

Jean-Luc Mélenchon paralyses the struggle against French President Macron and the far right

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Political crises are always a test for political parties. While they may hide behind a veil of rhetoric and illusions in normal times, a crisis reveals their true colours. This applies in particular to the current political crisis in France and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's *La France insoumise* (Unsubmissive France).

The resignation of Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu after only 27 days in office and his reappointment Friday evening is not simply another government crisis, such as France has repeatedly experienced over the past three decades. It is a crisis of capitalist rule. Lecornu is already the fifth head of government appointed by President Macron to have been forced to step down in the space of two years. And the terms of office are getting shorter and shorter.

The reason for this is the impossibility of implementing, within the framework of bourgeois-democratic institutions, the massive cuts in pensions, social benefits, education, health care and other public services that the ruling class considers indispensable to finance its massive military buildup, budget deficit reduction and hunger for profits.

“The underlying cause is the government's persistent inability to secure a functioning parliamentary majority for much-needed fiscal consolidation,” financial expert Mohamed El-Erian summarised the reason for Lecornu's resignation in the *Financial Times*.

In 1929, when democratic regimes in numerous European countries were replaced by authoritarian and fascist ones, Leon Trotsky compared democracy to “a system of safety switches and fuses to guard against too strong currents of national or social hostility.” “Under the too high tension of class and international oppositions, the safety switches of democracy fuse or burst. This is the essence of the short-circuit of dictatorship,” he wrote.

The same thing is happening today in France—and not only there. Decades of social spending cuts by “left-wing” and right-wing governments, which repeatedly met with mass protests, have discredited the established parties to such an extent that they can no longer achieve stable majorities. Leading representatives of the bourgeoisie are increasingly openly toying with the idea of bringing the far right—Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella's *Rassemblement National* (RN) and Eric Zemmour and Marion Maréchal-Le Pen's *Reconquête*—to power.

Bruno Retailleau, the leader of the conservative *Les Républicains* (LR), who brought down Lecornu's cabinet with his

resignation, is open to working with the far right. Former President Nicolas Sarkozy has even asserted that the RN belongs to the “republican arc,” meaning it is clearly a democratic party. For his part, RN leader Bardella has declared himself willing to enter into a government agreement with the conservatives. In the election polls, the RN has a third of the votes, while no other party has more than 15 percent.

This development is reminiscent of the death throes of the Weimar Republic, when economic crisis and explosive social conflicts shattered the fragile framework of democracy. From 1930 onwards, no government had a parliamentary majority and ruled by emergency decrees and semi-dictatorial measures. Finally, the leaders of the state, the economy, and the military decided to bring Adolf Hitler to power. They needed the Nazis to break the backbone of the working class.

In the US, Trump is following a similar path. Ongoing wars and social decline under the Democrats' responsibility have paved his way back to the White House. Now he is using his power to fill top government positions with fascists, set the ICE Gestapo on migrants, smash social gains, and suppress resistance with the National Guard and the army. The Democrats are not resisting because, like Trump, they represent the interests of Wall Street and fear a working class movement far more than a fascist dictatorship.

France is moving in the same direction. President Macron's reappointment of Lecornu as head of government will not stop this, but accelerate it. Should Lecornu prove capable this time around of forming a new government, it will bow to the dictates of finance capital, which demands drastic cuts in social spending because the country's high debt now threatens its profits and the stability of the euro and the European Union.

France is at a crossroads: either the working class intervenes independently in political events, declares war on the capitalist oligarchy and its parties, and reorganises the economy and society on a socialist basis—or it will be subjected to a brutal dictatorship.

Mélenchon insists on compliance with the Constitution

In this situation, Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his LFI play a

decisive role in covering up the manoeuvres of the ruling class from the left, lulling the working class into complacency and disarming it politically.

If one believes Mélenchon, there is no capitalist crisis and no fascist danger. The fall of several governments in a short period of time is merely the result of the “contradiction between the legitimacy of the presidential elections and the parliamentary elections” inherent in the Fifth Republic. This, Mélenchon writes in his blog post of October 6, leads “to confusion in people’s minds, in institutions, among economic actors and among political decision-makers, which makes everything worse.”

Mélenchon identifies the president as the “source of the chaos” for not accepting the results of the early parliamentary elections and refusing to appoint a prime minister from the ranks of the New Popular Front (NFP), which emerged from the election as the strongest faction. Macron also failed to respond to the mass protests of recent weeks.

To solve the core of the problem, Mélenchon says, we must “return to the people.” “The legitimacy of the President of the Republic must be questioned in the forms permitted by our parliamentary democracy. I repeat: in the institutional forms available to us,” he said. Specifically, Mélenchon proposes impeachment proceedings against the president in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, which—as he himself knows—are so high that they cannot be fulfilled.

Elsewhere in his blog, Mélenchon also insists on strict adherence to the Constitution and respect for state institutions. “The political life of a people runs through its institutions. And respect for the functioning of its institutions requires strict respect for the will of the people. Otherwise, it is no longer a democracy,” he writes.

The whole world is in turmoil. The European powers are arming themselves as they have not done since World War II and are intensifying the war against the nuclear-armed power Russia. In the US, Trump is establishing a fascist dictatorship and encountering growing resistance from the working class. In France, mass protests and strikes against Macron and his government are taking place regularly, and the extreme right is on the rise. But Mélenchon responds by swearing allegiance to the Constitution and refraining from any call to struggle. A few constitutional changes—Mélenchon calls for a “Sixth Republic”—and the election of a different president are, he argues, sufficient to dispel the spectre of fascism.

Mélenchon’s attitude is reminiscent of the German Social Democrats, who relied on the Reich president and the Constitution in the fight against Hitler and—as Leon Trotsky wrote—believed “that the question of which class will be in power in today’s Germany, shaken to its core, does not depend on the fighting power of the German proletariat, ... but on whether the pure spirit of the Weimar Constitution (with the necessary amount of camphor and naphthalene) will settle in the presidential palace.”

Behind the radical rhetoric Mélenchon is capable of in his hour-long monologues lies a bourgeois politician who believes in the state.

The WSWS has shown in numerous articles how Mélenchon has contributed to the current crisis.

Born in 1951, he began his political career in Pierre Lambert’s

Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI), when it broke with Trotskyism and turned to François Mitterrand’s Socialist Party (PS). In 1976, he joined the PS himself and rose through the ranks, leading him to a deputy ministerial post under Lionel Jospin in 2000.

In 2008, Mélenchon left the PS and founded the Left Party. This was followed in 2016 by La France insoumise, for which he won just under 20 percent of the vote in the 2017 presidential election and 22 percent in 2022. Although LFI presented itself as a left-wing alternative to the PS and the Communist Party, it strictly rejected a class analysis of society and an orientation towards the working class. Instead, it relied on populist theories developed by sociologists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which are also invoked by other pseudo-left parties such as Podemos in Spain.

In his book *L’ère du peuple* (The Era of the People), published in 2014, Mélenchon writes: “Action will be carried out in the name of the general human interest: that will be the new battle cry. The people will lead it, not a particular class that rules over the rest of the population.”

It is now clear what lies behind this invocation of “the people”: the rejection of class struggle in favour of shabby political manoeuvres within the framework of the bourgeois order. In Mélenchon’s case, this goes hand in hand with unbridled nationalism: he professes his commitment to France’s interests, whether in foreign or economic policy. The international working class has no place in his universe.

Although he is now calling for his removal, Mélenchon played a key role in keeping the hated president in power. For the early parliamentary elections in 2024, LFI forged an alliance with the discredited Socialists, Communists, and Greens under the name New Popular Front (NFP) and ceded numerous constituencies to them. In the second round of voting, many NFP candidates withdrew in favour of the president’s party, Ensemble, thereby strengthening Macron’s base. Subsequent governments were also able to rely on the support of the NFP time and again.

In the recent government crisis, Mélenchon did not participate in the negotiations with Macron in order to avoid discrediting himself too much. The other parties in the NFP—the Socialists, the Greens and the Communists—worked intensively with Macron to help him resolve the crisis. They repeatedly offered to form a government under his presidency. And while Mélenchon remained publicly reserved, two leading LFI officials, Manuel Bompard and Mathilde Panot, appealed to the Socialists and Greens to form a joint government.

The struggle against Macron and the threat of a takeover by the far right can only be waged against Mélenchon and his LFI. It requires a socialist perspective that unites the international working class, not populist slogans that paralyse and mislead workers and young people.



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