

The French government's crisis and the bankruptcy of the New Popular Front

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Tuesday evening, on the eve of the Paris Olympics, President Emmanuel Macron went on national television to announce that the government of his Ensemble party would remain in office despite losing the July 7 election. Declaring the ministers he appointed would remain in power until the games end in mid-August, he provocatively invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, despised worldwide for Israeli genocide in Gaza, to attend the Olympics.

If he can trample on the election result and brazenly embrace Netanyahu, this is above all due to the bankruptcy of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his New Popular Front (NFP) alliance, who act as enablers of Macron.

After the NFP placed first in the July 7 election, there was a surge of popular enthusiasm over the surprise defeat of the National Rally (RN) and the debacle suffered by Macron. Calls circulated for Macron's resignation and for the abrogation of the unpopular pension cuts he imposed last year. Attending the July 9 NATO summit in Washington, Macron did not dare publicly reiterate his call to send ground troops to fight Russia in Ukraine.

But the NFP squandered the political opportunity, first building election alliances with Macron on the false grounds that this would block the neo-fascists, then publicly debating whether to join a government still committed to carrying out Macron's policies. The recent strengthening of Macron is a bitter lesson on the unprincipled alliances championed by Mélenchon. As the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, warned after Macron called the snap elections and Mélenchon formed the NFP alliance, the NFP is a trap for the workers.

Not once has Mélenchon sought to mobilize in struggle the millions of workers who gave him their votes to oppose both Macron and the RN. Though it had the support of all of France's union bureaucracies, the NFP

failed to call a single strike to mobilize the power of the working class against war, genocide and fascism. It remained silent when the press revealed the Macron government's secret talks with the RN.

On Tuesday night, Macron, sure of support from within the NFP, refused to form a government based on the July 7 election results, stating, "Evidently, we must until mid-August be concentrated on the Games." He also rejected out of hand calls to abrogate his pension cuts: "I think what is urgent in our country is not to destroy what we have just done, but to build and advance."

Asked about popular suspicions that he is sympathetic to neo-fascism, Macron unapologetically admitted his role in the rise of the far right. "Look, I accept my share of responsibility in this. Anyway, the extremes are rising everywhere in Europe, everywhere."

Macron also dismissed France2's questions on the unpopularity of his banning of Russian athletes from key events because of the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine, while placing no restrictions on Israeli athletes despite the Gaza genocide. Macron declared, "The situation is profoundly different. Israel responded to a terrorist attack on October 7, by Hamas."

Reveling in his ties to far-right and genocidal forces, Macron said Netanyahu "would be welcome, despite our disagreements, which are profound." He added, "But having disagreements, trying to find useful solutions, this does not mean however breaking all relations."

Macron is able to advance a program of war, genocide, austerity and fascist reaction, after it was repudiated by voters, only thanks to the fecklessness of the NFP. It failed to reach an agreement on a potential prime minister until a few hours before Macron spoke. The fact that Mélenchon ultimately agreed to the choice of 37-year-old Lucie Castets—an unknown Finance Ministry official trained at the same elite National Administration School (ENA) as Macron—exposes the class gulf separating his

France Unbowed party (LFI) from the workers.

Events have vindicated the warnings made by the PES on the role of Mélenchon and his middle class “populist” LFI. The LFI worked in stages to strangle left-wing opposition to Macron and the RN. First, after Macron called the snap elections on June 9, LFI formed the NFP alliance with the big business Socialist Party (PS) and its political satellites. The PES warned:

This is a political trap for those seeking to halt the rise of the far right and police-state militarism. It aims to block a struggle for socialism by subordinating workers to a debilitating alliance with parties of the capitalist government like the bourgeois Socialist Party (PS), the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and the Greens. These corrupt parties can only lead their followers to disaster. ...

Mélenchon’s Popular Front is not a force for peace and democracy. Its perspective is a government standing on capitalist property relations, defending the interests of French imperialism. It ties workers and youth to the pro-austerity PS, which supports war with Russia under the guise of “aid to Ukraine,” and whose record of back-channel ties to the far right dates to its foundation in 1971 by the former Nazi collaborationist François Mitterrand.

The NFP adopted an election program backing the dispatch of French troops to Ukraine and strengthening French military, police and intelligence agencies. This was the prelude to the NFP’s formation, after the first round of the elections on June 30, of an alliance with Macron’s own Ensemble coalition, supposedly to fight the RN. Warning against this alliance, the PES declared:

Mélenchon and the NFP are not offering workers a way to build a mass movement in the working class against war and fascism. ...

The NFP is instead working to strangle such a struggle. It is cutting electoral deals, constituency by constituency, to form a capitalist coalition government with Macron, in which Mélenchon might serve as Macron’s prime minister.

The NFP’s role after July 7 vindicated these analyses. The PS, PCF and Greens promoted as a possible prime minister Professor Laurence Tubiana, who openly called for ditching the meager promises of social spending in the NFP’s program to instead form a government with Macron. This was a green light for Macron to try to integrate broad layers of the NFP into what would be a right-wing, Macron-led government.

This week, Mélenchon told the Italian daily *La Repubblica* that if such a government were to be formed, ceding the mantle of opposition to the neo-fascists, RN leader Marine “Le Pen would immediately gain 10 percent more of the vote.” But this is just what most of the NFP that Mélenchon formed is working to do.

Whatever government Macron ultimately forms will rule against the people and find itself at war with the workers. Nine out of 10 people in France oppose his pension cuts to fund military escalation and his calls to send troops to Ukraine. But workers cannot wait for the NFP bureaucracies to oppose Macron: They are instead supporting his government. Struggles against Macron and Le Pen can only be waged by organizations of rank-and-file workers, mobilized independently of the bureaucracies against imperialist war, genocide, austerity and capitalism.

Defeating the RN and Macron urgently requires building an alternative on the left to the NFP. The basis for this is the defense by the PES of the political independence of the working class and of the heritage of Trotskyism against Stalinism and the middle class pseudo-left. The endorsement of the NFP by this entire pseudo-left milieu—including the Pabloite New Anti-Capitalist Party, Workers Struggle (LO), and the Morenoite *Révolution permanente*—exposes it as an accomplice of imperialism.

The party whose program and perspective have been vindicated by the bankruptcy of Mélenchon, and that must now be built, is the PES.



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