

Socialist Party wins absolute majority in French legislative elections

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The big-business Socialist Party (PS) of newly elected President François Hollande won an absolute majority in Sunday's second round of the French legislative elections.

With a projected tally of 312 to 326 seats in the 577-seat National Assembly, the PS has well over the 289 needed to have an absolute majority. Hollande now has the majority in parliament that he was seeking in order to act without needing to negotiate compromises with other political parties. The PS runs virtually all of France's regions and has a majority in the Senate.

At 56 percent, voter turnout hit a record low for legislative elections held under France's Fifth Republic, founded in 1958.

The PS-allied Greens are projected to have 20 seats and will be able to form a parliamentary group, guaranteeing them additional state funding.

The UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) of defeated incumbent president Nicolas Sarkozy will have 206 to 230 deputies. Many key UMP members lost their seats: Claude Guéant, the hard-line law-and-order, anti-immigrant ex-interior minister, ex-defense minister Michelle Alliot-Marie; and Nadine Morano, member of the Popular Right, the UMP's far-right faction, who made appeals to the neo-fascist National Front (FN) during the run-off election.

Indeed, a feature of the second-round was a series of arrangements between UMP and FN candidates to work together against PS candidates, despite an official UMP ban on this practice. François Fillon, Sarkozy's former prime minister who is now vying for leadership of the UMP, merely gave Morano a gentle reproof.

The FN will enter the National Assembly for the first time since 1997, with three or possibly four legislators. Throughout France, some 61 FN candidates advanced to the second round.

FN President Marine Le Pen narrowly failed to win election in Hénin-Beaumont—a deindustrialised mining community, where local PS officials have been condemned for embezzlement—in a contest against PS mayor Philippe Kémel.

Her 22-year-old niece, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, was elected in a UMP stronghold in Carpentras.

The election was yet another sharp setback to the Left Front—a coalition of the Stalinist Communist Party (PCF) and a small PS split-off, the Left Party (PG) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon. It is projected to get only 13 seats in the Assembly. This is down from the PCF group's 20 seats in 2007, and under the 15-seat minimum to constitute an official parliamentary group. This threatens a significant cut in the PCF's resources.

The Left Front's call for unconditional support for Hollande in the second round of the presidential elections made clear to voters that they represented no alternative to the PS's pro-business programme.

Mélenchon was eliminated in the first round in a failed attempt to defeat Marine Le Pen in the Hénin-Beaumont district. Mélenchon will continue his term as a member of the European parliament in Strasbourg.

PS officials have mooted the possibility of bringing two PCF deputies into the government.

The PCF is divided on this, as joining the PS government would expose its fraudulent criticisms of Hollande's support for the EU Fiscal Pact, which imposes harsh austerity measures throughout the euro zone. For decades the PCF has been in coalition governments and alliances with the PS and collaborated in social cuts and privatisations of public enterprises.

Ségolène Royal, the 2007 PS presidential candidate, failed to get into parliament. The PS leadership imposed her as the PS candidate in a La Rochelle constituency, but local PS candidate Olivier Falorni

refused to step down, standing as an independent instead.

Hollande has made clear that he intends to use the unified executive power coming out of these elections to serve the banks. He plans to drive down France's budget deficit to 3 percent of GDP by 2013 and zero by 2017, through massive austerity measures to be borne by the working class.

His intentions for workers in France can be inferred from an interview on Wednesday on the Greek Magma TV station. Ignoring the devastation of the Greek economy by austerity measures imposed by the European Union, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund, and the 25 percent adult unemployment level, 50 percent for the youth, Hollande threatened: "If the impression is given that the Greeks wish to depart from the commitments which they have taken and abandon any perspective straightening up their finances, then there will be countries that will prefer to terminate Greece's presence in the euro zone."

Hollande's interim prime minister last Wednesday made clear that hard sacrifices would have to be endured because of the "difficult situation ... harder than we thought." The government is looking to the July 17 "Social Conference," where they, employers' groups, and the union bureaucracy will discuss their joint social and economic policies.



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