French populist Mélenchon gives advice to AMLO in Mexico amid growing social unrest

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2 August 2019

French populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the Unsubmissive France (LFI) party, spent two weeks in Mexico in high level meetings in which he praised president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) as the realization of his nationalist program, which he has dubbed the "Citizens' revolution."

His promotion and advice for AMLO's right-wing government was paired with direct statements promoting French and European capital. The trip constituted a defense of the interests of French imperialism against the backdrop of industrial strike waves in Mexico, the ongoing Yellow Vest protests in France and a resurgence of the class struggle internationally.

After holding individual discussions with AMLO and Martí Batres, the co-founder of the ruling Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), Mélenchon was given a green light to lecture at Morena political schools and seminars on his book *Era of the People*, while holding advisory sessions with Deputies and Senators of the ruling coalition.

His advice was explicitly aimed at developing new nationalist traps for workers and youth seeking to fight against social inequality and attacks against democratic rights.

Mélenchon now plans to go to Argentina to meet Peronist ex-president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who is running for vice president in the October elections. He will then visit jailed ex-president Lula da Silva of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), and perhaps Cuba.

A blog post announcing his Latin American tour lists numerous "left" populist groups and politicians he has visited since 2017 in Greece, Italy, Russia, Britain, Peru, Ecuador, Portugal, Tunisia, Mauritania, Germany and Spain to "create a global club (agora) for the personalities engaged in the battle for the ecological and social transition from the liberal and productivist globalization."

On July 25, at a meeting with senators of the ruling coalition in Mexico, Batres introduced Mélenchon as someone with "many fans here"—in fact, some quoted his book— and a close associate of AMLO since the founding of Morena in 2011. Amid the political defeat suffered by his partners in Syriza in Greece, which was voted out of power this month for imposing draconian austerity, and a political crisis brewing in his own LFI, Mélenchon energetically praised AMLO's overwhelming victory last year.

Nonetheless, he warned: "We need your success, or else people are going to start saying that you can't change anything at all."

Acknowledging the unpopularity of the social austerity, militarization and immigrant crackdown pursued by AMLO, with a recent poll by México Elige showing a drop of approval from 73 percent in February to 47 percent in July, Mélenchon proposed "a rational response."

"We can't jump to the excessive opposites," he advised the senators, "like claiming that if you want to come, do it, or if you want to leave. I will say frankly and straightforwardly: I am not a supporter of free migration. Borders have a vital function as a cell to structure and organize … People should be able to stay in their country. If they leave, it's not their fault or ours. We have nothing to do with that. They do—the powerful and their policies.

"Worry not about the fact itself, I know that you can deal with that perfectly, but with what the people feel … that same force that overthrew all other [political forces]."

This proposal has already been labeled the "Portuguese solution," referring to the tactic employed by Mélenchon's allies in Portugal's Left Bloc and that has now been adopted by Podemos in Spain. These forces support right-wing policies and governments while washing their hands of all political responsibility by "demarcating" themselves formally from the "powers that be." In this case, Morena, which controls the executive and both legislative houses, would faithfully legislate, approve and implement the dictates of the "elites" and the "imperialist powers" while "repeating that we are not at fault for this situation," in Mélenchon's words.

Last week, *El País* interviewed Venezuelan migrants who were detained for 23 days at the Iztapalapa detention center for children, which was accused in June by a government agency of "torture and abuse," given the poor conditions. The Morena authorities have detained 33,100 children there this year and deported 15,500 children in total between January and May.

A 10-year-old Guatemalan girl died when the Venezuelans were there on May 15. "She fell [from a bunkbed] at about 4 p.m.," they described, "She went to the doctor with a lot of pain: crying and crying and holding her ribs. He just said it was gastritis and gave her a pill. She went three more times. At about 9 p.m. we entered her room and saw that she was agonizing, turning her eyes, without color in her skin, her face."

The dehumanizing treatment of migrants and the thuggish threats of tariffs and sanctions by Trump against Mexico demanding an expansion of the anti-immigrant crackdown, including through the deployment of AMLO's new National Guard, are massively opposed in Mexico.

Far from calling to mobilize workers in Mexico, the US and

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internationally to oppose Trump's neocolonial threats and the policies that "are not their fault," Morena is now criminalizing any opposition. On Saturday, the Morena governor and legislators in AMLO's home state of Tabasco rammed through a bill dictating prison terms of up to 13 years for all marches, road blocks or any action that "impedes the execution of public or private works," i.e., strikes.

Back in 2015, Mélenchon had written an op-ed describing AMLO "as a master of democracy," while denouncing "[former French president] François Hollande [for having] received the fraudulent [former Mexican] president, Peña Nieto, who bought some helicopters from him, less than the ones promised, but Hollande still gave him the legion of honor."

Revealing the predatory nature of his promotion of French-Mexican ties, Mélenchon told the Senators on Thursday, "Look we are not interested in the failure of the empire in a crisis, but we need to re-negotiate the return to a rational situation—whether it's with the *gringos* (Americans) and their dollars or with Europe," adding, "America is sticking its fingers in Europe in a dangerous way."

As a defender of the interests of French imperialism, however, why would Mélenchon oppose AMLO's deployment of tens of thousands of troops that can ultimately be used against working class opposition to defend capitalist property? French investments in Mexico have increased more than 50 percent since 2013.

Mélenchon's LFI backed Macron's 2018-2024 military spending program of $300 billion aimed at preparing for wars against other major powers. Moreover, on the domestic front, the LFI is proposing a similar National Guard to the one created by AMLO, who enshrined in the Constitution the internal deployment of soldiers. Alexis Corbière, an LFI deputy, noted at the time, "We support a mandatory citizens service lasting nine months, which would be the basis of a citizens' National Guard that would allow us to build back up the link between the Army and the Nation."

The parallel political trajectories of Mélenchon and AMLO provide valuable lessons for the international working class. Mélenchon, after a brief period in the Organisation communiste internationaliste (OCI) led by Pierre Lambert soon after it broke with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), joined the Socialist Party (PS) in 1976 as a 25-year-old. The PS was an electoral vehicle for ex-Stalinists, Pabloites, Social Catholics and former officials of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime. After serving as a minister in 2000-2002 in a pro-austerity PS government, he responded to electoral defeats by splitting and founding the Left Party in 2009 and the LFI in 2016.

AMLO has been a career politician, providing "left" populist covers for the bourgeois establishment since joining the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) as a 23-year-old in 1976. Recently released intelligence documents claim that AMLO financed and supported the Stalinist Communist Party in the 1970s, which he denies.

Independently of their earlier motives, what marked their political evolution was the nationalist program of the milieus of petty-bourgeois ex-radicals in which they entered politics. These forces adapted to reformist illusions derived from the capitalist equilibrium after World War II and to the Stalinist forces cultivated by Moscow that had enabled this equilibrium by betraying the revolutionary struggles in Europe after the war.

Their politics are based on an explicit rejection of the revolutionary role of the working class. In his 2014 book *Era of the People* that he is basing his strategy and lectures on, Mélenchon writes under the header "The left can die": "There no longer exists any global political force in the face of the invisible party of globalized finance … None of the advancing realities of the world have a place in its argumentation, nor in its projects, supposing that it ever had any."

The devoted reception of Mélenchon in Mexico demonstrates the culmination of what has been a global process of political putrefaction of petty-bourgeois nationalism. At a time in which the production and distribution of goods is organized by transnational corporations globally, their defense of militarized borders and a nation-state system that today rests only on militarism and dictatorship, exposes the entire middle class pseudo-left as a last line of defense for imperialism against the international unity of the working class.

The only organization that has irreconcilably opposed AMLO, Mélenchon and all petty-bourgeois nationalist agents of imperialism is the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, which stands alone in fighting for genuine internationalism, that is, the revolutionary overthrow of global capitalism and all nation states by the international working class. The progressive alternative to war and dictatorship is the building of the ICFI in the working class, as a new political leadership rooted in the theoretical principles of Marxism and assimilation of the entire history of the fight for socialism.

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