

French New Popular Front's attempt to form government collapses

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The New Popular Front's (NFP) attempt to name a prime minister and form a government after winning the July 7 snap elections ignominiously collapsed Tuesday night. The big business Socialist Party (PS) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's middle class populist France Unbowed Party (LFI), the two main parties in the NFP, pulled out of talks after rejecting each other's proposed candidates for the position of prime minister.

This collapse betrays the hopes of all the workers and youth who voted for the NFP, expecting that it would form a government opposed both to Macron, the "president of the rich," and to the far-right National Rally (RN). Instead, it fell into bitter internal factional struggles, even as Macron asked for and received the resignation of Prime Minister Gabriel Attal. This leaves a path open for the ruling class to try to form more right-wing governments, as Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin proposes to do with the right-wing The Republicans (LR) party.

These events are rapidly confirming the warnings made by the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES). By building the NFP in alliance with the PS and its allies, the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and the Greens, Mélenchon's LFI was setting a political trap for the working class. It first allied openly with the PS, the party from which Macron himself emerged, and then with Macron's Ensemble coalition, ostensibly to block votes for the National Rally (RN).

The NFP's role is now exposing the bankruptcy of the parliamentary calculations on which Mélenchon made his alliances first with the PS and Macron. Large factions of the NFP are demanding that the NFP abandon its own election program and adopt a position of junior partner in a Macron-led government dedicated to policies of austerity and war overwhelmingly rejected by the French people.

Over the weekend, the PCF and then LFI proposed Huguette Bello, the Stalinist president of the regional council of Réunion Island, as prime minister. The PS vetoed Bello and instead advanced Professor Laurence Tubiana, whose candidacy rapidly obtained the support of the PCF

and the Greens. An ex-member of the middle class Pabloite Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), Tubiana helped draft the 2015 Paris Climate Accords and was considered by Macron in 2018 as a possible ecology minister.

Before receiving the PS endorsement, Tubiana had co-signed an open letter published in *Le Monde* calling on the NFP to form a government with Macron. Calling to "restore social peace" and fearing that "France could remain for some time without a real government," it demanded: "This is why the NFP must without delay extend its hand to all the other actors of the democratic front to discuss a democratic emergency program and forming a corresponding government."

Noting that the vast majority of the union bureaucracies, academic institutions and state-funded associations backing the NFP want an alliance with Macron, the letter threatened to oppose anyone who got in the way of close ties to Macron. It stated:

We know that civil society (associations, trade unions, think-tanks, etc.) is ready to help the NFP build an emergency program that can win the support of a large part of the country. And if somehow some preferred to privilege their narrow partisan interests over the superior interests of the nation, this civil society would know how to mobilize itself to bring them back to their senses.

The open letter cynically admitted that forming a Macron alliance would require abandoning overnight the mild social promises in the NFP's electoral program, on which it campaigned and won more than 7 million votes. However, it blithely dismissed this with the argument that workers and youth would not be upset if the NFP betrayed its election promises. Calling for NFP-Macron talks, it stated:

The starting point of such talks will of course be, on the NFP's side, its program, but everyone knows and openly admits in advance that this is not where we will end up on every issue. And there will be very few people who, in our country, will be upset with the NFP for having deviated from this program on one or other subject, if it allows France to be governed in a stable and appeasing way.

Tubiana's brief for an alliance with France's president is a pack of lies. A government led by Macron, whether or not it includes the NFP, will not be a stable regime appeasing the workers but a fascistic police state waging imperialist war abroad and class war at home. It would defend not the "superior interests" of the great majority of the population but the imperialist interests of the French banks and the NATO alliance.

The letter made no mention of Macron's call to send troops to Ukraine to wage war with Russia or his pension cuts last year that funded military spending increases. Nor did it say anything about the Israeli genocide in Gaza, or Macron's support for the Israeli government. Silence denotes consent, and these are policies Tubiana and her backers in the NFP clearly will support in order to ally with Macron, even if these policies are rejected by the overwhelming majority of the French people, above all, among workers.

Several leading members of LFI denounced the PS for proposing Tubiana as prime minister, with LFI national organizer Manuel Bompard claiming it was "not serious."

Paul Vannier, a member of LFI's election commission, tweeted: "I cannot believe that after having vetoed Huguette Bello's candidacy, [PS first secretary] Olivier Faure is preparing to try to impose on the New Popular Front a Macron-compatible candidate as prime minister. It would be to betray the promises that have been made to millions of electors."

Betrayal is precisely what the PS, the PCF, and the Greens are doing. However, this also exposes the role of Mélenchon and LFI, who allied with them and falsely promoted them as "left." It was not difficult to predict that the PS—which pursued policies of war in Syria and Mali, police state repression and deep austerity the last time it was in office, from 2012 to 2017 under President François Hollande—would reveal itself to be an ally of the banks and an enemy of the workers.

Yet ever since the PS election collapse in 2017 and the coming to power of Macron, Mélenchon has sought to promote these discredited parties of capitalist rule. In 2022, he formed the New Popular Union with them, rebranding it

as the NFP in the face of the danger of a far-right victory in the July 7, 2024 elections. The NFP's program, it must be added, also called for sending troops to Ukraine and strengthening the military police and intelligence forces, policies completely compatible with a Macron government.

Mélenchon gave so many seats away to candidates of Macron, the PS, the Greens and the PCF in his electoral deals this month that LFI has only 72 seats in the Assembly. It is thus a minority within the NFP that it played the central role in building. Moreover, significant sections of the LFI itself, including François Ruffin and Clémentine Autain, are deserting the LFI to join the Greens. The LFI's entire course of action over the recent years has systematically built up right-wing parties like the PS hostile to itself, but above all to the working class and to socialism.

This is a devastating experience on the role of affluent middle-class academics and union bureaucrats who have for decades shaped what capitalist media promoted as "left" politics. They are coming out, through documents like Tubiana's letter, as defenders of Macron and of "social peace" against the explosive anger in the working class. By allying with Macron, moreover, they are opening up a political avenue for Marine Le Pen's fascistic National Rally (RN) to continue posing falsely as the only real opposition to Macron.

The working class will inevitably enter into explosive conflict with whatever government emerges from these elections. Strikes and protests on a large series of demands—against war with Russia, genocide, austerity, police-state rule, anti-immigrant hysteria and neo-fascism—will proceed and must develop into a broad movement against Macron and neo-fascism. However, the essential precondition for this is to develop a revolutionary Marxist leadership among workers and youth to oppose not only Macron but also his pseudo-left defenders.



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