

Unsubmissive France summer school: Mélenchon invites the right wing

Anthony Torres
14 August 2018

In last month's scandal around the beating of peaceful protesters on May Day by a close aide of French President Emmanuel Macron, Alexandre Benalla, Unsubmissive France (LFI) formed a bloc with the right-wing The Republicans (LR) and the neo-fascists. LFI leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon echoed the police, who insisted that the only issue in the assault was Benalla's violation of the police chain of command. "When it is a matter of protecting the state and respecting the norms of the Republic, we come together with the right wing, I'm not ashamed to say it," he said.

What underlies this declaration of loyalty to the police is emerging ever more clearly. As Macron collapses in the polls, Mélenchon is extending a hand to explicitly right-wing politicians, inviting LR together with the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), the social-democratic Socialist Party (PS), and the Génération.s party of former PS presidential candidate Benoît Hamon to the LFI summer school. The foundation of this alliance is the common support of LFI, the PS, LR and also the neo-fascist National Rally (RN, formerly National Front, FN) for French militarism.

LR deputies Marianne Dubois and Olivier Marleix will represent LR at the LFI summer school. Dubois will speak at a round table on defense issues, while Marleix will discuss the controversial privatization of engineering firm Alstom. Dubois—who is close to LR leader Laurent Wauquiez, a long-time advocate of closer ties to the FN/RN—has been on the National Defense and Armed Forces committee of the National Assembly since 2012. She is involved in formulating the "Army and Citizens" plan for the Defense Ministry's plans for citizen involvement, i.e., the draft.

LFI campaign director Manuel Bompard defended

the invitation to LR, telling *Le Figaro*: "The goal is to show that faced with Emmanuel Macron's policy, the leading force of political opposition will give the floor to the entire political spectrum, despite our divergences."

What follows from Bompard's statement is that LFI wants opposition to Macron to be tied to explicitly right-wing perspectives. After the collapse last year of the PS, France's main social-democratic party of government since its foundation after the May-June 1968 general strike, the PS rump and its various Stalinist and pseudo-left allies are desperate to block the emergence of organized political opposition on Macron's left.

PS deputy and party spokesman Boris Vallaud will attend, as well as PS European parliamentarian Emmanuel Maurel, a former associate of Mélenchon from his time in the PS, who will discuss the proposed Trans-Atlantic Free-Trade Agreement. Génération.s deputy Régis Juanico and PCF deputy Stéphane Peu will discuss constitutional reform. Sonia Krimi, a member of Macron's The Republic on the March (LRM) party who is said to be a "dissident" because she asked for "more humanity and dignity" on welcoming immigrants, briefly thought of attending before deciding not to.

LFI has not invited the neo-fascists to avoid provoking a new scandal, as when LFI deputy Danièle Obono invited neo-fascists to criticize Macron over the Benalla affair, but this is only a tactical decision. Significant layers of neo-fascists around Marine Le Pen have long been anxious to obtain "Republican" respectability. A nominally "Republican" regroupment could therefore also prepare a rallying of LFI to sections of Le Pen's movement.

Whatever the exact nature of the alliance that

Mélenchon is preparing, the hand he is extending to the right must serve as a warning to the workers: the LFI leadership's populist politics will prove violently hostile to the working class.

Three years after LFI's Greek ally, Syriza ("The Coalition of the Radical Left") took power in Greece and formed a coalition government with the far-right Independent Greeks, Syriza is imposing a reactionary austerity policy. While overseeing a massive social retrogression, Syriza is also building detention camps for refugees and attacking the constitutional right to strike.

In France, LFI refused to take any position in the run-off of last year's presidential election, though most of its own voters rejected a vote either for the investment banker Macron or for Le Pen.

The Socialist Equality Party (France) was the only party to call for an active boycott of the second round, for the development of a political movement of the working class against whichever of the two reactionary candidates won the election. Events subsequently vindicated the SEP's warnings. Amid an unprecedented crisis of capitalism and rising social anger among workers, including against Macron in France, the pseudo-left parties are passing into the camp of the right. The key issue is the building the SEP as the Trotskyist alternative to the petty-bourgeois populist pseudo-left.

After the publication of Mélenchon's 2014 book *The Era of the People*, the WSWS had already warned that he was preparing an opening toward the right. The WSWS wrote, "An examination of Mélenchon's book makes clear that what is driving his shift into the camp of the right is his fear of the death agony of capitalism and a renewed struggle for socialism by the working class." On the middle-class forces around Mélenchon, the WSWS added: "Frightened by the discrediting of the bourgeois 'left' parties, accepting in a sinister fashion the inevitability of world war and economic collapse, desperate to impose austerity on the workers, they hysterically insist that socialism is dead. This is another political fraud."

Instead of socialism and Trotskyism, Mélenchon called for a "citizens revolution," that is, a national and perhaps "anti-capitalist" revolution that is neither socialist nor led by the working class. Such a perspective is, however, historically linked in France to

the far-right nationalist movement of the first half of the 20th century. Indeed, Mélenchon's meetings with and ties to Le Pen and to top LR officials like Claude Guéant during the drafting of *The Era of the People* were reported in the press.

Mélenchon also defended Eric Zemmour, the journalistic promoter of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime. Zemmour subsequently went on to denounce the renowned American historian of Vichy, Robert Paxton, who was the first to clearly expose the extent of Vichy's participation in the militarist and genocidal policies of European fascism.

After Zemmour was criticized for asserting that crimes are disproportionately carried out by Arabs, Mélenchon said: "I know Zemmour. He should say he made a mistake. He is not racist. He's a brilliant intellectual, but like all intellectuals, he is stubborn as a mule." Later on, Mélenchon aligned himself on Zemmour's position and denied French involvement in the Holocaust last year.

Now, amid rising working-class anger against social cuts imposed by Macron in France and similar governments worldwide, and particularly the Trump administration in the United States, panic is again seizing Mélenchon and his entourage. LFI's invitation to the right points to the advanced state of political degeneration of the affluent middle-class layers that form the social base of LFI, the PS and their pseudo-left satellites like the Pabloite New Anticapitalist Party.

In the struggles of the working class that are now being prepared, the decisive issue will be the struggle between the International Committee of the Fourth International's socialist and internationalist program for the working class and the national-populism of the reactionaries around Mélenchon.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact