

French President-elect Macron's legislative slate: Social reaction bares its teeth

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Yesterday, French President-elect Emmanuel Macron's Republic on the March (REM) movement unveiled a list of most of its candidates for the legislative elections of June 11 and 18. REM named candidates for 428 of the 577 electoral districts represented in the National Assembly, with the remaining 149 to be determined later, including in talks with other political parties.

The unveiling of the REM slate was accompanied by a massive media campaign presenting Macron as leading a renewal of France's political establishment, which is discredited by the wars, police-state measures, and austerity policies of the Socialist Party (PS) government. The media hailed points like the strict equality in the number of male and female candidates in the REM list (214 each), or the fact that 52 percent have never held office before.

The purpose of this campaign is to try to win Macron an absolute majority in the National Assembly, and to intimidate deep misgivings and opposition felt by broad masses of workers to Macron's organization. Over six in 10 voters have said that they do not want Macron to obtain a majority in the National Assembly, due to broad mistrust of Macron's warmongering and anti-worker policies.

Macron's aim is to wage a social counterrevolution in France. A former Rothschild banker and economy minister in the PS government, he plans to assemble France's most right-wing government since World War II and the Nazi Occupation. He has called to restore the draft; massively boost military spending; maintain the PS' state of emergency, which suspends basic democratic rights; and use the PS' unpopular labor law to slash and rewrite contracts at workplaces across the country.

Initial details that emerged about the REM slate

yesterday confirm that it is an almost chemically pure emanation of the banks and the security forces, completely divorced from the working class. The most prominent figure named so far as a REM candidate is Jean-Michel Fauvergue, the former leader of the RAID police special forces unit.

The 16 candidates who were the subject of detailed profiles in REM's press release included four business owners or CEOs, three consultancy executives, two economists, two lawyers, two academics, two officials in state or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and a fighter pilot.

REM's aristocratic class character reflects Macron's own profound misgivings about democracy, acquired as a student of the elite National Administration School and of Christian existentialist philosopher Paul Ricœur. In a 2015 interview he gave to *Le un* magazine as a PS minister, Macron laid out these views in some detail. He bemoaned the French revolution and the fact that King Louis XVI was found guilty of treason and guillotined in 1793 during the Terror, eliminating the absolute authority figure that Macron believes the French people wants and needs over it.

Asked by *Le un* if democracy is "necessarily deceptive," he replied: "There is an absent figure in the democratic process and its functioning. In French politics, this absent figure is the figure of the king, whose death fundamentally I believe the French people did not want. The Terror left a collective emotional and intellectual void: the King was no longer there! Then there were attempts to fill this void with other figures: these were the moments of Napoleon and De Gaulle."

Such views underlie Macron's friendly ties with monarchist politician Philippe de Villiers, who backed neo-fascist presidential candidate Marine Le Pen nonetheless, and Macron's full-throated "Republican

salute” to Le Pen as the very first point in his victory speech on Sunday.

The media adulation of Macron and REM depends above all on the bankruptcy of forces like Unsubmissive France (UF) leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). While Mélenchon won 7 million votes and the NPA nearly 1 million in the first round of the presidential election, they abdicated their responsibility to offer a political perspective to their voters to oppose Macron. They took no clear position on the Macron-Le Pen presidential runoff, but made clear their sympathies for Macron; Mélenchon even offered to become his prime minister.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* alone called for an active boycott of the second round, to lay out for the working class a politically independent perspective from the capitalist parties and prepare it for struggle against whichever reactionary candidate won. The PES rejected the arguments of those who, downplaying the PS’ attacks on democratic rights under Hollande, presented Macron as a reliable defender of democracy against the FN.

The PES based its opposition on the International Committee of the Fourth International’s (ICFI) decades-long struggle against the descendants, like Mélenchon and the NPA, of petty-bourgeois forces that broke with Trotskyism and worked for decades in the orbit of the PS. These pseudo-left parties represent affluent layers of the middle class that overlap substantially with REM’s social base, and that are highly susceptible to reactionary arguments that REM should be supported because it will modernize France and improve gender equality.

If the barrage of pro-Macron media propaganda faces no effective opposition from within official politics, this is largely due to the pseudo-left’s complacency and political complicity with REM and the PS, which is now in a deep crisis and considering dissolving itself into REM.

After taking just over 6 percent of the vote with its candidate Benoît Hamon in the first round of the presidential elections, the PS now faces poll results showing that it could win no more than 9 percent of the vote in the first round of the legislatives. This could produce a situation where the PS, France’s main bourgeois “left” party of government since the 1968 general strike, would be wiped out—sending just a

single deputy to the National Assembly.

This has unleashed a furious debate inside the PS, with large sections of the party machine calling to scrap the PS and rebuild an organization whose name would not make any reference, even of a completely empty and fraudulent nature, to socialism. Substantial factions of the PS are now scurrying off the sinking ship and trying to recycle themselves via the REM.

After PS First Secretary Jean-Christophe Cambadélis’ May 2 statement that the PS is “dead and truly dead,” former PS Prime Minister Manuel Valls declared on RTL radio this week that the PS is “dead and behind us” and sought to register as a REM legislative candidate.

While Valls’ maneuver has backfired for now—Macron was a rival of Valls inside the Hollande government, and REM has refused to grant him its investiture as candidate, while the PS is starting expulsion proceedings against him for leaving the PS—it is clear that ever larger sections of the PS are thinking of following his path. For now, all 24 of the REM legislative candidates that have already held elected office were PS members.

The turning of the PS and its periphery explicitly and violently against socialism portends a vast and explosive social conflict that is being prepared in France and across Europe. With 70 percent of the population opposed to the PS labor law Macron will use to attack the workers, and 64 percent of youth already hostile to Macron’s plans to restore the draft, a powerful constituency for socialism exists in the working class and the youth. It is to these forces that the PES is orienting its work and its struggle against the PS and its petty-bourgeois periphery.



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