

Guardian journalist Paul Mason calls for a “left” alliance with “free market elite”

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Guardian journalist Paul Mason has stated that the victory of right-wing French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron should be celebrated by every “globalist, leftwing and progressive voter” and must be emulated by a similar movement in Britain.

What are the “progressive” credentials that attract Mason to Macron and make him deserving of replication?

The former Rothschild investment banker served in the first and second Socialist Party (SP) governments of President François Hollande from 2012 as senior adviser and economy and industry minister.

Macron played a critical role in formulating Hollande’s hated austerity economic programme, as well as upholding reactionary labour laws lengthening the work week, and allowing trade unions to work with the bosses to ignore provisions of the Labour Code that protect workers’ rights. The laws were enforced last year in the face of mass protests.

Macron also helped formulate the pro-business Responsibility Pact deregulation package. He was an avid supporter of the authoritarian state of emergency, which has been in place since November 2015—following the terrorist attacks in Paris.

In the presidential election, he ran on a pro-austerity, pro-European Union (EU) ticket—receiving the backing of virtually the entire ruling class. His programme is aimed at reinforcing austerity not only in France, but also throughout Europe and consolidating the EU as a trade and military bloc against its global rivals. His “reform” agenda involves strengthening anti-democratic measures and bringing forward anti-worker labour legislation to be passed by executive decree. He favours the slashing of 120,000 public sector jobs, cutting pensions and reducing state spending.

Mason presents Macron as a popular winner against

his neo-fascist opponent Marine Le Pen of the National Front (FN). The reality is that Macron is so reviled that he won just 24 percent of the vote in the first round, with more than half saying that they had voted for him tactically against the far right. Of the more than 75 percent of voters who did not back him, almost 20 percent (7 million voters) supported Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his Unsubmissive France movement, based on his stated opposition to austerity and war.

Despite Mélenchon’s efforts to ensure a vote for Macron in the second round, and even though he received 65 percent of the vote against Le Pen, abstentions reached 26 percent—the highest since 1969. Fully 34 percent of voters aged 18 to 24, 32 percent aged 25 to 34, 35 percent of the unemployed, and 32 percent of manual workers abstained.

Twelve percent of voters, a record 4.2 million people, cast blank or spoiled ballots to express their hostility to both candidates. The choice of Macron or Le Pen was widely described as that between the “banker and the fascist,” or between the plague and cholera.

Mason does not bother to detail Macron’s reactionary domestic or foreign policy, but states in passing his view that it is “vacuous and unachievable.” Yet he claims Macron’s victory has given “French democracy, Europeanism and globalism another chance.”

The reality is that Macron’s agenda will only fuel social discontent which, in the absence of a socialist alternative, Le Pen will appeal to in order to pose as the representative of an embattled population against the “establishment.”

What really animates and excites Mason about Macron’s victory is that he, in Mason’s words, “[C]onstructed an alliance of the free market elite and left voters.”

When Mason speaks of the “left”, he is not referring

to those with genuine leftist sentiment, who abstained or voted only with extreme reluctance. He means the upper middle class layers of urban professionals to whom Macron is oriented, and who have no problems whatsoever in forming an alliance with the free market elite—i.e., the French bourgeoisie.

Mason too speaks for this social group, who have enriched themselves because of rising property prices, share ownership and their role in either administering, or in justifying, ideologically and politically, the constant transfer of societal wealth to the super rich at the expense of working people. Many have done very well out of direct relations with the EU and many more see it as a mechanism for maintaining a status quo with which they are more than happy.

Mason's prescription is that such a pro-EU alliance with the majority of the ruling class must be set up in the UK, against the sections that favoured Brexit—who are a minority but who are able to dominate events politically in the aftermath of last June's referendum Leave vote. He writes, "Macron won because the French establishment woke up. It realised that, given the options, an alliance with the left was better than an alliance with the ultra-right."

Such a political realignment, he warns, must not be confined to pro-EU forces in the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats—the latter committed to overturning Brexit and holding a second referendum—but must involve "progressive" Tories. Writing that the Tories "hard Brexit" wing "means business," Mason says that former Prime Minister David Cameron and his Chancellor George Osborne should back new electoral alliances to block Brexit—as championed by former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Mason writes, "[I]t is not enough for liberal Conservatives from the Cameron-Osborne generation simply to move on to better jobs. They should now lend their votes to the progressive parties." However, his end goal is clearly a new capitalist party similar to Macron's *Republique En Marche*.

Mason is also clear as to who he believes is to blame for the political domination of the "hard Brexit" Tory right. He sets out that his alliance of the free market elite and the "left" must be directed against the most oppressed layers of the working class.

He contemptuously describes those with "low education, short lifespan, pessimism about the future

and blue collar work" as the bedrock for the votes for Le Pen, for Brexit and the "nationalist right."

Millions have suffered for decades at the hands of Mason's beloved "free market elite" with massive cuts in pay, terms and the loss of their livelihoods. In addition, the EU he wants so desperately to rescue has spent the years since the financial crash of 2008 imposing savage austerity on one country after another.

Syriza in Greece is another example of the alliance between the pseudo-left and the free market elite. Mason has functioned as the cheerleader for this bourgeois government as it betrayed its anti-austerity mandate in the name of ensuring Athens' place in the EU. It is now busy imposing deeper attacks than its conservative predecessors.

Betrayals such as these are the real reason why the political right has been able to exploit social discontent among sections of workers that Mason and his milieu view with barely disguised enmity.

Mason is a former member of the defunct anti-Trotskyist Workers Power tendency, a splinter from the Socialist Workers Party. His politics today is barely distinguishable from any run-of-the-mill Blairite hack who writes for the *Guardian*, other than his pose as a "Marxist" who has seen the error of his ways.

His appeal is framed to the pseudo-left who are also careering to the right. In a previous *Guardian* piece he spoke of the necessity of "an alliance of the left and the radical centre" in defence of a "humane pro-business version of capitalism," and consisting of "bond traders from Canary Wharf, arm in arm with placard-carrying Trots."



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