proposed Sunday night, as he hailed the election of Macron, whom he obsequiously saluted while proposing at the same time to form a parliamentary alliance supposedly against him.

"May the sense of the destiny of our fatherland envelop you, Mr. President. And may the thought of the poor, without rights, roofs, or jobs be always with you. May France benefit from it. But it is better to monitor this ourselves," Mélenchon declared, adding: "A new parliamentary majority can be formed around us. The taste of happiness is contagious. Based on our appeal on June 18, the second round of the legislative elections, the resistance can win."

PCF National Secretary Pierre Laurent also speculated yesterday about winning the legislative elections to try to block Macron's coming austerity policies. Bemoaning the "mess that is being prepared" now that talks with Mélenchon have broken down, he said: "The responsibility of creating a winning dynamic rests with us. ... Without a national agreement, we would divide the voters of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who are calling for us to remain united."

The strategy outlined by Mélenchon and Laurent is false and bankrupt. It proposes to workers to rely on pro-capitalist parties who are long-time allies of the outgoing Socialist Party (PS) government, and who have participated in several pro-war, pro-austerity governments. At most, in the case of an improbable definitive victory of the UF-PCF alliance in the legislative elections, this would produce what Mélenchon proposed between the first and second round of the presidential election: he would become Macron's prime minister.

This would force Mélenchon to carry out Macron's domestic policy without any financial room for maneuver, accepting the foreign and military policy of Macron, who is calling for boosting defense spending, escalating the security forces' mobilization inside France, and bringing back the draft.

Even this outcome for a UF-PCF alliance does not seem likely. In the first polls, this alliance would get around 16 percent of the vote, in fourth place behind Emmanuel Macron's Republic on the March movement (22 percent), the neo-fascist National front (20 percent), and the right-wing The Republicans (20 percent). Now that UF and the PCF will compete with one another, however, it will be even harder for them to get a large score. Currently, they would share a few dozen seats in the 577-seat Assembly.

Behind the scenes, there are sharp tensions between the two organizations. These divisions do not proceed from principled differences on fundamental political issues, however, but on factional battles between two pro-capitalist parties that are long-term allies of the Socialist Party (PS) and of the discredited French President François Hollande.

The PCF has given up on using the communist symbol, the hammer and sickle, after the Stalinist restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, and now conflicts are emerging over logos. On May 4, UF announced it was "launching judicial charges" against the PCF, in order to compel "the immediate ending of use of the photo of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and all other graphic design elements belonging to the Unsubmissive France" movement.

More broadly, the financing of the PCF and its newspaper, *L'Humanité*, depends on subsidies from the state to elected PCF officials, and investment in *L'Humanité* by major corporate conglomerates including the Hachette Group and Lagardère. Mélenchon's attempts to reorganize the PS' periphery around UF threaten to strangle the PCF, which totally lost its working class base several decades ago and whose finances are in crisis.

Now that the PS itself is threatened with collapse after Hollande's disastrous presidency, these conflicts are taking on a particularly envenomed and intractable form.

Faced with a president implementing a policy of militarism, deep austerity, and the state of emergency,

allied to the European Union, and who hailed Le Pen with a "Republican salute," this squabbling is reactionary. It points to the total abdication by UF and the other forces in its periphery of their responsibility to present a perspective on which to fight Macron.

This abdication is not, however, the expression of a simple tactical error, but of their material class interests that are profoundly hostile to those of the workers. FI, NPA, and PCF officials, recruited from affluent sections of the middle class, have been orbiting around the PS for decades. They depend on it to preserve their privileges as well as their access to the very centers of state power in France.

They will prove to be violently hostile to a revolutionary struggle in the working class against Macron's social counterrevolution, which is the only way to fight the right-wing, pro-austerity policies he will seek to push through. To wage these struggles, workers will find no other way out than to ruthlessly break with them, base their struggles on the Trotskyist perspective advanced by the PES, and build the PES as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class.



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