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## French right splits as sections back neo-fascist Le Pen

By Kumaran Ira

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This weekend, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, the leader of the small right-wing party Arise France (DLF), officially backed Marine Le Pen of the neo-fascist National Front (FN) in the runoff of the French presidential election.

Le Pen said she would name Dupont-Aignan prime minister if she were elected president. “It is together that we will campaign to bring people together, more and more, and win a victory on Sunday May 7,” declared the FN presidential candidate.

The two leaders issued a six-point “government accord” that forms the basis of their alliance. “This contract for a governmental alliance will be key to get beyond the divisions and the doubts that are giving the ‘system’ and Emmanuel Macron the weapons they need to survive, thus harming the national interest,” the two signatories stated.

An alliance at the national and presidential level between the FN and a right-wing party is unprecedented and points to the collapse of the two-party system made up of the Socialist Party (PS) and The Republicans (LR), whose candidates were eliminated on the first round. Already, several LR leaders, including Henri Guaino, Laurent Wauquiez and Thierry Mariani, have decided not to call for a Macron vote against the FN.

While most PS and right-wing politicians are calling to block Le Pen by voting for Macron, a former economy minister in the reactionary PS government, Dupont-Aignan, justified his decision to back the FN. “If Emmanuel Macron—that is, [PS President] François Hollande junior—is elected, the country is screwed,” he said. “I’ve made a historic choice, telling the French people: yes, I will do everything to beat Macron. I went beyond, I didn’t rally to the FN. I negotiated. It is the most beautiful moment in my political history.”

The rallying to a neo-fascist policy by growing sections of the French ruling elite underscores the correctness of the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES) call for an active boycott of the second round of the presidential elections. The strategy of begging the political establishment to block the rise of the neo-fascists is false and will only produce disasters.

The pseudo-left parties—the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA, at the time the Revolutionary Communist League, LCR), Workers Struggle (LO) and the Independent Democratic Workers Party (POID, at the time the Workers Party, PT)—used this strategy in 2002. They aligned themselves with the PS as it endorsed right-wing candidate Jacques Chirac to block FN candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen. They claimed this would block the rise of the neo-fascists.

In fact, this granted the far right the monopoly of opposition to Chirac and the PS within the French political establishment. The conservatives and then the PS carried out policies increasingly indistinguishable from those of the far right over the last 15 years—in the last five years alone, the PS imposed a state of emergency and repeatedly invited Marine Le Pen to the Elysée Presidential Palace. Now, a section of the right is overtly jumping ship to back Le Pen, who has become a major force by profiting from the discrediting of the traditional PS-LR two-party system.

These bitter experiences, like Dupont-Aignan’s current policy, expose the claims that a vote for Macron, a supporter of austerity and war, will halt the FN’s rise. Not only would Macron carry out an extremely reactionary policy, but ever-larger sections of the ruling elite are rallying behind the far right and its populist demagoguery.

The PES calls for the independent mobilization of the working class through an active boycott of the election. Macron and Le Pen are both ruthless enemies of the workers. As the PES wrote in its statement “No to Macron and Le Pen! For an active boycott of the French election!”, “The critical issue... is the development of opposition in the working class to both Macron and Le Pen from the left.”

The differences between those sections of the French ruling class backing the FN and those supporting Macron are largely tactical and are principally about foreign policy. The bulk of the ruling class supports Macron, but a considerable section supports the FN. This division reflects in no small part the deep crisis of the European Union and of NATO: the FN prefers an alliance with Trump and Russia against German hegemony in Europe, and has proposed a Frexit to leave the EU as well as a referendum on leaving the euro and returning to the French franc currency.

Large sections of the French population still view the FN with horror, however. In their document, Le Pen and Dupont-Aignan therefore make a few modifications to nationalist or xenophobic policies of the FN that provoked particular media attention and popular hostility.

They therefore claim that to clinch the agreement, Dupont-Aignan forced Le Pen to give up her policy of making foreign children pay for school. Policy changes regarding “cost-free access to public services for strangers arriving legally on national territory will not affect schools,” the text states.

They also implied that Le Pen had somewhat moderated her anti-European nationalism. Dupont-Aignan said, “I am not against Europe, nor is Marine Le Pen. We are against the European Union. We want a referendum to renegotiate all the treaties. The French people, by voting for Marine Le Pen, will not have issued a blank check on Europe. The transition away from the common European currency will have to be accomplished with skill.”

Le Pen has also indicated that she may take 18 months to develop her policy on the euro and that other policy issues could have priority rather than the euro, though she is still hostile to it.

“The euro is dead,” she told *Le Parisien* this weekend. She explained that under the FN, the common currency could still be used by major corporations for international trade, but that the franc would be used for daily transactions within France.

These attempts to somehow reassure electors thinking of voting for the FN are false and reactionary. Class tensions in France and across Europe are enormous. Hollande’s presidency demonstrated that the entire ruling class is shifting rapidly and very far to the right. If the FN were to be elected, as was the case with the PS in 2012, it would seek to carry out a policy far to the right even of what it proposed during the presidential campaign.