

Macron delays announcement of French ministerial cabinet

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Yesterday afternoon, newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron suddenly delayed the announcement of his initial ministerial cabinet, which will be subject to parliamentary approval after the June 11 and 18 legislative elections. The cabinet is to be announced today at 3 p.m. Paris time, with a delay of 24 hours, after verification of future ministers' tax status and potential conflicts of interest.

The imbroglio surrounding the Macron cabinet is exposing the endless media propaganda according to which Macron is launching an ambitious renewal of official French politics. After the elimination of the Socialist Party (PS) and The Republicans (LR) in the presidential elections, amid widespread hostility to the two parties that have governed France for a half century, the media have hailed the 39-year-old president as proof that new forces are ruling France.

In reality, Macron is an investment banker and former minister in the unpopular outgoing PS government of President François Hollande, who intends to vastly intensify Hollande's policies of deep social austerity, attacks on democratic rights, and war. He offers not renewal, but a face lift for a decrepit capitalist ruling establishment in France.

The delay is manifestly intended to prevent tax evasion by the various established politicians being assembled in his cabinet from emerging as an issue that discredits Macron, as it did Hollande. In 2013, the revelation of tax evasion by PS Budget Minister Jérôme Cahuzac, an advocate of EU austerity who also was overseeing initiatives against tax evasion, dealt a serious blow to the PS. The scandal was particularly devastating as Cahuzac got help from Philippe Péninque, an advisor to the neo-fascist National Front (FN), to set up the offshore accounts he used to evade his taxes.

Yesterday, the Macron administration issued a communiqué stating the purpose of the delay is to “give time for verification, so the general directorate of Public Finances and the High Authority for the Transparency of Public Life (HATVP) can carry out due diligence to ensure that people being considered for ministerial office (1) have been subject to an initial verification of their tax situation, whereas the law only requires this verification to take place after they are nominated; (2) are not involved in a conflict of interest, based on the information that is available to HATVP.”

The Macron administration is particularly sensitive about this issue, as it campaigned based on a pledge to oversee the “moralization” of French politics. It is quite safe to say, however, that French politics will yet again resist the latest clumsy crusade to “moralize” it.

Even as the Macron administration was giving itself more time to pore over the tax returns of its ministerial hopefuls, the first criticisms of its top officials were emerging. Edouard Philippe, whom Macron named prime minister on Monday, voted against the PS' 2013 transparency law and was formally censured the next year by the HATVP for having refused to give information on his 2014 tax returns.

The names that were circulating in the press as potential ministers to be announced today made clear that Macron will oversee a reactionary government that will rule in direct continuity with the previous PS and LR governments and come into bitter conflict with the workers.

*Jean-Yves Le Drian, the Hollande administration's defense minister, is expected to remain at his post under Macron. A leading PS official, Le Drian reportedly worked closely with Hollande to identify and approve targets for the PS' “homicide operations” program of extrajudicial murder, which operated in

flagrant violation of the French constitution's ban on the death penalty. He would be tasked with overseeing the broad increase in defense spending that Macron is advocating, as well as Macron's deeply unpopular call to reinstate the draft.

*As interior minister, the names that are circulating include Gérard Collomb, the PS mayor of Lyon who was a key supporter of Macron from early on within in the PS, and Richard Ferrand, a leader of Macron's The Republic on the March (LREM) organization. Both are PS fixtures. Collomb was a member of the Convention of Republican Institutions (CIR), the grouping that formed around ex-Nazi collaborationist politician François Mitterrand before Mitterrand founded the PS in 1971. As for Ferrand, he shepherded the so-called "Macron law" of austerity and deregulation measures through the parliament under Hollande, in 2015.

*Right-wing politician François Bayrou, who was briefly mentioned as a potential prime minister for Macron and who was the education minister in a string of right wing governments during the 1990s, is seen as a likely justice minister.

*Nicole Notat, the former head of the PS-linked French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT) trade union, has been mentioned as a likely labor minister. She ran the CFDT between 1992 and 2002. During this time she was bitterly unpopular among workers for supporting the pension cuts of right-wing Prime Minister Alain Juppé, which provoked the 1995 mass railroad strike. Since then she has become the CEO of sustainable development research firm Vigeo Eiris.

*Potential foreign ministers include former right-wing prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who was designated to deliver a letter from Macron to Chinese President Xi Jinping on China's One Belt One Road infrastructure conference, as well as former LR minister Bruno Le Maire.

Macron and this group of discredited reactionaries are provoking enthusiastic statements of support from corporate CEOs and European Union (EU) officials. Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the EU Commission, sent a letter to Edouard Philippe, published on Twitter, declaring: "Your nomination is for me a sign that France, under the authority of its president, is taking a new political course with men and women of different political sensibilities but driven by the same ambition to bring the French people together

and take it into the future."

Behind this florid language, the banks and CEOs are expecting to receive massive new profits extracted from the exploitation of the working class in France. Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of automaker Renault-Nissan who is infamous for his job-cutting methods, hailed the Macron administration yesterday for being "of a nature that reassures the business world."



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