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What way forward in the struggle against Macron?

Alex Lantier

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French President-elect Emmanuel Macron's actions immediately after his election Sunday night have exposed the fraudulent claims that he would defend democracy and block the rise of the neo-fascist National Front (FN). Macron began his victory speech on Sunday with a full-throated "Republican salute" to the FN and its defeated candidate Marine Le Pen, delivered in the name of "national unity."

Yesterday, his transition team began outlining his reactionary agenda, which expands upon that of the Socialist Party (PS) government of outgoing President François Hollande in which Macron was a minister. He will intensify police deployments under France's state of emergency, which suspends basic democratic rights. He plans to cut taxes for the wealthy, boost the number of policemen and prison beds by 10,000 and 15,000, respectively, and continue the wars in Syria, Iraq and Mali.

The figures Macron is considering as potential prime ministers make clear that he is preparing a right-wing government. They include the Gaullist mayor of Le Havre, Edouard Philippe; Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund; and Jean-Yves Le Drian, the Socialist Party government's defense minister, who worked closely with Hollande on the PS' extrajudicial assassination program.

Above all, Macron is planning a confrontation with the working class, unilaterally imposing decrees based on the PS labor law—rammed through in the face of mass protests and overwhelming popular opposition—to shred contracts, lengthen working hours and cut social spending.

Macron's salute to the heirs of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime is an exposure of the true physiognomy of the French bourgeoisie: always ready to collaborate with fascist reaction to assert its privileges against the working class. Just as Hollande repeatedly invited Le Pen to the Elysée presidential palace and built up the FN amid growing hostility to his government, Macron hopes to legitimize and promote the far right as a political base for his reactionary agenda.

Macron faces explosive social opposition in the working class. Twelve percent of the electorate cast blank or spoiled ballots to express their opposition to both candidates. Large sections of the population abstained, including 34 percent of voters age 18 to 24; 32 percent of voters age 25 to 34; 35 percent of the unemployed; and 32 percent of manual workers. Of Macron's voters, nearly half (43 percent) said they voted against Le Pen, not for Macron, and 40 percent of those who voted for Jean-Luc Mélenchon abstained in the second round.

These developments vindicate the position taken by the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It called for an active boycott of the second round of the French presidential election, opposing illusions that Macron or parliamentary alliances with Macron supporters in the legislature would defend democracy from the FN.

The PES called for workers to boycott the election and mobilize against both candidates. It did so in order to raise the political consciousness of the working class and prepare it for the struggles to come. It insisted that there was no electoral tactic that would resolve the political crisis facing the working class. Rather, the central issue was to provide a Marxist and internationalist perspective on which to build the revolutionary leadership the working class needs in these struggles.

A class gulf separates the PES from the organizations around the PS that have for decades claimed to represent left-wing politics in France. As the French political establishment centered on the PS and the right-wing The Republicans (LR) collapses, these groups work to demobilize working class opposition and steer it into the dead end of support for Macron.

Forces such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the Unsubmissive France (UF) movement, the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) refused to advance any program on which workers could fight. As France prepares for the legislative elections on June 11 and 18, they are seeking to tie the working class to various pro-capitalist parliamentary combinations.

Mélenchon, who before the second round proposed to serve as Macron's prime minister, is now asking voters to vote for UF candidates running in the legislative elections on the basis of "social and ecological humanism" in order to form a "new parliamentary majority." PCF leader Pierre

Laurent called on Monday to “concretize the promise of a new left born at the ballot boxes on April 23”—that is, on the basis of the Mélenchon’s movement.

The NPA is calling for the building of “a front to defend in unity our social and democratic rights.” Whatever criticisms the NPA makes of Macron, however, will be combined with support for him insofar as he aggressively wages the war in Syria, which the NPA supports.

These proposals are cynical and reactionary maneuvers to maintain the domination of PS-linked organizations over the working class. They in no way advance a revolutionary socialist program for the working class to struggle for power, and they leave unchallenged Le Pen’s populist pretensions to represent social opposition to Macron. They advance no strategy at all to win back to the banner of socialism the many workers who voted for Le Pen because they want answers to attacks on social services, health care and jobs, and because they have lost confidence in the ability of the PS, Mélenchon and the NPA to provide them. Significantly, in neither the last statement issued by the NPA just before the final round of the presidential election, nor in its first statement after Macron’s victory, does the word “socialism” appear.

None of the established parties claiming to be on the “left” have anything to propose to working people. This dead end is the product of the bankruptcy of the parties that broke with the Fourth International in France, based on a repudiation of Trotskyism and revolutionary Marxism. They allied with the PS from its foundation in 1971, in the aftermath of the May-June 1968 general strike, and created a political framework in which any truly progressive alternative based on the independent revolutionary mobilization of the working class was excluded.

Mélenchon’s evolution is a classic example. He initially joined the *Organisation communiste internationaliste* (OCI) of Pierre Lambert, which had broken with the ICFI in 1971 to help build the PS. Mélenchon joined the PS in 1976, became a key adviser to PS President François Mitterrand, and then a PS senator and minister, before leaving with a faction of the PS in 2008 to found the Left Front together with the PCF.

The central question that is posed is the rebuilding of a revolutionary Marxist leadership in the working class. Explosive social conflicts are being prepared between the ruling class and the workers in France and across Europe. These struggles must be organized independently of the union bureaucracy and given a revolutionary perspective.

A century after the Russian Revolution, the PES insists that the only way forward for the working class is a return to the revolutionary road. It advances itself as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class, the representative in France of the socialist and internationalist program of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky in 1917 and the heritage of Trotskyism defended by the ICFI. We appeal to workers and youth who agree with our analysis of Macron to support the PES, study its program, and join the struggle to build it as the political vanguard of the working class in France.