

Macron's naming of a right-wing government in France and the bankruptcy of Mélenchon

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President Emmanuel Macron's naming of Michel Barnier as prime minister marks a historic breakdown of French democracy. Macron refused to select a prime minister from Jean-Luc Mélenchon's New Popular Front (NFP), which came first in the July 7 elections. Instead, after seven weeks of talks, he named a minority, right-wing government that will be France's first since the Nazi collaborationist Vichy regime to rely on far-right support.

The far-right National Rally (RN) has stated that it supports Barnier, a proponent of the NATO alliance, of deep European Union (EU) austerity measures and of violent anti-immigrant measures, including a five-year ban on immigration to France.

The unprecedented seven-week negotiations on the new government aimed at disenfranchising the electorate and imposing policies rejected by workers in France and internationally. Macron's call to send NATO troops to Ukraine to fight Russia faces 89 percent opposition across Western Europe, and his pension cuts imposed last year in the face of mass strikes to fund the country's military build-up are rejected by 91 percent of the population. Yet the banks and the military-police machine closed ranks behind a far-right government to force war and austerity on the people.

Protests are called today against the government, and explosive class conflict is brewing as Barnier prepares a draconian austerity budget. Polls show 57 percent of the French distrust Barnier, and 74 percent believe that Macron ignored the elections. To fight the Macron-Barnier regime, however, workers must draw critical political conclusions—above all, on the bankruptcy of Mélenchon and the NFP, which served as the enablers of Macron.

Throughout the summer, the NFP refrained from mobilizing the millions of workers who voted for the NFP. As the Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) warned, the formation of the NFP by Mélenchon's France Unbowed (LFI) party, the big-business Socialist Party (PS), the Greens and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) was not a step forward but a trap for the workers. After the July 7

elections, the PES wrote:

The NFP is, however, swinging sharply to the right in the aftermath of the election, as the product of its very own bankrupt, opportunist election strategy. It entered into an alliance with Macron against the RN, withdrawing its own candidates to strengthen Ensemble and Macron. After the elections, Mélenchon has focused entirely on negotiations with right-wing forces in the capitalist state, repeatedly asking Macron to name him prime minister, which Macron has refused to do.

Events vindicated the PES's assessment of the reactionary character of Mélenchon's strategy. By demobilizing the workers and falsely promoting Macron as a democratic opponent of neo-fascism, it bought Macron time to assemble a right-wing government based on a de facto alliance between the Ensemble and the RN.

Figures such as Mélenchon and organizations like the NFP serve a definite function: to provide political cover for the state apparatus and ruling class that is hurtling violently to the right and to block the independent political intervention of the working class on its own program.

Mélenchon and the NFP have their counterparts in every major capitalist country: Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, the Left Party in Germany, Bernie Sanders and Alexandria-Ocasio Cortez in the US. In every case, the role of these figures and parties is to facilitate the further shift to the right of the entire political system.

A counteroffensive of strikes and protests in the working class must be prepared and built, mobilizing left-wing sentiment against this illegitimate president and government. The vast, objectively revolutionary opposition to the existing order in the working class must be freed from the deadening grip of the NFP and its allies in the union bureaucracies.

Last year, polls showed a large majority of the French

people supported a general strike to halt Macron's pension cuts and bring down his government, amid explosive anger at the repression of protests as Macron imposed the cuts without even a vote in parliament. Yet the union bureaucracies, backed by Mélenchon, simply called off strikes after the judiciary rubber-stamped the cuts. This paved the way for a continued escalation of the war and an accelerating swing towards the far right in official French politics.

The decades-long suppression of the class struggle by the parties making up the NFP lets the RN demagogically appeal to social anger on a reactionary, anti-immigrant basis. Mélenchon's promotion of populism and nationalism against the international class unity of workers against capitalism also helps promote the RN as a seemingly acceptable option for workers embittered by the treachery of the PS, PCF and Mélenchon. This is epitomized in Mélenchon's 2022 statement that he could serve as prime minister under a neo-fascist president.

The working class cannot defend democracy and oppose the capitalist establishment's violent shift to the right by trying to impose an NFP government to cut deals with Macron and the RN. A movement must be built in the working class against fascism, imperialist war and capitalism, based on an international struggle for workers' power and for socialism.

This requires building rank-and-file organizations of struggle in the working class, independent of the union bureaucracies tied to the NFP, around a genuinely revolutionary program. The PES proposes the following demands:

NATO's war escalation against Russia, rejected by the overwhelming majority of the population, must be stopped. The military budget Macron imposed last year to pay for it, financed by his pension cuts, must be rescinded. France must leave the NATO military alliance as part of an international struggle of the working class to dismantle NATO and halt imperialist wars, including France's wars in its former colonial empire in the Middle East and Africa.

Workers in France and internationally must block the production and delivery of arms to the Israeli regime. Israeli officials charged with genocide by international tribunals, as well as French and NATO officials complicit in this genocide, must be prosecuted. The prosecution of opponents of the Gaza genocide on antisemitism charges must end, and workers must oppose attempts by extreme-right forces to use their support for the Israeli regime's genocide to falsely posture as friends of Jews and opponents of antisemitism.

Macron's long record of violent repression and mass arrests targeting strikes and protests shows that the executive presidency is the nerve center of the emerging police state.

The rapid emergence of the extreme right at the center of official French and European politics reveals the clear and present danger that this machine will develop into a fascist dictatorship. The executive presidency must be dissolved, together with France's riot and military police units.

The mobilization of the working class requires irreconcilable hostility to the bourgeoisie's attempts to divide it by inciting nationalism. Workers must fight against the fascist measures now widespread across France and the EU: state bans and persecution of immigrants, the construction of mass detention camps housing refugees, and humiliating laws banning Islamic religious clothing, including those supported by the NFP.

Macron's illegitimate pension cuts must be rescinded, and workers must reject the lie that there is no money for jobs and social programs. The trillions of euros in public funds plundered in EU bailouts by the financial aristocracy in recent decades must be impounded and used to meet the social needs of the French and European working class. This requires the mobilization of workers and the emergence of democratic rank-and-file workplace organizations to take control of economic life out of the hands of the financial markets and the police state.

The best allies of workers in France against war, fascism, genocide, austerity and capitalism are workers across Europe and internationally. As Barnier prepares savage austerity measures coordinated with other EU governments, the European working class needs to be politically united in a struggle against austerity and capitalism.

The Parti de l'égalité socialiste, the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is building a socialist leadership in the working class, which must have as its aim the conquest of power, the abolition of the existing state institutions and the establishment of a workers' state, to reorganize social and economic life on the basis of social need, not private profit.

This revolutionary offensive of the working class must be developed as a European and international movement, replacing the capitalist European Union with the United Socialist States of Europe.



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