

Anaïs Fley's speech within the discussion

"Reverse the trend. Reflections and actions against the right and the far right"

SUMMER UNIVERSITY 2024 – PLENARY 2

"I had initially planned to make a speech on the rise of the far right at the European level by trying to draw lessons from the sequence of the European elections, but in view of the slogan of this summer university and given the current political situation in France, I thought it would be useful to focus my remarks on this specific case. The victory of the New Popular Front and Macron's maneuvers to steal our victory raise hopes, concerns and many questions. I therefore propose to bring elements to the discussion.

The political configuration in France is certainly particular, but the rise of the far right is a global phenomenon whose determinants present clear continuities, in the same way that the social base of the left in France is certainly particular in terms of its capacity for resistance, but it has characteristics in common with other countries. I can come back to the first elements of electoral sociology in more detail during the Q&A if you wish, but I choose a more analytical (and more personal) approach for this discussion: how to reverse the trend and defeat the right and the far right?

In terms of reversal of the trend, it is true that the victory of the New Popular Front in the legislative elections last Sunday thwarted many predictions. Already, the unity of the left in the aftermath of the dissolution decided by Macron on the evening of the European elections, in which the National Rally was largely in the lead, has created surprise and immense hope. This hope emerged thanks to several elements.

First, unity for rupture. The left has been divided for years, and this division is justified by the fact that it is not by adding up the votes obtained by different lists or candidates that we know whether a unitary approach would work or not. Still, it's tempting. For example, at the beginning of the European election campaign, a list of the United Left was predicted to win according to the polls. In the end, with a fragmented left, the RN won more than 30% of the votes. In 2022 too, the division of the left visibly prevented the candidate most likely to win from reaching the second round. Maybe we could have avoided it. But no, it wouldn't work like that, it's not about mathematical calculations, elections are more complicated than that. **In any case, what the victory of the NFP**

shows us, after the first example of the NUPES two years ago, is that unity is a winning strategy.

But that's not all: **this unity has been made possible**, in a political context of crisis where the moderate center is in agony (Macron's scores are a very clear illustration of this), **only thanks to the fact that it was built on the basis of a political program of rupture, with the stated and real ambition to change life.** For the millions of people who hope for a better future and who have lost hope after years of social breakdown and defeats, a credible popular takeover strategy changes everything. The agreement was signed under pressure from the social movement, as soon as the dissolution was announced. And then, once the agreement is signed, it is no longer a question of stupidly adding up the votes: **the mobilization exceeds expectations and the participation increases, as we have seen in France.**

The radicalism of the program was therefore a central element of the success of the Popular Front. However, it was explained that the radical elements of the coalition were repellents and would cause the alliance to be lost, in particular the figure of Jean-Luc Mélenchon. We have witnessed a media campaign of unprecedented violence against the NFP, initially directed against La France Insoumise and its leaders but gradually extended to all the members of the alliance, with its share of slander and lies, in particular accusations of anti-Semitism and the refrain sending back to back two extremes of equal dangerousness. In the end, it seems that the opposite happened.

Of course, political unity, the agreement signed under pressure from the masses, was decisive and made it possible to thwart most attempts at division. Above all, they have made possible the in-depth mobilization of the people of the left, of thousands of collectives and associations... and the CGT, which took the historic decision to bring the electoral campaign into the companies and administrations. The NFP was born from the unity of the people during the pension reform. An NFP government will bring this unity to fruition.

Secondly, despite the fragility that might have been expected from this alliance, the solidarity that was built within the Popular Front and the concern to respect the confidence and hopes of the people in the face of the threat of the National Rally was decisive. This solidarity and the seriousness of the programme presented, supported by hundreds of economists, have largely contributed to reversing the trend and to wresting from the National Rally the driving force it had enjoyed until then, appearing as the natural winner after the triumph of the European elections. Conversely, the nullity of Jordan Bardella in the televised debates and the appalling profiles of the RN candidates in nearly a hundred constituencies also helped a lot. They were obviously not ready to ask themselves how a party can manage its candidacies so badly, and this did not escape the bourgeoisie despite all the pledges that Bardella gave to the bosses during the

campaign. In this context, the intense politicization that shook the country for three weeks, the daily discussions, etc., led millions of people, until then politically passive, to position themselves against the ED.

This momentum was really powerful, so much so that it made Macron give in, despite being largely complicit in the theses of the Rassemblement National. Three weeks ago, she said: "The far right is more the Popular Front." Two weeks ago, it was no longer there, but there was no question of calling for a vote for the New Popular Front, mobilizing all the most far-fetched pretexts for authoritarian or even demonic projects of La France Insoumise. And a week ago, the left having already withdrawn from all the territories where it had come third, the Macronists were forced to withdraw as well.

In reality, the well-to-do categories that form the social base of the Macronists were afraid of the RN's unpreparedness and the radicalization of its base. They therefore called on the working classes committed to the left to the rescue. Despite the long years of political violence, contempt and anti-social measures they have suffered, they have not hesitated for a second and have assumed the leadership of the fight against the far right. Thanks to the clear and credible strategy of power, with a costed government program and a united left to enforce it, with the reinforcement of the social movement, trade unions and militant collectives, this struggle was able to lead to victory.

Now, two major challenges are facing us, one immediate and the other requiring in-depth work.

The first: that of the possibility of a New Popular Front government. Will Emmanuel Macron respect the results of universal suffrage? Will he appoint, as he should, a prime minister from the New Popular Front? He has now removed the ambiguity: it is no. Like a Mr. Veto, he seeks to twist the institutions so that nothing changes and that a grand coalition of liberals continues to govern the country, with the support of the major television networks. This fact alone shows the need to put an end to the Fifth Republic quickly – before the catastrophe occurs. Today, 63% of the French are in favour of a new Constitution.

Faced with this attitude, mobilization will be decisive: Macron must be made to give in. At the moment, a proposal for a Prime Minister could emerge at any time from the NFP parties. According to pollsters, one in two French people believes that if the NFP agrees on a personality to propose as Prime Minister, Emmanuel Macron should ask him/her to form a government. Popular mobilization can therefore really turn everything upside down. It is the only way to implement the social progress programme chosen by the French, starting with the repeal of the pension reform, the increase in the minimum wage, the freezing of prices, etc. This program is the only way to dispel the threat of the RN. Not to implement it is to strengthen the far right. While the whole world is watching the news

in France, a victory would instead send a signal of hope that would weaken the far right not only in France but also everywhere else.

The second: there were 10 million voters for the National Rally, do we live in a France of racists? Is it possible to reverse the trend in the long term under these conditions? This is an essential question that concerns us all: has the far right definitively won ideological hegemony? I think it is very important to say and repeat that the struggle for hegemony is not set in stone. Of course, everyone knows very well what they are doing by voting for the far right: it is a racist vote. But not all RN voters are fundamentally racist, even if they take this political option.

The essential lesson, in my view, of the analysis of the far right in Europe and in the world, is that its rise is always part of a context of social defeat, where governments do everything to dispel the hypothesis of popular victories and social progress. Under the weight of a difficult daily life and in the absence of a desirable future, the far-right vote is therefore presented as a way of negotiating – with the bourgeoisie and to the detriment of other proletarians – better living conditions in defeat. If people vote for the far right, it is because they have understood that it represents this political option. And then, communication strategies are no longer essential: even if Bardella was astoundingly useless, 10 million people voted for him. Because the quality of the far-right's communication is no longer the issue. The fringes of the working classes that resist it are, unsurprisingly, the most politicized and combative, in France as elsewhere.

If we want to defeat the far right, we will have to convince these millions of people that only a progressive collective project of rupture like that of the NFP provides a credible alternative to capitalism, to the crises, suffering and fears it feeds. Here again, it is not primarily a question of communication – especially not of copying that of the far right, since between the original and the copy, the first is always chosen – but of political work in action. **We must continue to move forward, because to stop now means to go backwards: the far right always, always takes off on the bed of popular defeats, and the left on the credible hope of radically changing life. »**