

Neo-fascist RN gives its marching orders to the incoming French government

Kumaran Ira
9 September 2024

France's far-right National Rally (RN) intends to dictate the policies of the incoming right-wing government led by Prime Minister Michel Barnier, recently appointed by President Emmanuel Macron with RN support in parliament. Barnier advances essentially far-right positions in support of NATO wars, stringent EU austerity measures and harsh anti-immigrant policies. Nonetheless, the RN is making clear that they intend to set the agenda of the government, which relies on RN votes to have a parliamentary majority.

In an interview with *La Tribune* on Sunday, RN leader Marine Le Pen boasted that she selected Barnier and detailed her demands for anti-immigrant policies. Macron, she said, "took into account the RN's criteria in the choice of his prime minister. ... Michel Barnier seems to have the same positions on immigration as ours."

Reiterating this point, she continued, "It is undeniable that Michel Barnier seems to have the same position on immigration as ours. Now we expect him to act. He said it himself during the transfer of power: say less, do more."

These remarks confirm that the Barnier government is France's first national government since the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime to rely on far-right support. It exposes the political bankruptcy of Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his New Popular Front (NFP). The NFP made an election alliance with Macron, ostensibly to prevent the RN from coming to power, only to have Macron trample upon the election results and name a far-right government to power.

Insofar as millions of workers vote for the RN, moreover, it must be noted that Le Pen's remarks unmask the ultra-reactionary politics of her party, which she has sought to downplay to win votes. Her

party works, however, in the political tradition created by the Vichy regime. It is providing support to a widely hated president who rules against the people, working to slash pensions, back the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and push for French military intervention in Ukraine against Russia.

In *La Tribune*, Le Pen went out of her way to explain that she would stabilize and support the Barnier government. She stressed that the RN's intention was not to create an obstruction to the new government, explaining that her "wish [was] not to cause a blockage." She added, "If we had wanted to, we would have done like the New Popular Front and threatened to censor everyone. That's not our state of mind."

Similarly, RN President Jordan Bardella told TF1 television on Saturday evening pledging that the RN would not create political instability by blocking the Barnier government. Bardella said that he did not want to participate in "institutional disorder and democratic chaos" by censoring the future government, with whom Bardella claimed he had had "no direct discussions."

The formation of what is now manifestly a far-right government in France constitutes a comprehensive exposure of the bankruptcy of Mélenchon and the NFP, as the entire French ruling class turns rapidly and sharply to the right. It vindicates the warnings made by the WSWs on the NFP's pro-imperialist program and bourgeois and middle class social base. Indeed, the NFP program advocated right-wing measures like backing NATO's war against Russia and strengthening intelligence agencies and military police within France.

In June, Macron called snap elections, hoping to secure a majority to form a right-wing government or a far-right RN government. He aimed to pursue reactionary policies against the working class, intensify xenophobic measures against immigrants, and escalate

the US-NATO-led war against Russia. However, the opposite occurred due to popular opposition to Macron, the “president of the rich.” The NFP—an alliance of the bourgeois Socialist Party (PS), the Stalinists, the Greens and Mélenchon’s France Unbowed (LFI) party—came in first.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s NFP won 182 seats on July 7. Macron’s Ensemble coalition followed with 163 seats, while the far-right National Rally (RN) obtained 143 seats, largely because the NFP endorsed Ensemble candidates to prevent an RN victory in the second round of the vote.

Workers voted for the NFP to prevent the RN from taking power. However, the NFP’s campaigning of Ensemble candidates meant that it effectively helped Macron build his coalition government with the neo-fascists.

Macron refused, however, to nominate a NFP candidate as prime minister and, after holding secret talks with the RN officials, instead waited seven weeks and ultimately nominated Barnier to lead a right-wing, minority government backed by the RN. This reactionary outcome is the product of the suppression of the repeated suppression of the class struggle by the NFP and its allied union bureaucracies.

Last year saw millions protest Macron’s unpopular pension reform, which raised the retirement age to 64 to finance France’s war economy. At the time, polls found that two-thirds of the population supported a general strike to oust Macron from power. An overwhelming majority of the population similarly opposes plans to deploy French ground troops to the NATO-led war against Russia in Ukraine. The union bureaucracies, Mélenchon, the PCF and their allies ultimately called off all protests against the cuts, allowing them to pass.

This year, after the July 7 elections, Melenchon refused to mobilize the working class against Macron’s refusal to respect election results. The NFP did not call a single strike over this issue the entire summer, giving Macron time to plot the installation of an ultra-right government. The NFP only called one demonstration, on September 7, after Macron predictably picked a right-wing operative, Barnier, as prime minister.

In his Friday interview with TF1, Barnier assured that the executive was embarking on a “new era.” The ex-minister and EU Brexit negotiator hailed his own

“negotiation skills, ability to unite people, respect for others, and attentive listening” as reasons for his appointment.

Asked about last year’s pension cuts, which he intends to continue with new cuts this year, Barnier expressed his desire to “initiate a dialogue” to “enhance” the reform, adding, “I will open the debate on how to improve this law for the most vulnerable people, and I will do so with the social partners.” This is a signal that the union bureaucracies tied to the NFP are currently preparing talks with Barnier’s far-right government on new social cuts targeting the workers.

Macron, as well as the entire ruling class, is discredited. On Sunday, when he attended the final ceremony of the Paralympic Games in Paris, thousands booed him.

The opposition to the ruling class’s legitimization of far-right dictatorship, however, cannot be led by the rotten NFP and Mélenchon, who for decades have been tools of French imperialism, hostile to the interests of the working class. The defense of social and democratic rights and the struggle against genocide and war require the building of a movement in the working class fighting for socialism against pseudo-left forces like Mélenchon.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact