

Analysis: What Must the French Left do After the Legislative Elections?

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The decisive 2017 electoral cycle has ended. Politics are no better. The left as a whole has problems, but their more left-wing supporters are in a more favorable position. Which is an opportunity that calls us to redouble our efforts.

To organize the people

Dispersion in the political arena, unusual levels of abstention, loss of power of traditional parties... All signs lead to the conclusion that there's a real political crisis, combined with a regime crisis. Superficial changes in discourse and Constitutional amends are not enough and are useless. To facelift the left and change nothing is nonsensical. The times demand an unprecedented transformation in all senses. The left needs to be created from scratch again or metamorphosed—not developed.

The “worker movement” has collapsed—the crisis of unions is a very important fact— without the “social movement” taking the lead. Radicalism isn't exempt from the tension between a default pragmatism (with the pretext that utopia is not achievable) and the longing for “better days” (it's not always clear whether this is revolutionary hope or a remembrance of social democracy). The alleged “realism” that socialism defends is stranded in the sand, but the “alternative” has also not been able to prove its strength and credibility.

Throughout the years, the French Communist Party has been immobile, remembering its days of glory, while the Socialist Party has become the “equitative manager” of global capitalism. Thus, both parties have ceased to be spaces for the promotion of the desires of the masses, especially workers and urban citizens. The violence of the political class, the increasing passivity of citizens and the force of the right-wing National Front are the stronger signs of this regressive process. Politics obey to the law of horror vacui: when the forces that exercise the strongest criticism aren't up to the task, the place is free for improbable centrism or violent alternatives from big and small “communities”.

The disorder of society can't be changed without human beings that make this possible. But the traditional left is in crisis. Communism and socialism, which gave structure to the left throughout the 20th century, are no longer capable of doing this task. Even the right/left polarization is in question since their ways to exercise power overlap. The conclusion is obvious for many: we need a new paradigm, where the goal is no longer uniting the left but regrouping the people—not against the right, but against the elite, both of the left and of the right.

There's much truth in this affirmation. The people have no representation in the institutional arena. Its strength lies its number (workers and employees represent two thirds of them) and its weakness in its level of dispersion. It is no longer a central, modern and expanding nucleus. And although its capability for struggle is intact, the heart of yesterday's mass movement, blue-collar workers, is now not as firm. Unions are unclear regarding its forms and projects, the associative world is broken and

what was once the great unifier of urban citizens (the big “social” dream) is still struggling to find its contemporary form to oppose the well-defined projects of the dominant forces.

Therefore, mass organizations need to make a movement, like yesterday’s workers were able to build the workers movement. They must struggle and organize unhappiness so that fury becomes collective action—not just resentment. By uniting, they will become “multitude”. But that’s not enough, because society is not a simple juxtaposition of practices and specific structures—it’s a way to organize them. It has its coherence and its dominant logics. In world capitalism, we know the answer: accumulation of material goods, raw materials and profit are the motor; competence is the basis of all movement; management is the primary regulatory method; and inequality, polarization and relations of power are the axis of distribution of individuals, groups and territories. Primarily, it is the task of politics to act on these coherences and, to that end, group the minorities that can make the difference. If one wants to address the root of the social dynamic in order to transform it, the multitude of social struggles must become a political “people”.

But what makes the masses a people is not only the notion of an adversary or an enemy. Pointing out the culprits behind the difficulties may be an initial lever, but it doesn’t guarantee long-term success. Most importantly, the causes of the problems must be revealed. The “people” struggle against those who exploit and dominate them (the “elite”). However, the people doesn’t become a central agent unless it imposes a coherent, realistic plan to abolish the mechanisms that cause the separation between the “people” and the “elite”, between exploited and exploiters, between proletariat and bourgeoisie. A project for the emancipation of the masses, not hatred towards the elite, is what transforms the multitude into a political people.

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P.S.

* Kaos en la Red / The Dawn News / June 27, 2017:

<http://www.thedawn-news.org/2017/06/29/what-must-the-french-left-do-after-the-legislative-elections/>