

Attal named French prime minister as Borne government falls

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French President Emmanuel Macron announced yesterday the replacement of Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne by former Education Minister Gabriel Attal. At age 34, Attal became the youngest prime minister since the founding of France's current Fifth Republic in 1958. He will now seek to assemble a cabinet of ministers for approval by Macron.

On Monday, Borne resigned, making clear that she had been pushed out by the presidency. Her resignation letter noted Emmanuel Macron's "will" to "name a new prime minister" and defended the "essential reforms" she imposed while in office. Chief among these were the pension cuts adopted last spring despite overwhelming popular opposition and mass strikes brutally repressed by riot police and sold out by France's corrupt trade union bureaucracies.

Borne wrote, "Now that I must present the resignation of my government, I wanted to say how passionate I was about the mission, guided by our shared concern of producing rapid, tangible results for our fellow citizens."

The final announcement that Macron had named Attal prime minister did not come until yesterday afternoon, however, amid reports of bitter conflicts inside the Macron government. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, Elysée presidential palace chief of staff Alexis Kohler, and Macron's former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe all reportedly objected to Attal. "Bruno and Gérald screamed," one anonymous minister told BFM-TV, while one of Le Maire's advisors said he "does not want to work for a youth aged 34."

As a result, yesterday morning, even after his name had been rumored as a potential prime minister, Attal held a meeting with education trade union bureaucrats which he had previously cancelled.

After Macron finally named Attal, however, Elysée palace officials cynically argued that having a new prime minister would allow for a politically expedient rebranding of Macron's policy agenda. Macron, one of his advisors told *Le Monde*, is inserting "a semi-colon, giving time to take a breath in his decade in power, changing tone as one might do in a musical score or in a poem."

In reality, by naming Attal, Macron aims to deepen and accelerate the ever more overtly fascist turn he has carried out since his re-election in 2022.

Borne was despised for imposing Macron's massively unpopular pension cuts without a parliamentary vote, using the French constitution's anti-democratic Article 49-3 provision on budgetary matters. Since Macron's party lost its parliamentary majority in the 2022 elections, Borne ultimately resorted to the 49-3 provision to block parliamentary votes no less than 23 times. Starting after the adoption of Macron's pension cuts last spring, there was mounting speculation in corporate media that Macron would remove her as a political liability.

Ultimately, however, Borne survived as prime minister until the crisis caused inside Macron's party by the adoption last month of his fascist anti-immigration law. This law blocks immigrants from receiving social benefits, in line with the "national preference" policy of the neo-fascist National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen. The law, which utterly exposed the charlatantry of Macron's claims to be fighting for democracy against neo-fascism, led several members of his party to resign, including Borne's former chief of staff, Health Minister Aurélien Rousseau.

Borne herself also struck a somewhat discordant note on the immigration law, claiming to be "profoundly humanist," and pointing to her background as the

daughter of immigrants to say that she would ensure that the anti-immigration law would “respect our values.”

While Borne’s record is deeply reactionary, Attal’s record and his support for the immigration law appear more compatible with the openly fascistic turn Macron is carrying out.

Attal, the product of an elite education at the Ecole Alsacienne school and the Sciences Po political science university, was only 26 when he followed Macron, leaving the big business Socialist Party (PS) and joining Macron’s On the March party (since renamed Renaissance) in 2016. After serving as the government’s spokesman, he worked on Macron’s plan to impose universal national military service on French youth, and then, as a minister for balanced budget, on the austerity agenda that led to last year’s pension cuts. Attal was finally named education minister last July.

As education minister, Attal oversaw anti-democratic measures like the imposition of a ban on the Muslim abaya in schools, plans to segregate classes according to academic performance starting in junior high school, and plans to reintroduce mandatory school uniforms.

In a brief, perfunctory speech yesterday afternoon accepting the office of prime minister, Attal laid out a domestic agenda of continued assaults on the working class. He pledged to “continue transforming our economy,” to “drastically simplify the life of our companies and entrepreneurs,” and to carry out “resolute action towards the youth.”

Officials of the far-right RN, for their part, described Attal as someone who would adopt a far-right agenda from within Macron’s party. “He is very crafty. He always stays calm, with a smile, speaks the way we do without ever insulting us and uses our themes in a much more subtle way than the others, which is what makes him harder to fight,” said Jean-Philippe Tanguy, a RN legislator for the Somme, who added, “We will let him show his cards, and we’ll hit him when we need to.”

Indeed, Macron’s nomination of Attal is the political product of his turn towards the far right, particularly after last year’s pension struggle. It is now widely understood, among broad layers of workers and youth in France, that Macron rules via police violence against the people, impoverishing workers to enrich the

wealthy. This policy goes hand in hand with a massive surge in French military spending, as Macron backs NATO’s war with Russia in Ukraine and the Israeli government’s genocide in Gaza.

Faced with these escalating and explosive class tensions, the Macron government has embarked on an attempt to divert these tensions along racial and ethnic lines with fascistic appeals to anti-immigrant hatreds. It is planning to largely adopt the RN’s agenda as it runs against the RN in this year’s European elections. Attal is well positioned to implement this reactionary agenda in the service of Macron’s policies of imperialist war abroad and war on the working class at home.

Relying on police-state repression and the support of corrupt union bureaucrats to strangle workers’ struggles, Macron depends on the exorbitant powers of France’s executive presidency, served by an ever narrower circle of top officials personally loyal to him. This has created the conditions for the rapid promotion of young, politically-connected reactionaries like Attal.

Attal’s nomination again confirms the perspectives advanced by the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* during the pensions struggle. There is nothing that workers or youth can try to negotiate with Macron, who leads a government utterly impervious to social protest and firmly set on a course of global imperialist war and fascistic police-state dictatorship. The only way forward is the construction of a political movement among the workers and youth, rejecting the chauvinism of the French ruling establishment and aiming to bring down Macron and transfer power to the working class.



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