

On the eve of the second round of the French legislative elections

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The second round of the French legislative elections taking place tomorrow will undoubtedly mark a historic collapse of both French bourgeois democracy and what has passed for the “left” in France for nearly a half century.

The newly elected president, Emmanuel Macron, is seeking an overwhelming majority for his The Republic On the March (LREM) party. LREM, drawing forces from the Socialist Party (PS) as it collapses, aims to serve as a vehicle for a violent restructuring of French society on a scale unseen since the end of World War II.

The legislative elections are marked by a startling paradox: while Macron’s policies face deep opposition, LREM has reasonable hopes of winning an overwhelming majority of more than 400 seats in the 577-seat Assembly. This is the product of the abdication of responsibility by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and forces like the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) of proving a perspective for opposition to Macron. Instead, in the second round of the presidential elections, they made clear that they “understood” a vote for Macron as a lesser evil against neo-fascist Marine Le Pen.

Under conditions where wide layers of the French population saw no one to vote for, a record 51 percent of voters abstained in the first round of the legislative elections a week ago. Abstention was highest among youth and working class voters. This was the electorate’s negative judgment on the policies Macron has laid out since his election, which intensify those of the previous, discredited PS government.

Whatever the proportions between the different parties that emerge from tomorrow’s election, Macron and the National Assembly will proceed with attacks on the working class that lack even a fig leaf of democratic

legitimacy. Macron won only a quarter of the vote in the first round of the presidential election, and LREM obtained the votes of barely 15 percent of registered voters in last Sunday’s first legislative round.

Macron’s strategy is clear: he aims to impose these policies on a hostile population by force, pushing his measures through a rubber-stamp parliament, exploiting the absence of organized opposition on his left and using the state of emergency to send police to attack social protests that do erupt.

The *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), campaigned for an active boycott of the second round between Macron and the neo-fascist Le Pen, rejecting claims that workers could vote for Macron as the lesser evil. It explained that this policy aimed to give a politically independent class line to the workers for the struggles that would inevitably emerge after the elections.

The PES insisted, moreover, that the call for a boycott had to go hand in hand with the building of a revolutionary party in France and the ICFI as the leadership of the French and international working class, against the PS and Mélenchon, the NPA, and similar bankrupt pseudo-left forces. The six-week period since Macron won the May 7 presidential elections has vindicated the policy of the PES and decisively exposed the claims that he was the democratic alternative to the threat posed by Le Pen.

Macron’s government has announced that it will write into law the powers granted to the security forces under the state of emergency—that is, making the suspension of basic democratic rights under the state of emergency permanent. It will then demand an enabling act from the parliament to allow Macron to rewrite French labor law at his discretion. At the same time, it

will continue to pour ever more resources into the military, police and intelligence apparatus.

Concisely stated, the aim of Macron's government is to repudiate and destroy all the concessions on social and democratic rights the French bourgeoisie was compelled to make to the working class in the aftermath of World War II and the collaboration with Nazism in France. This is the outcome of a sea change in global political and class relations bound up with the capitalist crisis and the collapse of US imperialism's world hegemony.

Macron is pursuing an alliance with Berlin in an effort to use Donald Trump's discrediting of the US government in a desperate bid to establish a German-led European Union (EU) as the world hegemon. The French media reacted enthusiastically, unanimously hailing it as a "European moment," when Macron met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Versailles to call for improved relations with Russia despite US opposition. Such ambitions require a massive increase in military spending at the expense of the working class, and Macron has proposed to bring back the draft.

The affluent "left" petty-bourgeoisie forces calling for parliamentary opposition to Macron's agenda offer nothing to the workers. On Thursday at a campaign speech in Marseille, Mélenchon echoed the concerns of the press that if, as everything indicates, Macron wins a massive majority in the Assembly, he will have full power to proceed unchecked by any opposition inside the ruling elite.

This is a dead end: Macron's basic agenda—on the state of emergency, labor law, and the build-up of the military—is shared by LREM, the PS, the other major bourgeois political formations in France, and the ruling elites across the EU. If the election tomorrow were to see LREM's rivals win more seats, and if Mélenchon's candidates were to advance in the few dozen constituencies where they are still present, that would not change the basic course of events.

An explosive confrontation is being prepared between Macron's government and the population, above all the working class. It cannot be left to the trade unions, Mélenchon and other pseudo-left forces like the NPA. They have already presided over countless defeats of workers' struggles against austerity, such as last year's struggle against the PS labor law, and have supported the war drive of French imperialism in Syria, Libya and

beyond.

Workers urgently require a new revolutionary leadership to wage what will rapidly emerge as a bitter political struggle with the Macron government, backed by the EU.

One hundred years after the October Revolution, the PES advances itself as the representative of the irreconcilable socialist and internationalist program of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky in 1917 and the heritage of Trotskyism defended by the ICFI. It appeals to workers and youth who agree with its analysis of Macron's presidency to support the PES, study its program and join the struggle to build it as the political vanguard of the working class in France.



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