

Macron fails to name new French government

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The crisis shaking the French government since the resignation of Interior Minister Gérard Collomb, one of the earliest supporters of President Emmanuel Macron, intensified this week. Last week, Macron announced a major cabinet reshuffle, but as of this writing the cabinet changes have still not been announced.

Following eight ministerial resignations over the past two weeks, further departures took place this week. Culture Minister Françoise Nyssen, Agriculture Minister Stéphane Travers and Regional Cohesion Minister Jacques Mézard all announced plans to step down.

The naming of a new government has been announced and then delayed multiple times. On Tuesday, the press was invited for an imminent announcement. But it was rescheduled at the last minute for Friday, reportedly after Macron and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe failed to reach an agreement. Macron purportedly did not want a cabinet reshuffle that would allow Philippe to make a new statement of general policy before the National Assembly, insisting that his own July 9 statement to both houses of parliament at Versailles remained the authoritative statement of overall government policy.

At a press conference Friday, with the media reporting that the cabinet reshuffle would not be announced, Macron seemed totally overcome by the situation. He lamely declared, “I do things calmly and with respect for people. I am trying to do things in a professional way... One must do things with calmness, method and at a good rhythm. There is no crisis, the government is at work, no posts are vacant and things are advancing.”

Officials have admitted that one of the main difficulties in finding new ministers has been repeated refusals by politicians to join the Philippe government. They all fear risking their careers by joining a government whose days seem to be numbered. This is

an unprecedented situation in French politics, where politicians offered a ministerial post have traditionally rushed to accept.

The replacement of Collomb at the interior ministry has posed a particular challenge under conditions of rising discontent within the security forces, which for years have been demanding a rise in their budgets so they can carry out the mass repression the government demands of them.

Nine ministers have cancelled key public appearances. Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire did not go to the yearly meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Bali, Indonesia.

Whatever the composition of the new government, it is already clear that Macron’s agenda of deep austerity, militarism and police state rule will not change. All of the major bourgeois parties support this program and Macron has announced that he will work more closely with the trade unions to impose it. In line with the trajectory of the entire French and European bourgeoisie toward the far right, the cabinet reshuffle will mark a new and violent rightward shift.

Since Collomb’s resignation, Prime Minister Philippe has taken steps in this direction, pushing for the integration into the government of figures from the right-wing Gaullist The Republicans (LR) party.

For now, it is the various factions of this party that are pushing the hardest against the Macron-Philippe government, denouncing its indecision and accusing it of spreading indecision at the highest levels of the state. Speaking in the National Assembly, Christian Jacob, the head of the LR parliamentary group, said, “They were not able to tell us anything... because we are not even sure if there will be a government.”

LR deputy Guillaume Larrivé declared, “Eight days after the compulsory resignation of Mr. Collomb, it does look very serious that we still do not have an operational government... The ship of state no longer

has a pilot. We are not capable of finding an interior minister. That is pretty surprising!”

Factions of LR around Alain Juppé, the former prime minister under right-wing President Jacques Chirac, are coming forward to offer themselves for a proposed coalition. Juppé set off a massive rail strike in 1995 by announcing a direct attack on pensions and public services.

Another former Chirac prime minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, said one should “go towards a logic of coalition,” with “people of the center left” and “the center right... people close to Alain Juppé, for example.”

Another LR faction closer to the far right, around ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy and current LR party leader Laurent Wauquiez, was omnipresent in the interview and matinee radio shows. Brice Hortefeux, the former interior minister under Sarkozy, who is close to Wauquiez, denounced what he called “institutional disorder and political chaos on a scale never seen before” at the highest summits of the state.

Just a few days after French neo-fascist leader Marine Le Pen met with Italy’s neo-fascist interior minister, Matteo Salvini, and declared that she wants “to take power,” her party is conspicuous by its absence, at least for the present. Neo-fascist deputy Sébastien Chenu told BFM-TV on October 9, “This is a lot of noise over nothing.”

The same moderation could be observed in Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Unsubmissive France (LFI) party, whose leaders reacted by mildly criticizing the government without doing anything to inconvenience it. LFI spokeswoman and deputy Danièle Obono said in an interview, “We are not seeking crisis for the sake of crisis,” adding, “Macron may be in crisis... we are spectators.”

With Macron leading the most right-wing regime in France since the end of World War II and the Nazi occupation, the Morenoite wing of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) wrote on its website *Permanent Revolution* that Macron is “worn out” because he is losing his “center-left base,” which is frustrated with his right-wing policies. The NPA was, in typical fashion, leaving open the possibility that a more “center-left” tendency in the ruling elite could lead an opposition to fascistic forces. The heart of the NPA’s political strategy is to subordinate the independent interests of the working class to the supposedly

“democratic” wing of the bourgeoisie.

But all of the bourgeois parties are moving in the direction of counterrevolution and the far right, the supposedly “democratic” no less than the openly neo-fascist. In Germany, the grand coalition of the main “democratic” parties—the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union—is adopting the politics of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which won only 12.6 percent of the vote in the last election. Last week, AfD leader Alexander Gauland published an article rehabilitating anti-Semitism and Hitler’s “blood and soil” policy in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, one of Germany’s main newspapers.

The key question is the growing conflict between all the different wings of the bourgeoisie and the working class, the only consistently progressive and revolutionary force in capitalist society. In France, the ruling elite is for the time being trying to carry out its move toward the far right under some political cover, working through the so-called “center-right” or “center-left” factions that surround Macron and Philippe. But this changes nothing with respect to the basic trajectory of the government, which is entering into collision with the working class.



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