

French police attack demonstrations against regressive labor law

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Tens of thousands of people throughout France demonstrated yesterday against the decision by the Socialist Party (PS) to impose the El Khomri labor law without a vote in the National Assembly. The contemptuous and provocative decision to use Article 49-3 to impose the law without parliamentary vote has stirred the anger of the protestors.

The police have responded by violently attacking protesters in a number of cities throughout the country.

Several thousand people demonstrated in Toulouse and Nantes, along with several hundred in Lyon and Caen. According to reports, protesters in Le Havre ransacked the headquarters of the PS. There have been a number of arrests, including nine in Toulouse, eight in Lyon, five in Nantes and three in Bordeaux.

In many cities, there were reports of clashes between youth and members of the trade unions, including the Stalinist General Confederation of Labour (CGT). The unions had indicated before the protests that they would work with the police to control the protests and prevent conflicts.

In Marseille, where several thousand demonstrators marched, violent clashes took place near the Place Castellane.

In Paris, there were violent clashes between protestors and the police. After an initial confrontation between demonstrators holding glass bottles and police firing tear gas, the demonstration moved towards the Invalides; the protesters found themselves trapped by police in the street and soldiers armed with assault rifles guarding the Invalides.

After a confrontation between the police and a small number of unidentified rioters, the police fired several tear gas grenades and charged the crowd. At least two demonstrators were injured in the head and four people were arrested.

WSWS reporters interviewed some demonstrators at the Invalides. One student, Emilien, insisted that the rioters who clashed with police were not present at the start of the event, but they had slipped in during the demonstration among a group of anarchists that were peacefully protesting.

He denounced Hollande's decision to resort to invoking Article 49-3 in order to impose the law. "It is an act of authoritarianism; it is a proof of political and ideological impotence. The government has no legitimacy and depends on brute force to pass laws that will attack all workers and destabilize the youth." He saw that the role of the PS was "to defend the capital system."

Emilien again stressed his suspicions about the rioters who intervened in the protests and seemed to work closely with the police to launch provocations. He said, "I mostly saw people who were part of the processions at specific locations, it was not random. It was after the security forces that were prepared to crack down, but not just on the violent groups but the whole procession."

The WSWS also spoke to Didier, who said he was disappointed in the environmentalist Green Party and feared the long-term political consequences of the El Khomri law. Mocking the pretensions of Hollande to be a "great tactician," Didier said, "The right will come back ... they [the PS ministers] will be swept away in a few months, which makes it even more sad that this law is issued from the 'left.' The left does not mean anything anymore; we are in a pre-revolutionary period."

Evoking the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, he added, "The 1793 Constitution recognizes the right to insurrection when a law does not respect the rights of the people. ... When a law is

unjust, we will not respect it.”



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