

PSA auto workers protest threat to close Aulnay, France plant

Our reporters
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Workers marched Saturday in a protest called by unions at the PSA plant in the east Paris suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois against the planned closure of the site in 2014. This is part of a management strategy to impose productivity increases and cut staff (“*compactage*”) that also involves plans to shut down PSA plants in Madrid and at the Sevelnord plant in northern France.

Marchers chanted slogans including, “There is money, in PSA’s accounts!” and “Prohibit sackings!”

Approximately 2,000 people joined the march. Besides PSA workers and local residents, there were contingents of General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union officials, of mayors and members of the bourgeois “left” Socialist Party (PS), and petty-bourgeois “left” parties like the Communist Party (PCF) and the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA).

The most significant aspect of the march was workers’ growing distrust of the unions and petty-bourgeois “left,” as class tensions between the proletariat and the ruling class sharpen.

This is the product of bitter experiences, such as the CGT’s betrayal of the 2010 struggle against President Nicolas Sarkozy’s pension cuts—where the CGT stood aside while the police were sent in to break a strike and blockade by refinery workers. There is also the impact of the revolutionary struggles of the working class in Tunisia and Egypt, and the pillaging of Greece by the European and international financial aristocracy.

Workers who spoke to the WSWs justifiably had no confidence that they could fight for their demands under the leadership of the CGT and of the petty-bourgeois “left.” The CGT was advancing a bankrupt line that workers could defend their jobs by asking PSA to share production between several different plants. Such demands, which amount to a complete

capitulation to the employers, have served as a political cover for the CGT to oversee the closure of dozens of auto industry plants throughout France since the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2008.

The WSWs spoke to Zitouni, who has worked on the production lines at Aulnay PSA for 15 years.

Speaking of a need for a fight back, Zitouni said: “It needs a much broader movement, this can’t be won at plant level. The unions aren’t organising it ... PSA won’t back off. It’s all about money and profits. In Morocco the workers are paid €250 a month. Workers in low-cost countries are not our enemies, they will wake up and revolt.”

“To my knowledge, there is no party in France which represents the working class. [Communist Party presidential candidate and former PS minister Jean-Luc] Mélenchon makes out he opposes the system, but he still has a PS mentality. He’ll line up with the strongest ones. If there are more and more people unemployed, there’ll be a civil war. I agree we need an international party to articulate the class struggles on the international level.”

Samba, a CGT member who has worked at PSA-Aulnay for three years, said, “The problem is that the unions don’t agree with each other. I admit that they were together in the *Intersyndicale* (Joint union committee), but they did not unify workers in the struggle in 2010 against the pension reform. I don’t agree with what happened at Grandpuits”—one of the refineries where, during the 2010 pensions struggle, the CGT did nothing to stop the police from breaking a workers’ picket line.

He added, “What is happening in Greece is a warning for us. But there is no party which represents the working class in France. We should help the Greeks, but how? I agree that the funds given by the EU to the

Greek government are only to pay the banks. Workers here must be in solidarity with the Greek workers. They must keep up the fight against austerity. Their struggle is our struggle.”

Rajaram has worked at PSA for 15 years: “We’ve been told that, if there’s no work for us, we’ll be offered work elsewhere. But I can’t leave the area: I’ve got a flat here and my family, two children. I was working in a factory in Madras and made redundant. The same thing is happening here and everywhere.”

“I’m 45. I won’t find work anywhere and if I did I’d lose the rights I’ve acquired after 15 years at PSA. The trade unions are useless. The Socialist Party, the NPA and the CGT—they’re not going to change anything.”

WSWS supporters interviewed workers and distributed articles on the struggles of automobile and industrial workers internationally: Fight Ontario Caterpillar plant closure! Unite North American workers against wage-cutting! and Global layoffs hit workers at GM, Nokia and Pepsico.



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