

# Hollande invites Le Pen, Macron to funeral of slain Champs-Élysées officer

Alex Lantier  
26 April 2017

French President François Hollande invited both candidates in the May 7 presidential runoff—neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron, the candidate now backed by Hollande’s own Socialist Party (PS)—to the commemoration yesterday of slain policeman Xavier Jugelé. Jugelé was shot on April 20 by a gunman whom French authorities claimed was linked to the Islamic State (IS) militia on Champs-Élysées Avenue in Paris.

The significance of Hollande’s gesture is clear. He already invited Le Pen to the Élysée twice after terror attacks in 2015, ostensibly to promote “national unity,” including with the National Front (FN), which descends from the fascist forces that ruled France under the Nazi Occupation. Particularly now that Le Pen has reached the second round, and could conceivably win the presidency on May 7, Hollande is determined to delegitimize opposition to Le Pen’s FN.

The last time the FN was in the second round, when PS candidate Lionel Jospin was eliminated in 2002 and Marine’s father Jean-Marie advanced, millions of people went into the streets to protest. Fifteen years later, police assaulted an antifascist protest on Sunday night as the results of the first round of the elections were released. Now Hollande is treating both Le Pen and Macron as legitimate contenders for the presidency of the Republic.

Addressing the two candidates as those “who will have to decide tomorrow,” Hollande called on Le Pen and Macron to continue building the massive police-state apparatus that has emerged under the state of emergency Hollande imposed starting in 2015. He asked that they provide “the necessary budgetary resources to recruit the indispensable staff to protect our fellow citizens,” asking for “constancy, perseverance, and coherence in our efforts, rather than boasting and sudden changes.”

Hollande’s appeal to a neo-fascist to strengthen the security services was politically sinister, above all as there

is virtually no doubt that these services were implicated in Jugelé’s murder. The deceased gunman, Karim Cheurfi, had been condemned to 15 years in prison for shooting and nearly killing two policemen in 2001, but was later released on appeal. After he was arrested in February for saying that he was trying to obtain weapons to murder policemen, French intelligence began closely monitoring him due to his Internet ties to IS.

There is no innocent explanation for the fact that such a man could amass an arsenal of firearms and combat knives and use this arsenal to murder a policeman. The loyalty of the security services to the FN is well known. Given that Jean-Luc Mélenchon was rising in the polls before the elections based on growing antiwar sentiment among youth after the US strikes on Syria, it is legitimate to ask whether the shooting was allowed to occur so the resulting security hysteria would swing the election to Le Pen.

Le Pen went from Jugelé’s commemoration to the studios of TF1 television, where she gave a long and bellicose interview on her campaign. She called for protectionism, the abandonment of the euro currency and the return of the French franc, and a doubling of French military spending.

Financing such a massive increase in military spending would require devastating attacks on social programs. Le Pen said the army has been cut “to the bone... They use obsolete equipment, sometimes they must pay for their own equipment; it’s undignified and dangerous for the security of the French people and our armed forces.” She pledged to raise the defense budget to two percent of GDP by next year, and 3 percent by the end of her first term in 2022, if she were elected.

The right-wing austerity policies of the PS and what passes for the French “left” have allowed the FN to posture as the sole opposition tendency, based on reactionary protectionist and anti-immigrant rhetoric. In

the first round, the FN was the leading party in 216 of France's 566 electoral districts. While it lost in major urban areas, it won by decisive margins across large areas of devastated industrial heartlands of the North, Picardy, and Lorraine, as well as in Champagne and along France's Mediterranean coast.

The FN won by smaller margins in broad areas of France where it had virtually no presence a decade ago, including Alsace, Burgundy, the central Loire Valley and eastern Normandy. It is expected that the FN could now win over 100 seats in the National Assembly in the June legislative elections.

At the same time, in an indication of broad leftward movement of workers and young people, Mélenchon won nearly 20 percent of the vote, including almost one-third of voters under the age of 24. Mélenchon is popularly identified as a left-wing opposition to the PS. Mélenchon's role, however, has been to channel opposition back into the political establishment. In a cynical effort to cover for an endorsement of Macron, Mélenchon announced on Tuesday that he was launching a "consultation" of supporters to determine whether his Unsubmissive France movement should formally back Macron against Le Pen.

Hollande's invitation to Le Pen and Macron yesterday points to the ties that emerged between the PS and the FN during his presidency, as the entire ruling elite responded to growing opposition to PS and European Union (EU) policies of austerity and war by shifting far to the right. As his poll ratings collapsed, Hollande used the FN as a political base for his government. He invited Le Pen to the Élysée twice in 2015, as the PS prepared to impose a state of emergency suspending democratic rights that it then used to violently repress protests against the PS's regressive labor law.

The PS also tried to inscribe in the French Constitution the principle of deprivation of nationality, the legal basis for the outlawing of French Resistance leaders and the deportation of the Jews to death camps during the Occupation. In taking these and other right-wing measures, the PS not only sought to legitimize the FN as part of the political mainstream, but discredited itself among masses of workers.

As a consequence, the PS has suffered a historic defeat, and received barely 6 percent in Sunday's vote.

The FN can posture as France's leading oppositional, "anti-system" party principally due to the role of the various organizations that broke from Trotskyism in France. As mass protests erupted against the FN's

presence in the second round 15 years ago, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) called for an active boycott of the second round. This was aimed at preparing the working class to fight back against the militarist and austerity policies that Jean-Marie Le Pen's opponent, Jacques Chirac, went on to implement.

These parties—Workers Struggle (LO), the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR, today's New Anti-capitalist Party, NPA), and the Workers Party (PT, now the Independent Democratic Workers Party)—rejected this call. They had received three million votes. Yet they were hostile to building a mass Trotskyist party in the working class against Jospin and the PS. They aligned themselves with the PS's call for a vote for Chirac, thus handing the mantle of political opposition to the FN.

The 2017 election results expose the disastrous and deeply reactionary consequences of these decisions. The FN is now a major contender for power in the bourgeois establishment.

The mass opposition in the working class to austerity, war and dictatorship that drove millions into the streets in 2002 has not gone away, however. With millions unemployed, including 25 percent of youth, class tensions are in fact far more explosive than in 2002. Opposition in the working class cannot find legitimate expression through middle-class parties like the NPA, however, which endorsed an Hollande vote in 2012, support the Syrian war, and are still tied to the decaying PS via a thousand threads.

The urgent task is to build the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste*, the French section of the ICFI, as the revolutionary political leadership in the working class. It is not a matter of supporting one or another faction of the ruling class, but of politically mobilizing the working class, the vast majority of the population, against war, dictatorship, unemployment and inequality. This requires the fight to unify workers throughout Europe and internationally in a common fight against the capitalist system.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**