

Former economy minister Macron announces French presidential election bid

Anthony Torres
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The announcement November 16 by French politician Emmanuel Macron that he would run for president in 2017 as an independent candidate points to the advanced state of disintegration of President François Hollande's government and of the Socialist Party (PS), which is anticipating a debacle in the elections. Macron was Minister of Economy in the Socialist Party government of Prime Minister Manuel Valls from August 2014 to August 2016.

Macron chose the city of Marseille to launch his campaign, visiting a technical school in the north of the city, in the 13th district, governed since 2014 by Stéphane Ravier of the neo-fascist National Front (FN).

The former minister called for more "entrepreneurial" freedom and denounced the 35-hour work week. He cynically referred to the plight of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, although the government he joined in 2014 is fully implicated in the Libyan disaster by its covert interventions in that country, and its support for Islamist insurgents in Syria. Macron asked, "Who can be proud to see men and women dying at sea in this, the lands of the Mediterranean? We live in a country that has made citizens of foreigners who shared our values."

This attempt to run against the FN's anti-immigrant rhetoric, without naming the latter, in a speech given to a group of roughly 100 students, was meant to cover up Hollande's politically criminal policies. The imperialist war drive of Hollande and the NATO powers provoked the migrant crisis, which the PS used to justify stepped-up repression of Muslims and migrants. This reactionary policy bolstered the FN and encouraged the neo-fascists to protest against, or even attack outright, refugees in Calais and elsewhere across France.

Macron, who is running without a political affiliation, also denounced political parties, which he accused of

distributing money and organizing "debates worthy of a condominium board. ... But what are these parties, they don't exist anymore!"

The PS is consumed by a crisis that erupted into the open this spring, when Hollande decided to abandon the attempt to inscribe the deprivation of nationality policy and the state of emergency into the French constitution. This stunned the media, which concluded that the PS would suffer an electoral disaster in the 2017 presidential elections.

In April, as protests against the PS's deeply regressive labor law took on a mass character, Macron launched his electoral movement, Forward! [*En Marche* !] This movement stressed Macron's persona as a young entrepreneur and former investment banker, to give a veneer of modernity to the brutal attacks being waged against social and democratic rights.

In recent months, Macron has obtained the backing of CEOs such as Henry Hermand (who died November 6), whose fortune was based on supermarket chains and who participated in PS-linked think tanks. He also has support from Jean Peyrelevade, the former C?edit Lyonnais boss, and Marc Simoncini, founder and CEO of the Meetic dating web site. He also met Geoffroy Roux de Bézieux, the vice-president of the Medef business federation, and Claude Bébéar, founder of financial firm AXA and of the Montaigne Institute.

Macron also enjoys the support of several PS deputies and of the mayor of Lyon, Gérard Collomb, a former Hollande supporter.

The official launch of Macron's candidacy provoked broad media enthusiasm for the former Rothschild banker, with France3 television broadcasting a documentary about his campaign only a few days after his electoral bid was announced.

PS National Secretary Jean-Christophe Cambadélis

appealed to Macron to join the so-called “primary of the left,” as a sign he would then support whatever candidate the PS named. “I appeal to him this morning, Emmanuel, join the primary,” he told France Info. “He is not stupid, he knows his political chances are shrinking quickly,” Cambadélis added.

Cambadélis is trying to prevent the widely anticipated debacle of the PS in the presidential elections by proposing that Macron join the primary in order to boost his support within the PS electorate.

Cambadélis, who has recently dropped support for Hollande as the PS’ “natural” candidate, stated: “This is very inconvenient, because it divides the left, it disqualifies the left without qualifying him for the election. The left-wing electorate is not Macron’s strong point.”

Macron refused Cambadélis’ call, however, and manifestly is anticipating the PS’s demise in the near future. He is putting himself in the best position to pick up the pieces—parliamentary groups, seats, official posts, influence networks, and other resources accumulated over four decades as a party of government—once the PS disintegrates.

Above all, however, Macron will inherit the reactionary politics of this party of the financial aristocracy, which is moving very far to the right. It is not simply a matter of the recent crisis caused by Hollande’s unpopularity and mass hostility to his austerity and police-state policies. It is the entire project of building a bourgeois “left” party to defend capitalism in the period after the general strike of May-June 1968 that is collapsing, amid a deep economic crisis and intensifying class divisions.

Macron has now launched his personalized movement, offering France the gift of his supposed economic talent. There is more than a little hint of the traditions of the far right in this. Macron and other former PS politicians who have gone on to create “semi-independent” movements from the PS, including Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Bernard Kouchner and Jean-Pierre Chevènement, are all turning sharply to the right, or even the far right.

Macron has already spoken about the support he gave for a time to Chevènement’s party, the nationalist Citizens Movement (and later, Citizen and Republican Movement). It should be noted that it was in this movement that the FN’s number two, Florian

Philippot, began his political career. Chevènement himself now openly raises forming alliances between himself and the nationalist far right, including the FN.



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