

New Popular Front embraces war in French snap election campaign

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17 June 2024

Events are rapidly confirming that the New Popular Front alliance called by Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the French snap elections is a political trap for workers seeking to deny the far right a new victory after its surge in the June 9 European elections. The New Popular Front is advancing a war policy for French imperialism compatible with President Emmanuel Macron, the “president of the rich.”

Yesterday, the New Popular Front held its first rally, in Montreuil, outside Paris. Leaders of the New Popular Front’s four main parties spoke: François Ruffin of Mélenchon’s France Unbowed (LFI) party, Clémentine Autain of LFI and formerly of the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), Marine Tondelier of the Greens, and Olivier Faure of Hollande’s Socialist Party (PS). Ruffin, who launched the call for the New Popular Front alliance, claimed: “We have not won yet, but we have won against the slide towards the worst and towards feeling resigned.”

Hollande’s Socialist Party National Secretary Olivier Faure said, “Let us swear an oath never to abandon each other.” He said he opposed “putting an equal sign” between the New Popular Front and the far-right National Rally (RN), rejecting official accusations of antisemitism against Mélenchon for his statements of solidarity with Gaza. Faure said the New Popular Front has “people who are sometimes noisy, who sometimes annoy certain Frenchmen ... but the program they defend is one of justice.”

Before the rally, however, former PS European candidate Raphaël Glucksmann had made clear that the basis of this alliance is support for global imperialist war plans. He supports NATO intervention in Ukraine against Russia and has denied that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. While denying the Gaza genocide, he echoes NATO’s anti-Chinese war propaganda, making unsubstantiated accusations against China over a

supposed genocide of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

Glucksmann said the New Popular Front is committed to escalation against Russia and repudiating Mélenchon’s earlier talk of a Ukraine cease-fire. Citing internal talks in the New Popular Front on the electoral platform, Glucksmann said:

It was an ideological trial of strength, it was hard. But we have obtained an extremely clear engagement on arms deliveries to Ukraine, Ukraine’s borders, on unwavering support for the Ukrainian resistance.

In response, Macron sent a signal of support to the New Popular Front yesterday. His Renaissance party signaled that it would not run a candidate against François Hollande, the widely despised former president of France whom the New Popular Front named as its legislative candidate as a PS member in the Corrèze region. Macron’s message said this decision was taken out of “respect for [Hollande’s] former position” as president of France.

NATO war plans with Russia are at the center of Macron’s calculations in calling the snap general elections in two rounds, June 30 and July 7. Macron called these elections just after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also called snap elections for July 4, and Macron and other NATO officials called to send troops to Ukraine. Both Britain and France will therefore have new governments as the July 9 NATO war summit is convened in Washington to prepare a direct NATO intervention against Russia.

Macron’s snap election call is a desperate bid to prepare the state machine to wage war on the workers at home so it can wage war on Russia abroad. Last year, to finance

the related surge in military spending, Macron slashed pensions by decree, despite overwhelming popular opposition and mass strikes. The strikes and protests this policy generated were widely acknowledged, even by the capitalist media, as France's deepest political crisis since the May 1968 general strike.

The military escalation NATO is planning against Russia, like last year's pension cuts, is opposed by an overwhelming majority of the population. Polls found 68 percent of Frenchmen, 80 percent of Germans and 90 percent of Poles oppose Macron's call to send troops to Ukraine to fight Russia. The question Macron aims to resolve with these elections is what government could best force this monumentally reckless escalation, which threatens to provoke nuclear war, on the workers.

In this explosive situation, enormous uncertainty hangs over the election result. Polls show the far-right RN with 33 percent of the vote, the Popular Front coalition with 25 percent, and Macron's coalition with 20 percent. The right-wing The Republicans would have 7 percent and the far-right Reconquest party 3 percent, with the rest of the vote divided between smaller parties mostly allied to the Popular Front.

With Macron unable to assemble a parliamentary majority from his own party, the question is whether he would form a government with RN or Popular Front forces. Last week, the German tabloid *Bild* reported that EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had told the leadership of her Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) that Macron was considering putting the RN in power. Macron claimed, von der Leyen said, that the RN would therefore become unpopular, leading to lasting "disenchantment" in France with the far right.

Such reports, together with widespread opposition in France at the repressive nature of Macron's regime, led to protests and social anger against his collusion with the far right. The attempt of the parliamentarians, academics and middle-class functionaries of the New Popular Front to capitalize on this anger is, however, deeply cynical.

With LFI's alignment with the PS, the New Popular Front is offering itself as another potential party of capitalist government and war. During the 2022 elections, Mélenchon had offered to serve as a prime minister under Macron and even under a neo-fascist president. Now, his hailing of the New Popular Front's investiture in Corréze of Hollande—who is widely despised for imposing austerity, a state of emergency suspending democratic rights, and for invading Mali—only confirms this orientation.

Indeed, the decision of LFI to call for a Popular Front is not merely empty rhetoric or demagogy. As Mélenchon entered into politics as a student shortly after the May 1968 general strike, he joined Pierre Lambert's *Organisation communiste internationaliste* (OCI), which was then breaking with Trotskyism and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). While he joined the PS in 1976, ultimately becoming a senator and minister, Mélenchon was thus from the outset aware of Trotsky's critique of the counterrevolutionary role of Stalinism and the Popular Front.

The liberals, social democrats and Stalinists of the 1934-1938 Popular Front blocked a struggle of the working class for power and for socialism during the 1936 general strike. The capitalist government they formed then brutally repressed strikes that broke out over the next two years. The Popular Front thus blocked the last great revolutionary opportunities in Europe during World War II. Ultimately, the majority of French liberal and social democratic parliamentarians voted for dictatorial powers to Nazi-collaborationist dictator Philippe Pétain in 1940.

While Mélenchon left the PS in 2009 to form the Left Party and then the LFI, he maintained this essential orientation, born of the rejection of Trotskyism, to strangling and disarming the working class and blocking a revolutionary struggle for workers' power and for socialism. This took a particularly egregious form in his role during last year's struggle against Macron's pension cuts. The LFI-PCF-PS alliance launched empty moral appeals to Macron and supported the union bureaucracy's decision to abort and shut down strikes against it.

The sharpest warnings must be made: The New Popular Front, while it seeks to exploit working class anger against neo-fascism, speaks for pro-imperialist layers of the middle class who do not oppose war or dictatorship. A movement against imperialist war, austerity and capitalism can only be built in the working class by opposing the New Popular Front. That struggle is inseparable from the struggle for Trotskyism against the politics of Stalinism and Popular Frontism.



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