

Macron's En Marche set to win large majority in French legislative elections

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Just under a week before the first round of the legislative elections, newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron's party, The Republic On the March (LREM) is set to obtain a large majority in the National Assembly. According to a raft of recent polls, LREM would obtain more than 30 percent of the vote and would have a 330 to 390 seat majority in the 577-seat Assembly.

The Socialist Party (PS) of former President François Hollande faces a historic collapse. It is expected to win around 8 percent of the vote in the first round of the legislative elections and only 25 to 35 seats. The Unsubmissive France (UF) movement of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) would only obtain about 12 and 3 percent of the vote, respectively, and about 30 seats together.

This collapse is the devastating conclusion to nearly a half century during which the PS dominated what passed for left-wing politics in France, while carrying out policies of austerity and war. Now the PS, the central axis of social democratic politics and of the various organizations of the radicalized petty-bourgeoisie, is threatened with destruction. It is facing the worst defeat since its foundation in 1971—far worse than its collapse in the 1993 elections, under the first PS president of France, François Mitterrand, when the PS was reduced to only 57 seats.

Abstention is set to be extremely high for France, at 45 percent, amid deep discontent in the population with the political establishment. The right-wing The Republicans (LR) would obtain under these conditions around 22 percent of the vote and 95 to 115 seats, whereas the neo-fascist National Front (FN) would obtain 18 percent of the vote and 5 to 15 seats.

The broad disparity between the number of votes and of seats parties obtain is due to the two-round

organization of the election. Since candidates must obtain over 12.5 percent of registered voters to advance to the second round, in the face of abstention by over half of voters, candidates need to carry nearly a quarter of the vote to advance. Parties who have that level of support only in a small number of electoral districts face significant losses.

The victory LREM is hoping to win does not reflect popular support for Emmanuel Macron's program, despite the massive propaganda for him that currently dominates the media. The landslide for Macron that is being prepared, *France Info* admitted, "does not seem to correspond to the wishes of the electorate, only half of which want the head of state to have a friendly governmental majority. Only 37 percent want his party to be able to form a government."

The popular hostility and mistrust towards Macron is entirely justified. According to what details have emerged of the president's plans, Macron intends for the Assembly—dominated by his party, founded last year and consisting largely of people who have just come to politics—to serve as a rubber stamp for a social counterrevolution in France.

Its first actions will include the passage of an enabling act allowing Macron to rewrite the Labor Code and Hollande's labor law by decree. The goal would be to slash fines for unjustified sacking, to allow companies to impose contracts that violate industry-level agreements and the Labor Code, and more broadly to smash the social protections obtained by the working class in France during the 20th century.

Social spending cuts would be all the more intense in that, as part of his bid to work with Berlin to turn the European Union (EU) into a military rival of the United States, Macron plans to re-establish the draft and massively increase military spending.

The National Assembly would also be tasked with passing a law to make permanent most of the provisions of France's two-year state of emergency, giving the president and the security forces emergency powers. As large sections of the political establishment expect explosive opposition in the working class to Macron's agenda, the main target of this measure will be the working class.

Macron is seeking to impose the diktat of the financial aristocracy on the French people without a shred of democratic legitimacy. Fully 70 percent of the population opposed Hollande's labor law, even without the most reactionary measures that Macron is now pledging to re-establish, and two-thirds of French youth are hostile to establishing universal military service.

Macron is poised to win a majority despite the unpopularity of his program due above all to the complete abdication of political responsibility by Mélenchon and other allies of the PS, like the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). While they did not dare openly endorse him in the second round of the presidential elections on May 7, they made it clear that they agreed with the PS, LR, and the media, who presented Macron as the democratic alternative to FN candidate Marine Le Pen.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, alone called for an active boycott of the second round of the presidential elections, to warn that Macron would not be an alternative to Le Pen for the working class. This demonstrated the unbridgeable class gulf separating the PES from Mélenchon, the NPA and the entire petty-bourgeois periphery of the PS.

Mélenchon, after rising suddenly to 20 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential election, based on rising anti-war sentiment after Trump's April 7 strike on Syria, has fallen rapidly in the polls. Rather than appealing to popular opposition to Macron, he is very publicly seeking to develop an alliance with him.

After offering to become Macron's prime minister and to provide him with the "tempered hand of a wise man who knows where the happiness is to be found," Mélenchon has offered to work with Macron's ministers. He boasted last week that he was meeting with Macron's right-wing justice minister, François Bayrou, to discuss adding measures from Mélenchon's

presidential election program to Macron's law to "moralize" French politics.

As for the NPA, it stated that Macron was "the best representative of the free-market policies of the last 30 years," but that workers should nonetheless vote for Macron to prevent the building of a dictatorial regime by Le Pen. This gave political cover to Macron's anti-democratic program, which consists of counterrevolutionary policies well to the right of those implemented by PS governments 30 years ago.

Macron's election with the tacit support of UF, the NPA, and similar organizations has vindicated the boycott call of the PES. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that, just as in the presidential elections, there is no electoral way out for the working class. It is impossible to halt Macron's attacks by voting for PS or LR candidates, which also support Macron's counterrevolutionary program. The only way to defend basic social and democratic rights is the mobilization of the working class in revolutionary struggle.

As Macron seeks to impose his diktat on the workers, the critical question is the building of the PES as the vanguard of the struggle against Macron, articulating an independent political perspective for struggle by the working class.



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