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France

“A united and militant movement can prevent the RN from winning”

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The first round of the French local elections will take place on Sunday 15 March, the second on 22 March. There is a real possibility that the “traditional” right, which is increasingly radicalizing in a far right direction, will win in Paris, under Socialist Party government since 1995, and that the Rassemblement National could win in France's second, and very multi-racial, city, Marseilles. *L'Anticapitaliste's* editor Olivier Lek Lafferrière asked Ugo Palheta, a specialist in studying the rise of fascism, for his opinion on this situation.

Olivier Lek Lafferrière: You place great emphasis on the notion of "fascization", to highlight that this is a process. One gets the impression that there is currently a rather staggering acceleration in this process.

Ugo Palheta: The process of fascization should not be understood as a trend that progresses gradually and inexorably, come what may. This process involves qualitative leaps, tipping points such as the one we are currently experiencing, where the ideological and political balance of power can shift in one direction or another. Two aspects seem particularly important to me today.

The first is the demonization of La France Insoumise and anti-fascism following the death of the neo-fascist activist Quentin Deranque. Anti-fascists are being targeted because they have been at the forefront of most of the major popular movements of the last ten years, and LFI because it has expressed, in a combative manner, this mass protest within the realm of institutional politics.

The second aspect is the normalization of the far right. A large section of the political and media elites are shifting the *cordon sanitaire* from the far right towards the radical left to facilitate a union of the right that will inevitably involve the RN, and most likely under its hegemony. By merging the “central bloc” and the far-right bloc, the aim is to stabilize the political system and secure electoral legitimacy to accelerate social regression.

This development is of particular interest to employers, who hope to see through the neoliberal agenda of dismantling social protection and public services. Among most major business leaders, the option of a right-wing coalition under RN leadership has gained ground, following a model similar to Italy's, and has become a credible and even desirable possibility.

In what institutional forms might the rise to power of the far right take shape?

The most likely scenario is not necessarily a formal alliance between organizations, which has always put the FN/RN off. The RN would probably seek to absorb whole sections of Macron's camp and LR, as we saw with Éric Ciotti, by promising ministerial posts and winnable constituencies.

Periods of fascistization always combine these two phenomena: a far right that is gaining ground whilst the bourgeois right becomes more extreme, aligning itself with its positions: state authoritarianism, racism, and the criminalization of the left and social movements.

On this last point, significant milestones have already been reached in recent years, notably with the increasing number of administrative dissolutions of anti-racist, anti-colonial or anti-fascist groups (and the threat issued by Ciotti and others to dissolve La France insoumise). Such a dynamic would most likely be intensified by the RN in power, particularly in the event of social unrest and political crisis. Once set in motion, this repressive spiral is very difficult to

halt.

How can we act today to counter this process of accelerated fascistization?

Being anti-fascist begins with preventing the far right from establishing a militant presence in neighbourhoods, towns, universities or workplaces. This requires a local militant presence and a collective balance of power, as demonstrated by the experience of [Ras l'Front](#) in the 1990s.

The second aspect is self-defence. Left-wing organisations, trade unions and collectives must be able to protect their demonstrations and premises against far-right violence and police repression. There is a desperate need for anti-fascist collectives, but self-defence must not be delegated to these collectives; it must be undertaken by mass organizations.

Anti-fascism also has an ideological and political dimension. It involves waging a battle to lend credibility to a social alternative and ideas that enjoy broad support among the population—strengthening public services, raising wages, improving working conditions, etc.—but which many deem unachievable. The left must demonstrate that a break with neoliberalism is possible.

We must also fight tooth and nail in areas where the left is currently in the minority and very timid (at best), particularly against anti-immigration, Islamophobic and security-driven policies. If the left does not fight these battles, the far right will continue to impose its agenda, with the support of the mainstream media.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon's success in 2022 shows that it is possible to combine an anti-neoliberal programme with firm stances against Islamophobia and police violence, whilst securing significant popular support, particularly among young people and the urban working classes.

At the NPA-I'Anticapitaliste, we believe that despite all the obstacles, an anti-fascist front of the entire social and political left is needed. What do you think of this perspective?

The question of unity on the left remains central and cannot be sidestepped, as no single organization has the social base and political power to defeat the far right on its own.

However, unity does not mean the absence of debate. It also involves a confrontation over programmes and strategic directions. There are currently two poles within what is traditionally referred to as “the Left”: an orientation that supports neoliberalism, embodied by the Socialist Party and Raphaël Glucksmann, and an orientation that seeks a break with neoliberal, racist and authoritarian policies, embodied mainly by La France Insoumise.

Unity must therefore be sought without abandoning strategic debate. On the other hand, exploiting the necessary fight against anti-Semitism to discredit LFI by declaring them “unacceptable” is a recipe for defeat, as it amounts to making any united front against the far right impossible.

The 2024 general election shows that a united and militant dynamic can prevent the RN from winning. Polls had predicted its victory, sometimes even an absolute majority. Yet militant mobilization — involving trade unionists, feminists, anti-racists and many citizens with no political experience — enabled the New Popular Front to come out on top. The central question is therefore how to recapture this kind of momentum, despite a context marked by a general shift to the right, the demonisation of the left and internal rivalries.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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