

French election: The Left Front's Mélenchon stands against neo-fascist Marine Le Pen

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The Left Front (FG) announced on May 15 that its candidate in the recent presidential election, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, was standing as deputy for the 11th constituency of Nord-Pas-de-Calais in the legislative elections on June 10 and 17. His main opponent will be Marine Le Pen, the neo-fascist National Front (FN) candidate in the presidential election.

In this constituency is Hénin-Beaumont, a town of 25,000 inhabitants hard hit over the last few decades by closures in mining and other industries. The town came into prominence last year because the FN obtained a high vote in the local elections against the Socialist Party (PS).

Campaigning against the corruption of Gérard Dalongeville, the PS mayor of Hénin-Beaumont, and criticising the destruction of jobs and impoverishment under the PS, the FN was able to gain influence. (See, “France: Near win for neo-fascists in Hénin-Beaumont by-election“)

Marine Le Pen came first in the constituency with 31.4 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election on April 22. François Hollande, the PS candidate, got 60 percent of the vote in the run-off against the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy.

In an interview published on May 15 in *Libération*, Mélenchon explained his reasons for standing in Hénin-Beaumont: “There were three parameters for choosing the constituency: a strong social and working class content; the battle against the FN; representing the renewal of the left where the PS has run out of steam, caught up with scandals and personal squabbles.”

Mélenchon explained his decision to stand in Hénin-Beaumont because of his wish to continue the programme of the bourgeois “left” parties where the PS

is no longer capable of doing so: “If the largest left party had done its work in Hénin-Beaumont we wouldn’t be where we are now. The Left Front can take over.”

This sentence sums up well the aspirations of Mélenchon: to take over from a PS electorally undermined by the hostility of workers towards its pro-capitalist policies, in order to maintain the influence of the bourgeois “left”. Such policies offer nothing to workers and will do nothing to check the political advance of the FN, whatever the result of the Hénin-Beaumont election.

For its part, the PS is well aware of the role played by the FG, an electoral alliance made up of the Stalinist Communist Party (PCF), the Left Party (PG), a split-off from the PS led by Mélenchon, and the Unitary Left (GU), a split-off from the NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party). Mélenchon called without conditions for a vote for Hollande in the second round of the presidential elections.

The PS, which is still fielding a candidate on the Hénin-Beaumont constituency, does not exclude support for Mélenchon in the second round. Some in the PS want to support Mélenchon in the first round.

The Left Front openly intends to do what it did in the presidential elections—that is, call for a vote for the PS. In an interview on *France Inter* radio, Mélenchon said: “As the FG’s magnificent noble act in the second round, let’s admit it, took the decision—because without the four million FG votes, whatever the brilliant score of François Hollande might have got, he would not have had the majority—we have the right to respect.”

The programme put forward by Mélenchon is hostile to any movement of the working class. Advocating a “citizens’ unity” of the exploited and the exploiters, he

only won 11 percent of the votes on April 22, while Le Pen got nearly 18 percent. He only attracted the support of those who vote for parties putting themselves forward as being “to the left” of the PS (See, “What was French Left Front candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s campaign?”).

Mélenchon himself bears some of the responsibility for the impoverishment of Nord-Pas-de-Calais as he was a PS leader in the 1980s when the government of former PS president François Mitterrand was deindustrialising the region. He was a member of the PS-dominated Plural Left government (1997-2002).

This underlines the fundamentally dishonest nature of Mélenchon’s pretensions that he embodies a “socialist” alternative to Marine Le Pen. As he put it: “At the beginning of the 21st century does the former mining area, the cradle of the workers’ movement, make the choice of a far right deputy or of historical socialism?”

In fact Mélenchon has nothing to do with “historical socialism”. On the one hand, he is the ally of the bureaucratic carcass of the Stalinist PCF, which betrayed the 1936 general strike by supporting the social democratic government of Léon Blum. It supported the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, and then betrayed the 1968 general strike by supporting General de Gaulle. Mélenchon himself comes out of the radical 1968 student milieu, having spent some years in the petty-bourgeois Internationalist Communist Organisation (OCI) before joining the ranks of the PS.

Mélenchon sets his candidacy in line, not with a socialist tradition, but with Latin American bourgeois governments and European petty-bourgeois parties, modelling himself on Greece’s SYRIZA, with which he is allied.

He declared that the high vote for SYRIZA in the Greek election represented “a triumph for our SYRIZA comrades, which is the confirmation that the citizens’ revolutions in South America are coming to Europe. In Greece, we are now the leading left party. In France it’ll take less than ten years.”

Since its electoral victory, SYRIZA has indicated that it is ready to participate in a government, which would impose the diktats of the European Union. During the election campaign, SYRIZA stated that Greece would on no pretext leave the EU.

In France, the FG’s perspective is to “advise” Hollande. Mélenchon stated: “If he [Hollande] resists,

it will be with our solutions. Because the European social democrats have shown that they don’t know how to proceed in any country in Europe.”

The empty phrases of Mélenchon, whose main ambition is precisely to try to suggest “solutions” to the European social democrats, should be linked with those of his Italian ally *Rifondazione Comunista*. It participated in the Prodi government (2006-2008), which carried out reactionary policies, cutting pensions and voting credits for the wars of Italian imperialism in Afghanistan and Lebanon. After this experience, *Rifondazione* lost all its parliamentary representation.

The role of Mélenchon and the Left Front in France is similar. It is not preparing a counterattack against the bourgeois “left”, but precisely the bitter disillusionment, which will facilitate the political rise of Marine Le Pen.



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