

Macron re-elected French president against neo-fascist Marine Le Pen

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Last night, French President Emmanuel Macron was re-elected with an estimated 58.2 percent of the vote, with 41.8 percent of the vote going to neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen.

The race between France's widely despised "president of the rich" and the country's leading neo-fascist provoked disgust and disillusionment among broad layers of workers. Abstention was the highest recorded since the 1969 elections, when the then-massive Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) called for a boycott. Nearly three million people cast blank or spoiled votes. Including those who did not vote, 16 million voters, or one-third of the electorate, did not vote for either candidate.

The election fueled demonstrations throughout the country Sunday, with riot police charging demonstrators and spraying tear gas in central Paris. Police killed two people in Paris, opening fire on their vehicle, claiming that it failed to stop at a checkpoint.

Despite Le Pen's defeat, it was the largest vote in history for the French far right, which obtained eight percentage points more than in Le Pen's last run-off against Macron in 2017. Le Pen carried outright the overseas territories of Guadeloupe (70 percent of the vote), Guyana (61 percent) and Martinique (61 percent). If Macron's own legitimization of far-right politics and his violently anti-worker policies drive a similar rise in the far-right vote in his second term, Le Pen will be poised to take power in 2027.

Le Pen conceded the election shortly after the voting projections were announced at 8:00 p.m. yesterday evening, declaring her vote to be "a striking victory." She said, "Despite two weeks of unfair, brutal and violent methods, the ideas we represent are reaching new heights."

Le Pen demagogically postured as the defender of

masses of people whose living standards, she predicted, would collapse during Macron's second term.

"The French people made clear tonight their desire for a strong opposition to Emmanuel Macron," she claimed, adding that she would oppose "the disintegration of their purchasing power, attacks on individual liberties... and Emmanuel Macron's increase in the retirement age, delinquency, anarchic immigration and a lax judicial system." She pledged to "continue serving France and the French" in future elections.

Shortly after Le Pen spoke, rival far-right presidential candidate Eric Zemmour—a journalist who promotes the memory of the Nazi collaborationist Vichy regime and has been convicted of inciting racial and religious hatred—called for the unity of the far right in upcoming legislative elections. The elections will take place on June 12 and 19 of this year.

Macron appeared somewhat later yesterday evening and gave a short, perfunctory victory speech to a crowd of a few thousand supporters, mainly high-ranking state officials and journalists, in front of the Eiffel Tower. He claimed that by voting for him, France had "chosen a humanist program that is ambitious for the independence of our country and of Europe."

Having pledged to increase the retirement age three years to 65, introduce US-style university tuition fees and force welfare benefit recipients to work, he referred to his policies of war and austerity. Macron pledged to carry out the "liberation of our academic, cultural and entrepreneurial forces." He said that "the war in Ukraine is there to remind us that we are living through tragic times" and asked his supporters to be "benevolent and respectful" towards far-right voters.

Nonetheless, after admitting that "our country is riven by so many doubts and so many divisions," he

cynically claimed he would re-invent himself to build a “new era” in his second term. “This new era will not be in the continuity of the term in office that is ending but the collective invention of a new method to create five better years in the service of our country and of our youth,” he said, pledging, “No one will be left behind.”

This pack of lies from Macron is an insult to the intelligence of the public. It is apparent that his draconian social cuts aim to massively increase inequality and that his call to be “benevolent and respectful” to the far right is a pledge to continue with the anti-Muslim agenda laid out by his “anti-separatist law” and mass closures of mosques. Faced with ever intensifying class tensions for which it has no progressive solutions, the French ruling class is moving towards dictatorial forms of rule, whether under Macron or Le Pen.

Tens of millions of workers and youth who suffered badly under his first term view Macron’s re-election as a disaster. He carried out violent police repression of “yellow vest” protests and rail strikes against austerity. On the pandemic, he placed profits before lives, championed a policy of “living with the virus” that led to 145,000 deaths in the country and 1.8 million in Europe, while boosting the wealth of French billionaires by over 40 percent. He aligned France with NATO’s stoking of a conflict with Russia in Ukraine that threatens to provoke world war in Europe.

As inflation stoked by massive cash handouts to the super-rich and NATO sanctions against Russia devastates workers’ living standards in France and internationally, the stage is being set for an explosive confrontation between the Macron government and the working class.

Indeed, the first statements of support for Macron came primarily from fellow European imperialist politicians who see his re-election as guaranteeing that France will continue to work closely with the European Union (EU) to militarize Europe and threaten Russia. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen tweeted her “congratulations” to Macron on his re-election, adding: “I am glad to be able to continue our excellent cooperation.”

Somewhat more frankly, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told Spain’s *El Confidencial* that the French people’s support for mild criticisms of NATO’s war on Russia in Ukraine made by Le Pen

and populist candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon had terrified NATO. “Half the population politically supports either leaving the alliance, like Jean-Luc Mélenchon, or the NATO military command, like Le Pen, which means the same thing. The French population has shown it is in a very worrying place in terms of its comprehension of the world.”

As NATO military and diplomatic officials watched the elections, *El Confidencial* wrote, there was “only bated breath and hidden tension. The French elections turned into a security issue.”

If Washington and the European NATO powers viewed the French elections as a military question, it is not because of the statements of Mélenchon or Le Pen. Both have made clear that they will adapt to the NATO war targeting Russia. Le Pen endorsed Macron’s policy on Russia in last Wednesday’s televised debate, and Mélenchon has signaled his willingness to serve under either Macron or Le Pen as prime minister, a position that would give him no influence over foreign policy.

Indeed, Mélenchon, who was the undeserving beneficiary of a massive left-wing protest vote of 22 percent of the electorate in the first round, briefly appeared on the BFM-TV news channel last night to again stress his availability to serve as Macron’s prime minister.

This points to the role of the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (Socialist Equality Party of France--PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The PES called for an active boycott of the second round of the presidential elections by the working class, proposing that workers reject a vote for either Macron or Le Pen and mobilize against both candidates independently of forces endorsing one or another candidate.

This call gave an independent political line to the working class, helping to arm it with a revolutionary and socialist perspective for the coming struggles against the Macron administration.



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