

How the French New Popular Front strengthens the far right

Peter Schwarz
26 June 2024

A few days before the first round of the French parliamentary elections Sunday, the far-right National Rally (RN) is clearly in the lead. Depending on the poll, between 32 and 36 percent of voters intend to vote for the far-right party. A further 4 percent are accounted for by the wing of the divided right-wing The Republicans (LR) party that supports an alliance with the RN.

The New Popular Front—an electoral alliance of the pseudo-left La France insoumise, the Socialist Party (PS), the Communist Party and the Greens—is well behind with between 27 and 29 percent. Ensemble, the electoral alliance of President Emmanuel Macron, is far behind with 20 percent.

How this will affect the distribution of seats in parliament will only be decided in the second round of voting on July 7, to which candidates who achieve at least 12.5 percent in the first round will be admitted. As further agreements are possible, it is difficult to predict the exact result. Most forecasts assume that the RN will become the strongest parliamentary group with around 250 seats, but will fall short of the absolute majority of 289 seats.

The WSWS already warned last week that the New Popular Front is a trap for the working class. The aim of the new elections called by Macron is “to carry out a far-right restructuring of official politics before the July 9 NATO summit in Washington, which will approve a massive escalation of the war [against Russia].” The New Popular Front is not an opponent, but “a full participant in the right-wing reorganization of the political establishment. ... It does not propose any significant social reforms and aggressively signals support for NATO’s war with Russia.”

The course of the election campaign has confirmed this warning. The New Popular Front is not only

constantly reaffirming its willingness to support even the most right-wing policies if it does win the election. It is also allowing itself to be driven forward by the most reactionary forces in its ranks.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of LFI, who received almost 8 million votes in the 2022 presidential election and only narrowly missed out in the run-off with 22 percent, has allied himself with some of the most reactionary and hated politicians in France in the name of “unity against the right.”

Raphaël Glucksmann, the lead PS candidate in the European elections on June 9 and one of the architects of the New Popular Front, supports the Israeli genocide in Gaza and is one of the pioneers of the NATO war against Russia. He lived in Georgia and Ukraine for many years, served as an adviser to the controversial, pro-Western Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. He was married to Eka Zgouladze, who was Georgia’s Minister of Justice and—after the pro-Western coup in 2014—Ukraine’s Deputy Interior Minister.

François Hollande, French president from 2012 to 2017, is running for a seat in parliament for the Socialist Party—an unprecedented move for a former president. Hollande’s time in office was characterised by fierce attacks on the working class. He deported Roma living in France to Eastern Europe, started the reactionary war in Mali, imposed a two-year state of emergency, and passed a reactionary labour law against which millions took to the streets. In the end, he was so unpopular that he decided not to run for a second term.

Hollande is also the political mentor of his successor Emmanuel Macron, the “president of the rich.” After his election victory, he brought Macron, an independent investment banker, into the presidency as an adviser and deputy secretary general and later appointed him economy minister.

Hollande and other right-wing members of the Popular Front are now primarily campaigning against Mélenchon, with whom they are formally allied. Hollande has publicly called on Mélenchon to shut up. “If he wants to help the New Popular Front, he has to stand aside and shut up,” Hollande said at an election event.

Former PS Prime Minister Lionel Jospin declared that Mélenchon was not a solution. Fabien Roussel, leader of the Stalinist French Communist Party, said: “Jean-Luc Mélenchon is not part of the political landscape of the New Popular Front.” And Green Party leader Marine Tondelier announced that Mélenchon would never become prime minister.

Mélenchon responds to these attacks by constantly apologising for his own policies and imploring his allies that it is he who brings them votes and paves the way for them to return to office. This was shown particularly clearly in an interview broadcast by the television channel France2 on Monday.

Mélenchon repeatedly emphasised that he was not seeking the office of head of government. He would be prepared to do so if called upon, he indicated, “But I will not impose myself.” Finally, he emphasised twice: “I am not a candidate running for anything.” He also warned his critics inside the PS: “Mélenchon is a man who opens doors in the working class areas. Hollande is a man who makes people close them.” Mélenchon added that he is “a trump card” for the New Popular Front.

Mélenchon could not make it clearer that he sees his task as promoting the completely discredited politicians of the Socialist Party.

At the same time, Mélenchon made it clear that should the RN win the election and form the next government, he would reject any mobilisation against it. President Macron had previously warned in a podcast that the election of the extreme left or right would lead to “civil war.” It had already become known last week that Macron was considering declaring a state of emergency and establishing authoritarian rule if the election did not go his way.

Mélenchon has now assured that he will play the role of the loyal opposition if Macron appoints a government under RN leader Jordan Bardella. Asked whether he would respect the “verdict of the voting booths” if the RN won the majority and formed the

government, he replied: “By definition, yes.” Mélenchon claimed his role would be to ensure that the RN respected the French capitalist republic and its “fundamental principles.”

Mélenchon’s subordination to his right-wing allies and his willingness to serve as a loyal opposition under an RN government are not a misunderstanding. Despite his sometimes radical demeanour, he is a thoroughly bourgeois politician. He was a member of the pro-capitalist Socialist Party for many years and even served as a minister under Lionel Jospin. In the past, he even declared his willingness to become prime minister under both President Macron and a President Le Pen.

He explicitly rejects the class struggle in favour of vague populism. His social policy does not go beyond minimal tax increases for the rich. He does not touch capitalist private property.

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.



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