

French politics lurches right after the death of a fascist

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The death of a fascist near an event organised by France Unbowed (La France Insoumise, LFI) has triggered a right-wing rampage in France. A broad front ranging from open fascists to the far-right Rassemblement National (RN), President Macron, his government and the Socialist Party (PS) is outdoing each other with attacks and threats against Jean-Luc Mélenchon's party.

The campaign, reminiscent of the glorification of murdered Trump supporter Charlie Kirk in the United States, marks a sharp shift to the right by France's ruling elites. Four weeks before the upcoming local elections and 15 months before the end of the president's regular term, they have apparently concluded that it is time to pave the way for Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella's RN to come to power.

Twenty-three-year-old Quentin Deranque died on February 12 as a result of a brawl that broke out following an event at the University of Lyon organised by Palestinian LFI Member of the European Parliament Rima Hassan.

Deranque was working as a security guard for the identitarian group Némésis, which is notorious for its Islamophobic provocations. It protested against Hassan's appearance with posters reading "Islamо-leftists out of the universities." Deranque himself was a former member of Action Française, the country's oldest fascist organisation. In 2025, he founded his own local fascist group, which is closely networked with others.

Némésis and most of the bourgeois media claim that the fascists were attacked by LFI stewards belonging to the Jeune Garde group. This is disputed by participants at the meeting. One told the *Mediapart* platform that the fascists had attacked them as they were leaving the meeting. In the brawl that ensued, Deranque suffered brain injuries, from which he later died.

LFI has rejected any political responsibility for Deranque's death. Party coordinator Manuel Bompard referred to "unfounded, serious and false accusations." Mélenchon denied any connection between LFI and the fascist's death and emphasised that his party is against violence and has been itself the target of violent attacks.

This did not prevent the government from sharply denouncing LFI. Government spokeswoman Maud Bregeon accused the party of bearing "moral responsibility for the climate of violence." Justice Minister Gérald Darmanin, who was himself formerly close to Action Française, claimed that "it is quite obvious" that "the ultra-left killed Deranque." He accused LFI of "indulgence towards political violence." President Macron described LFI as "left-wing extremist" and accused it of antisemitism, which "contradicts the fundamental principles of the Republic."

The police arrested eleven people associated with LFI, including two employees of a member of parliament. The fascists involved in the brawl, on the other hand, went unpunished.

The Rassemblement National demanded that Mélenchon's party be declared illegal. Party leader Jordan Bardella said the far left had murdered and Mélenchon must be held accountable for what had happened. LFI was a movement "completely outside the Republic," he said.

Fascist groups called for violence and followed through with actions. "We will not be satisfied with lighting candles and lamenting," warned Stanislas Tyl, spokesperson for the identitarian group Les Natifs. "I swear today that we will pursue you at the ballot box, in the courts, in the streets, in the media, everywhere!" The group released a video showing activists splattering fake blood on LFI's headquarters in Paris and putting up posters against "Antifa" and Mélenchon. Numerous LFI campaign offices were sprayed with graffiti, and the Paris headquarters had to be evacuated after a bomb threat.

But the most notable reaction came from the Socialist Party (PS). It joined the right-wing chorus of condemnation and ruled out any future cooperation with LFI.

"It is clear that there can be no alliance between the Socialists or reformist left-wing parties and LFI in the second round of the local elections; the relationship is over," declared former President François Hollande. As for the presidential elections, Hollande added that he hereby gave his promise, his commitment and his bet that there would be

no place for Mélenchon in the second round.

In practical terms, Hollande is saying that he would prefer the far right to take power to Mélenchon winning the election. In the polls, the RN is well ahead of all other parties with around 35 percent, and there are numerous candidates among the conservative Republicans and in Macron's liberal camp who would jump at the chance to join an RN-led government.

Then at 3 p.m. on February 17, the entire National Assembly, including the deputies of LFI and the Communist Party, rose for a minute of silence for the slain far-right activist Deranque. The motion was proposed by Deputy Éric Ciotti of the right-wing Union des Droites pour la République party.

Workers must reject the right-wing smear campaign against Mélenchon and his party. It is directed against LFI but targets the working class. It is intended to set an example, declaring and criminalizing any opposition to the genocide in Gaza, war and rearmament, social spending cuts and pension cuts as "left-wing extremism" and "violent." And it is intended to pave the way for the far-right RN to come to power.

The reason for this is not Mélenchon, who, despite his radical rhetoric, is a tried and tested supporter of the bourgeois order, but the deep crisis of global capitalism. The drive for profits, trade wars and massive increases in military spending requires massive attacks on workers' incomes, social benefits and democratic rights, which can only be enforced with fascist methods. This is the reason for the rise of far-right parties in the US, Japan and throughout Europe.

To combat fascism and war, lessons must also be drawn from the bankruptcy of Mélenchon's own politics. He himself nurtured and bred the viper that is now biting his throat.

Mélenchon, who spent most of his political career in the Socialist Party, has always refused to fight for the mobilization of the working class to overthrow capitalism and reorganize society on a socialist basis. His call for a popular or bourgeois revolution means subordinating the independent interests of the working class to the interests of the wealthy middle classes and the French bourgeoisie.

After receiving 8 million votes in the 2022 presidential election, Mélenchon formed an electoral alliance with the Socialists, Communists and Greens in the 2024 parliamentary elections, which he called the New Popular Front. He agreed on a right-wing program with these discredited parties and helped them—and, in the second round, Macron's camp—gain additional seats in parliament through electoral agreements. This was justified on the grounds of keeping the far right out of government.

World Socialist Web Site warned even then that the New Popular Front would not weaken the far right but strengthen it. We wrote:

The policy of the New Popular Front does not stop the rise of the RN, but favours it. The fight against the extreme right and the threat of dictatorship is not a question of electoral tactics, but of class struggle. The rise of the RN and similar parties in other countries is only the sharpest expression of the shift to the right of the entire ruling class. Their policies of war, militarism and social cuts are not compatible with democracy.

A movement against war and dictatorship can only be built from below, through the independent mobilisation of the working class. The task of such a movement is not to put pressure on the union bureaucracies, Mélenchon's LFI party, or other establishment parties to change their policies. They will not.

It must fight for the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of a workers government and the reorganisation of society on a socialist basis. Without breaking the power of finance capital and the corporations, not a single problem can be solved. Building such a movement requires the construction of a new party, the Parti de l'égalité socialiste in France and sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) internationally.

This is being confirmed once again today.



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