

Mélenchon to ally with Greens, PCF, NPA in French legislative election

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Unsubmissive France (LFI) candidate Jean Luc-Mélenchon came in third with 21.95 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election, eliminating him from yesterday's runoff. In response, Mélenchon is now trying to rally his supporters behind a campaign for the French legislative elections in June.

Mélenchon aims not to mobilise the working class but to demobilise it. LFI called for building a Popular Union, an electoral coalition of discredited bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties, aiming to make Mélenchon prime minister under a Macron or Le Pen presidency.

On April 15, LFI sent a letter to several parties including Europe Ecology-The Greens (EELV), the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and the Pabloite New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA). The letter was not addressed to the big-business Socialist Party (PS) of former president François Hollande. However, the PS National Council adopted a resolution on Tuesday evening proposing to discuss with all supposedly "left" forces, including LFI.

In the letter, LFI refers to Mélenchon's results in the first round: "Last Sunday, three clearly defined political blocs emerged from the ballot box. One around the liberals, another with the far right, the third with the Popular Union."

Tacitly pushing for a vote for Macron as the lesser evil, the letter cynically asserts that Macron or Le Pen both represent a danger, "even if they are of a different nature." It adds that "in the present context and given the sharp delineations between the three groups, this second round will therefore elect a presidency by coercion and by default. None of the country's political tensions will be resolved. On the contrary, they are likely to be aggravated."

This reveals the class chasm separating the Socialist Equality Party (PES), the French section of the

International Committee of the Fourth International, from Mélenchon and LFI. The PES has called for an active boycott of the second round, to mobilise workers, reject the two reactionary candidates, and prepare struggles against the next president, be it Macron or Le Pen. Mélenchon, on the other hand, seeks to disorient the working class by steering social opposition to the next president into a parliamentary dead end.

Mélenchon got more than 7.7 million votes among workers and young people who opposed both the unpopular Macron and the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen. Objectively, LFI is in a powerful position. Armed with the votes of young people and millions in the working class areas of the big cities, Mélenchon could call for strikes and demonstrations to boycott the presidential election, and to oppose austerity and war. This would have broad support among workers in France and beyond.

However, LFI does not seek to mobilise workers and young people against the next reactionary president. Instead, it aims to work with Macron or even a neo-fascist president to channel working class opposition into parliament and suppress the class struggle. This also unmask the role of the NPA, which has responded favorably to LFI's proposal of talks.

"I ask the French to elect me prime minister" by voting for a "majority of Unsubmissive [referring to his LFI party]" and "members of the Popular Union" in the legislative elections of June 12 and 19, Mélenchon said on BFM-TV on April 19. The aim would be to achieve a parliamentary bloc within the capitalist state to legitimise the next president, be it Marine Le Pen, an openly neo-fascist candidate, or Macron, who also pursues far-right policies against workers.

Workers' struggles against the next president cannot

take place in parliament, through parties of the established order like EELV or the PCF. Deep anger is rising among workers in France and Europe amid a growing social and economic crisis, exacerbated by rising inflation, the pandemic and the dangerous military conflict between NATO and Russia in Ukraine. This anger is also directed at parties, such as EELV, which openly called for a Macron vote.

In order to make itself heard by workers in its electorate, LFI admits that both the Macron and Le Pen campaigns represent a “danger” for workers. But far from seeking to mobilise this opposition to Macron and Le Pen in struggle, LFI offers itself to Macron or Le Pen as potential allies in the same government that would pursue reactionary policies on all the main issues of the day.

Mélenchon’s letter says nothing about the pandemic or NATO manoeuvres against Russia, which threaten to provoke nuclear war. On the war, Mélenchon has sided with NATO by solely blaming Russia for the conflict. On the pandemic, LFI supported the anti-vaccine movement, dominated from the outset by the far right, adopting its reactionary arguments that collective vaccination is an attack on individual liberties.

The People’s Union aims to lure voters into voting for an unprincipled electoral coalition around Mélenchon, which could also include openly right-wing forces. LFI claims Mélenchon would pursue radical policies to build “a new governmental majority, that is, a political majority in the National Assembly.” It promises in its letter to “stabilise and further entrench the popular pole to make it available and a majority as soon as possible, especially for the next legislative elections.”

LFI says the People's Union wants to “build based on a programme, not party logos.” LFI does not limit its alliance with the parties to which it sent the letter. According to the letter, “This new stage will obviously be a coalition of parties and movements but also of personalities and associative and trade union figures. They will meet in a new parliament, like the parliament of the People’s Union, reconstituted for this election.”

Mélenchon clearly implies that he is open to alliances with the right. In a tweet on April 19 he wrote: “I don’t ask people what they were before, if they were right-wing or left-wing. I welcome all those who want to join us on the basis of a programme. All those who want to

participate in the victory of the programme are welcome.”

A clear warning must be made on the so-called “popular bloc” Mélenchon is assembling. It is not a revolutionary, socialist, or working class movement, but an unprincipled petty-bourgeois bloc. He wants to work with parties and unions that for decades have helped close factories, cut jobs, and isolate and demoralise struggles against social austerity and police-state violence.

Mélenchon proposes to obtain various concessions under capitalism, rejecting the overthrow of capitalism and the struggle for socialism on a European and international scale. While he advances important social demands—raising the minimum wage to €1,400 monthly, freezing prices to fight inflation, and keeping the retirement age at 60—he calls to build alliances with parties that are in fact hostile to such demands. He thus aims to deceive the workers and block a struggle against the financial aristocracy.

The discredited parties with which Mélenchon wants to ally himself called to vote for Macron, denounced “yellow vests” protesting for social equality against Macron, and gave a blank cheque to policies of mass infection with the coronavirus. LFI voted for many parts of Macron’s Islamophobic “anti-separatist law.” Mélenchon himself repeatedly chanted, “We must not give a single vote to Mrs Le Pen,” after the first round, encouraging his supporters to vote Macron yesterday.

These events again confirm the correctness of the PES’s call to boycott the run-off and give an independent political line to the workers, arming them with a revolutionary and socialist perspective for the struggles to come against the next president. The pseudo-left milieu around Mélenchon presents a bourgeois parliamentary opposition to the crisis of global capitalism and has nothing to offer workers but political illusions.



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