

French pseudo-left politician Jean-Luc Mélenchon calls for alliance with Socialist Party

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In an interview with *Libération*, the daily newspaper, late last month, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the founder of Unsubmissive France (*La France insoumise*—LFI), proposed a coalition with the Socialist Party (PS) for the 2022 French presidential elections.

LFI will seek to use its vote in the European elections this month to build a coalition, he said. “If the election gives us strength, we will assume our responsibility. We will propose a new popular federation to be built for the next elections and in the ecological and social movements.”

Mélenchon made clear that he is not ruling out a coalition with anyone. “In the Assembly, we even vote at times with the right. It’s the content that counts, not the label.” As for the content, the programme of LFI “provides a good point of departure” to “discuss everything.”

Calling for unity with the PS, he said: “We must clarify positions. Will the PS separate itself from the [German] Social Democratic Party, which is participating in a coalition with Merkel? ... In the National Assembly, the deputies seated at the left vote together nine times out of ten. Why is it possible in the Assembly, but not when we stand in front of a journalist?”

These statements show that while the working class is moving to the left, in opposition to the entire political establishment—a movement that has found its initial expression in mass “yellow vest” protests since last November—Mélenchon’s response is to shift further to the right.

Despite winning 7 million votes in the 2017 presidential elections, Mélenchon proved incapable of and uninterested in taking any action to assist the “yellow vest” movement. He called no mass protests to support the “yellow vests” and looked on as unions strangled

strikes called in solidarity with them. Instead, he issued statements hailing it as a movement of the people and attacking Marxism, calling for a “break with the centrality of the concept of proletariat and socialist revolution as the inevitable pairing in the dynamic of History.”

Now he is preparing to join a bourgeois government with the PS, committed to intensifying austerity attacks and imperialist wars, and to accelerating the build-up of a police state against the working class.

The PS is rightly hated among workers and youth. It is polling at 5 percent, and it is unclear whether it will reach the threshold required for seats in the European parliament. Its collapse is the outcome of its role over four decades in imposing attacks on the working class and support for imperialist wars.

To call for an alliance with the PS means, in fact, to support the current government of Emmanuel Macron, which is deploying the French army against protesters, has hailed the legacy of the fascist dictator Petain as a “great soldier,” and is sending thousands of riot police to shoot rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters.

Macron’s government is a political creature of the PS. It is staffed mainly by current and former PS officials—most prominently the “president of the rich” himself, who was finance minister under PS President François Hollande. Defence Minister Florence Parly, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and others are long-time PS officials. In the case of Le Drian and Castaner, they remained inside the PS for months while serving in the Macron government—Le Drian ended his own 40-year membership only in 2018.

Macron is merely building upon the achievements of his PS predecessor, Hollande. His labour law, announced within three months of taking office—tearing up limits on working hours and restrictions on businesses from firing

workers—contained the same measures that Hollande sought to impose a year earlier but withdrew in the face of mass opposition. His anti-protest law, allowing police to ban anyone from attending a protest, follows upon Hollande's two-year-long state of emergency beginning in November 2015—a measure voted in the National Assembly by Mélenchon's party.

Such is the character of Mélenchon's "popular federation"!

Melenchon's appeal also underscores the right-wing and bourgeois character of the parties standing alongside LFI in the European elections, as part of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left bloc. They include Podemos in Spain, the Left Party in Germany and Syriza in Greece.

The *député* is following a path that has been well-trodden by his fellow European pseudo-left allies. Their response to the upsurge of working-class struggle, after a decade of austerity, is driven by the upper-middle class social forces they represent, and their fear of and hostility to the working class. Universally, they are closing ranks with the state and official bourgeois parties, and directly participating in the repression of the working class.

In Spain, Podemos has been a junior coalition government partner with the Socialist Party that has carried out a police-state crackdown on Catalan-nationalist protests.

In Greece, Syriza (the misnamed Coalition of the Radical Left) came to power in 2015 by appealing to anti-austerity opposition in the working class, but immediately invited the right-wing Anel party into a coalition, and has since imposed even more brutal austerity than its predecessors in Pasok and New Democracy.

And in Germany, the Left Party, while sitting on leading military and other government committees with the Grand Coalition, removed all criticisms of the European Union as "militaristic, undemocratic and neo-liberal" from its constitution in February.

Implicated in these political crimes is not only Mélenchon, but the New Anti-capitalist Party and the entire French pseudo-left, which have promoted Syriza and Podemos from the beginning.

Mélenchon knows very well the PS is hated. On several occasions in his interview with *Libération*, he states that he intends to fill a political vacuum created by the collapse of the anti-working class social democratic parties and trade unions. "We are not in the 1970s anymore," he said. "The political landscape has collapsed. It is not my doing. The voters have dissolved

the PS and pushed us ahead. We are responding to our own situation, not another."

His "response" is entirely in keeping with his long political career.

After a brief membership in the Internationalist Communist Organisation (OCI) in the 1970s, following its break from Trotskyism and the International Committee of the Fourth International in 1971, Mélenchon joined the PS in 1976. He became an advisor to the government of Francois Mitterrand after it carried out its "austerity turn" in 1983 and implemented sweeping cuts to social spending and workers' living standards. He was a minister in the PS government of Lionel Jospin until 2003.

Mélenchon resigned from the party in 2008. His latest statements confirm that this decision was nothing more than a ruse to deceive workers. He had concluded that the party's discrediting in the eyes of the working class meant that a new "left" political trap was needed. Under conditions of an upsurge of class struggle, he is preparing the short journey home.

In a joint meeting with two long-time PS deputies, Emmanuel Maurel and Marie-Noëlle Lienemann (who have since joined LFI) last September, Mélenchon was evidently emotionally touched by the wretched manoeuvre he is seeking to carry out: "I have not come here to woo you, or to reproach you for your past errors, because you could point out that I shared many of them. My heart is full of enthusiasm if your paths join with ours. That this long solitude may come to an end where I have been separated from my family. My friends, I've missed you."

The working class can only conduct a fight against the Macron government and the capitalist system it defends through an irreconcilable struggle against the entire political establishment, including its pseudo-left flank, represented by Mélenchon and the NPA. The key task is the building of a revolutionary party to arm the growing movement of the working class with a socialist perspective. This is the perspective fought for by the International Committee of the Fourth International and its French section, the Socialist Equality Party.



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