

French daily *Le Figaro* reports that Macron considering early resignation

By Alex Lantier
13 June 2020

On Thursday morning, the French daily *Le Figaro* reported that President Emmanuel Macron told a video conference with a “very restricted” group of London donors to his 2017 campaign that he was considering resigning. The report points to a deep crisis of the French ruling elite: the only resignation by a French president since the fall of the fascist regime in 1944 was General Charles de Gaulle in 1969, when he was confronted by his defeat in the referendum he sought in response to the May-June 1968 general strike.

Le Figaro writes: “According to one of the participants, Emmanuel Macron explained that he was considering the possibility of resigning, to trigger, ‘in the weeks or months to come,’ an early presidential election. The head of state’s aims are clear: to regain political control in a difficult period, convinced that he is taking his opponents by surprise. He confirmed this to his audience, who were asked to provide him with funds: ‘I am sure I will win because there is no one else.’”

Contacted by *Le Figaro* before the article was published, the presidential palace confirmed that Macron’s resignation was possible, but not decided upon. The presidency said that “as a matter of principle, we do not rule out any possibility,” but that “the hypothesis of a resignation has never been on the agenda or even raised in a meeting at the Elysée.” It added, “We are entering a cycle of reflection and consultation. In this context, everything is being looked at.”

Later, faced with questions from the media, the Elysée denied the *Le Figaro* report. “The president of the Republic has never mentioned his resignation” and “has never participated in a video conference with donors,” the Elysée told AFP, without specifying whether he had used other terms or participated in the discussion by other technical means. Government spokeswoman Sibeth Ndiaye simply said that “It’s rather crazy, I must confess, to imagine a resignation of the president of the Republic.”

Even though the Elysée has not clarified the issue, the coronavirus pandemic and the international protests against the police murders of George Floyd and Adama Traoré have profoundly destabilized the government. Already weakened by the “yellow vest” protests and the rail workers’ strikes against its pension reform, Macron faces a deep economic and political crisis brought on by the pandemic, spreading worker anger around the world, and growing lack of confidence in the ruling class.

Macron delivers his speech tomorrow to outline the next phase of the end to the lockdown from a clearly weak position inside the ruling class.

Already, on May 19, the presidential party had lost its majority in the National Assembly, with 16 deputies from Macron’s Republic On The Move (LRM) party leaving to join former Socialist Party ecology minister Delphine Batho in an “Ecology, Democracy, Solidarity” (EDS) group. LRM retained only 288 deputies, whereas 289 deputies are required for a majority of the 577 seats in the Assembly.

The media reported that EDS members considered the Macron line “too far to the right.” EDS deputy Aurélien Taché tried to give an antifascist veneer to his group, claiming that he was fighting against a neo-fascist victory in the next presidential elections: “If we do not make progress and if we do not have results very soon, unfortunately, in 2022, the French may choose the worst.”

The press is also fuelling the rumour that Macron is going to separate from his Prime Minister Édouard Philippe, who came from the Gaullist Republicans party. The author of Thursday’s report, *Figaro Magazine* editor Carl Meeus, has posted numerous Tweets highlighting Philippe’s higher popularity rating than Macron and posing the question: “A message for @EmmanuelMacron?”

Conflicts at the highest levels of the state apparatus

reflect the magnitude of the global economic and social crisis triggered by the pandemic, and the class struggles it sets in motion.

The pandemic's shutdown and the subsequent containment needed to stop the transmission of COVID-19 caused the worst recession since the 1930s. The GDP of France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy are expected to fall by between 11 and 15 per cent in 2020, while government debts will soar. French debt will be 115 or 120 percent of GDP, an unsustainable level in the long term.

Already the consequences for employment have been harsh. In May, more than 40 million European workers were on unemployment assistance, including 12.4 million in France, 10.1 million in Germany and 7.5 million in the United Kingdom. More than 500,000 workers have lost their jobs in France in the first quarter of the year, mainly due to a record decline in temporary agency work—a 40 per cent drop, compared to 14 percent in the 2008 crash.

The Macron government, the political establishment and trade unions are complicit in the preparation of massive attacks by banks and employers against workers. Many media outlets are counting on an unprecedented wave of layoffs in the autumn. According to *Les Échos*, Labour Minister Muriel Pénicaud is preparing to reduce the pay of lockdown-related unemployment payments from 84 to 60 per cent of salaries.

Through various manoeuvres, including the debate over Macron's future, the ruling elite is preparing for a class confrontation between workers and the financial aristocracy and its political and union servants. While Jérôme Fourquet at the IFOP polling institute predicts that “as in 2008–2009, we could see acts of violence with factory occupations and people who have nothing left to lose after the announcement” of layoffs, the bureaucrat Stéphane Flégeau of the General Labor Federation (CGT) warns *Le Monde*: “There will be enormous tensions in the industry. Many employees are infected or affected by deaths among their loved ones.”

Macron's statement that there is “no one” against him except Marine Le Pen and the neo-fascists, if true, would only underscore his own complacency. In fact, a neo-fascist regime might well emerge from the fall of his government, as might a whole range of other political alliances within the political elite. All of them, even those who do not claim to be part of the fascist legacy of the Vichy regime, would carry out violent economic and political attacks on workers.

The fact that US President Trump has considered

sending troops to shoot demonstrators against the police murder of George Floyd highlights the fact that throughout the world the financial aristocracy wants is moving toward military dictatorship.

In 2017, the Party for Socialist Equality called for an active boycott of the second round of presidential elections, insisting that only an independent mobilization of workers against the winner, whether Macron or Le Pen, would prevent them from implementing a fascistic policy. Macron's presidency has fully confirmed this warning. He has not only violently repressed the “yellow vests” and imposed drastic austerity, but waged neo-colonial war in Mali and hailed collaborationist dictator Pétain as a “great soldier.”

The anger of young people and workers has already exploded internationally in demonstrations against the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. This movement raises the question of the unification of workers and young people internationally. Faced with the “yellow vests” and protests against the murder of George Floyd, French intelligence is worried about a “convergence of the existing struggles over the social crisis and the racial crisis,” that is to say, a convergence between the workers who are already demonstrating against inequality, and broad working masses, including those of immigrant origin, who are preparing to enter the struggle.

In the face of the staggering of the Macron government, the only viable policy is to build an international political leadership to provide this developing movement with the political perspective required to seize power, overthrow capitalism, and reorganize economic life on the basis of social needs and not private profit.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>