

French police scandal exposes Mélenchon's ties to the police state

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Since the eruption of a scandal over a video of a top aide to President Emmanuel Macron, Alexandre Benalla, illegally assaulting protesters while wearing a police uniform, Unsubmissive France (LFI) leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon has made himself the spokesman for aggrieved policemen. He has been careful not to appeal to anger among workers and youth over police repression. Rather, he is playing on tensions inside France's rapidly developing police-state apparatus, within which LFI has deep connections.

Mélenchon has relentlessly attacked not Benalla's assault on two protesters, but the fact that Benalla dared to illegally don a riot police uniform. "Not a single policeman will be able to believe in the word" of the interior minister, he complained, adding: "We are working in the context of the parliamentary institutions, of which we disapprove but that we respect. But if they destroy them, they are doing our work for us."

This record constitutes a serious warning. A class gulf separates the LFI machine from the aspirations of left-wing workers and youth who voted massively for Mélenchon in the 2017 presidential elections. Mélenchon and his anti-Marxist party are oriented to the police state and will prove violently hostile to a movement in the working class.

The press tends to downplay LFI's links to police, in order to avoid discrediting Mélenchon and so that LFI can continue to disorient and strangle social protests. However, the ties of LFI to police and intelligence circles are well documented in a series of articles carefully planted in the press.

According to an article in *Médiapart*, "LFI is cultivating its Rolodex to be able to govern one day," LFI is counting on "top state bureaucrats who know the mechanisms of the state and could be the main people to get the job done if LFI took power. These are people who participated in elaborating LFI's program and who, from

the shadows, continue to draft notes and send suggestions and advice to its elected officials."

Charlotte Girard, the co-drafter of Mélenchon's program in the presidential elections, applauded top state officials' role in elaborating LFI's program, saying they are "people who have a feel for public service."

François Pirenne, the pseudonym of a top bureaucrat claiming to specialize in security and intelligence operations, described his work with LFI as follows: "I joined the group led by Bernard Pignerol, not necessarily to work on the program. ... I regularly drafted memorandums. For example, when a policeman was assassinated on the Champs-Élysées in April 2017, I went over with Jean-Luc Mélenchon the right things to say in response."

Pirenne had no difficulty fitting into the LFI. Pirenne made clear he believed that a rise of Mélenchon's political influence would be welcomed by generals, spy chiefs and police officials: "You have to count on the momentum it would create in the technostructure and the Republican spirit it would spread in the institutions."

Mélenchon also relies on a considerable layer of trade union executives who occupy top positions in the police and domestic intelligence agencies, and who according to Mélenchon's blog helped work out his security policies. They include:

- Georges Knecht, the general secretary of the Independent National Union of Administrative and Technical Personal (SNIAPT) of the Workers Force (FO) union, and a member of FO's Federation of Unions of the Interior Ministry (FSMI-FO);
- Laurence Blisson, the national secretary of the Union of Magistrates;
- Vincent Drezet, the former member of the NPA-linked Solidarity trade union's Public Finances trade union;
- Alexandre Langlois, the head of the Stalinist General

Confederation of Labor's (CGT) police branch and member of the domestic General Intelligence (RG) agency, to whom the Stalinist daily *L'Humanité* devoted an article titled "Our comrade policeman."

Mélenchon originated in the post-1968 student movement and from Pierre Lambert's *Organisation communiste internationaliste* (OCI), which had broken with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and with Trotskyism in 1971 in order to pursue an alliance with the Socialist Party (PS). After the PS won the 1981 elections and became the ruling party under President François Mitterrand, it carried out austerity policies and further developed its police and intelligence ties. Nearly 30 years after the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR, the political forces inside LFI are discredited among workers and support austerity and war.

Mélenchon's present close ties to police and intelligence circles are the product of this anti-Trotskyist history. The police circles around LFI are desperate to preserve military and police budgets from austerity cuts and to make workers and social services foot the bill. They therefore set out to disorient and repress workers' struggles against austerity and militarism.

The Harpocrate think-tank brought together top state officials and security and intelligence professionals who last year supported Mélenchon's presidential bid, launched under the draconian police-state conditions of the state of emergency.

In November 2016, they published in news magazine *Marianne* a column titled "For a reasonable anti-terror policy" that declares: "Intelligence resources must not be abandoned to the supposed necessities of austerity and should, on the contrary, be reinforced. ... The absurd obsession with the bottom line, together with police staffing cuts, should be opposed by recruiting administrative agents and boots on the ground for the police and paramilitary police."

The column ended by congratulating Mélenchon on his close collaboration with cops and spies: "It is thanks to solutions that were elaborated over the long term, guided by the expertise of intelligence professionals and anti-terror specialists that Jean-Luc Mélenchon's program on security issues won unanimous support, including among security professionals!"

The security spokesman of Mélenchon, who presents him as a friend, is Djordje Kuzmanovic, who reportedly joined the Harpocrate group. A former military officer and specialist in defense and geopolitics who is generally

hostile to NATO, and who is still a reservist officer, he was in the army from 2000 to 2012. Initially a parachutist, he carried out missions for the Operational Intelligence Group (GIO) in the Balkans and then during the NATO occupation of Afghanistan, where he claims to have "done intelligence work without wanting to do it."

Asked in an interview with the *Journal du Dimanche* what his duties had been in the Balkans, Kuzmanovic, who is of Serbian origin, refused to say: "I did some things that were tied with interventions, analysis work and translation work ... It's a thing that we don't have to talk about."

In 1994, during a mission to Rwanda during the year when Mitterrand's PS government was financing and arming the Hutu-extremist regime responsible for the anti-Tutsi genocide, Kuzmanovic was allegedly tasked with identifying orphans in refugee camps. This is reportedly when he met Charlotte Girard, then a law student, who introduced Mélenchon to the parachutist in 2008.

From 2007 to 2010, Kuzmanovic spent time in Russia. He joined France's Left Party (PG) and developed ties with the Russian Left Front. Kuzmanovic reportedly played a significant role in setting up Mélenchon's recent visit to Russia, where Mélenchon met Russian politicians, legislators and French investors in Russia. This visit produced a nationalist Franco-Russian appeal to anti-German sentiment.

The Benalla affair has unmasked the class character of the alliance between LFI, Workers Struggle (LO), the NPA and all the trade unions, launched at the NPA's request supposedly to help organize strikes against Macron. In fact, it is a petty-bourgeois, anti-Marxist and counter-revolutionary social layer, directly tied to the police and the police-state apparatus.



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