

French Morenoites call on trade unions to join anti-vaccine protests

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The pseudo-left website *Révolution permanente* (Permanent Revolution) is attempting to give a “left” veneer to the extreme-right mobilisation against a scientific health policy against the coronavirus. Echoing the arguments cited by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Unsubmissive France (La France insoumise—LFI) to call protests against mandatory vaccination at the same time as the far right, *Révolution permanente* is calling upon the trade union apparatuses to join this movement.

Macron’s “health pass” is a reactionary policy, which the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the *World Socialist Web Site* oppose. Without educating caregivers and the rest of the population about the need for vaccination, Macron is, in an authoritarian fashion, withholding pay if they refuse to be vaccinated. This is part of a policy pursued by the ruling class throughout the European Union to force people back to work and school and to let the virus spread in defiance of scientific recommendations.

However, the Parti de L’Égalité Socialiste (PES, Socialist Equality Party of France) insists that the struggle against the pandemic and against police dictatorship is an international struggle, which must be conducted through the mobilisation of workers in complete independence from capitalist parties and trade union apparatuses. *Révolution permanente* takes a diametrically opposed position, calling on the trade union apparatuses to intervene and direct sections of workers toward protests called by the extreme right.

This is what emerges from its reactionary statement, entitled “Against Macron’s authoritarianism, for a real health strategy: in the streets this Saturday!” It welcomes “a broadening of the mobilisation that went hand in hand with a certain radicality, as in Poitiers where the demonstrators invaded the town hall to take down a portrait of Macron.” If “the central watchword remains the opposition to the health pass,” they applauded “several calls” of the demonstrators making “the link between this authoritarian attack and the anti-social attacks of the government.”

The protests are hostile to vaccinations, which are necessary to limit coronavirus deaths. Moreover, *Révolution permanente* is well aware that the protests were being held at the call of neo-fascists, such as Marion Marechal-Le Pen, Florian Philippot, the former adviser to Marine le Pen, Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, and libertarians within Unsubmissive France like François Ruffin.

They write:

“While the far right was able to intervene and call for a mobilisation, the general tint of the demands is marked by confusion, expressing an initial politicisation. A politicisation that is marked by the discrediting of the claims of the government, which has opened up space for doubts, some of them legitimate, about vaccination.”

Révolution permanente then applauded trade union apparatuses that have denounced vaccinations. If they criticized the union apparatuses, it was only for not having supported more aggressively the movement of the extreme right. They continue:

“New sections of the labour movement have moreover called to join the movement. These include CGT [General Federation of Labour] Commerce, but also local structures like in Dreux or in the Bouches-du-Rhône, where the CGT and FO [Workers Force] jointly called for a mobilization. However, these calls have the limitation of not being accompanied by a call for a strike and are not enough to compensate for the shameful passivity of the union leaderships. This passivity plays into the hands of the extreme right, which will be present again tomorrow to try to take control of the movement.”

In fact, the far right is not trying to take control of the movement; it launched it. *Révolution permanente* falsifies the origins of the protests in the calls of the extreme right that they had just referred to. The aim of this is obviously to conceal their increasingly direct alignment with the political activities of the far right.

Explosive anger is rising across Europe and internationally against the ruling elite, which has refused to take the necessary health measures to stop the pandemic. Instead of following a policy of social distancing, with strict containment to stop the transmission of the virus, followed by a policy of tracing to prevent a resurgence, they have repeatedly done partial lockdowns and called for “living with the virus.” After more than 110,000 deaths in France and 1.1 million in Europe, the emergence of the Delta variant threatens a new wave of deaths.

An international health and political crisis has developed, with the possibility of an independent intervention by the working class to impose a scientific health policy. In March 2020, spontaneous walkouts by workers across Italy and Europe imposed a strict lockdown to allow workers to shelter in their homes. But *Révolution permanente*’s response to this crisis is to try to line up angry and desperate health care workers behind the extreme right.

Mandatory vaccination against many diseases, including the coronavirus, is not an attack on democratic rights, as *Révolution permanente* claims. It is part of the social gains obtained by the struggles of the working class in the 20th century, which allowed for improvements in working-class life expectancy. The vaccination against the coronavirus is an elementary requirement of public health and self-defense of the working class.

The arguments provided by *Révolution permanente* to justify its alignment against science are fraudulent. First, in an article entitled “Some elements of analysis on the emerging mobilization against the

health pass,” Révolution permanente insists that the mobilizations called by the far right against vaccinations are similar to the “yellow vest” movement:

‘First, these protests have a multi-class character, with a significant presence of petty-bourgeois as well as working-class layers and first-time demonstrators, who mobilized against Macron as part of an initial process of politicisation. Second, there is the spontaneous character of the demonstrations, largely organized on social media, without a precise trajectory, slogan or organization. The generally peaceful character of the protests also recalls the illusions about nonviolence that animated the very first “yellow vest” demonstrations. Finally, the protests expressed a strong anti-Macron content, crystallizing the anger with the return of the slogan ‘Resign, Macron!’

It is true that a layer of “yellow vests” has joined the anti-vaccine demonstrations at the call of the far right. This only underscores the weaknesses of a movement that declared itself “apolitical.” Nevertheless, it is wrong to compare the anti-vaccine protests to a movement like the “yellow vests,” which were part of an international explosion of strikes and demonstrations against social inequality.

While the “yellow vests” had the support of an overwhelming majority of the French population, as did the strikes against the attacks on pensions, the current demonstrations represent only a minority. Roughly 70 percent of the population has said it supports the “health pass,” not because Macron’s health policy is popular but because of support for vaccinations.

The neo-fascists who launched these protests, on the other hand, are the fiercest opponents of any coronavirus restrictions. Like their political ancestors in the fascist dictatorships of the 20th century, they embody the ruling elite’s hatred of equality and the masses. And indeed, thanks to the stimulus packages during the pandemic, European billionaires have increased their collective wealth by more than \$1 trillion during the pandemic, while 1.1 million people died in Europe.

In their deadly policy, the European financial aristocracy has obtained the support of the French trade unions. Indeed, the CGT supported European bailout stimulus packages that granted more than €750 billion to banks and large companies, as part of the ending of social distancing against the pandemic.

Mehring Books, the publishing arm of the Socialist Equality Party (US), is proud to announce the publication in epub format of Volume 1 of *COVID, Capitalism, and Class War: A Social and Political Chronology of the Pandemic*, a compilation of the *World Socialist Web Site’s* coverage of this global crisis.

This unmasks the counterrevolutionary role of the petty-bourgeois forces in Révolution permanente, as well as the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) from which they emerged. The NPA slandered the “yellow vests” by calling them “poujadist,” i.e., neo-fascist, in order to justify its hostility to a social movement launched independently of the trade union apparatuses on social media. On the other hand, Révolution permanente aligns itself with anti-vaccine demonstrations truly called by the extreme right.

In order to hide the reactionary character of its politics, Révolution permanente calls upon the trade union apparatuses to intervene, allegedly in order to push the anti-vaccine protests to the left.

‘Yet it would be just as erroneous as in 2018 to reduce all the protesters to the movement’s most reactionary components. After bringing together more than 100,000 people on July 17, this

mobilisation process could be the beginning of a non-reactionary movement against the government. It is therefore the duty of the organizations of the workers’ movement and of revolutionaries to do everything within their reach to develop and give a class perspective to the politicisation underway, by proposing their own demands and methods of struggle.’

It is undoubtedly true that the demonstrations are very heterogeneous. Health care workers and “yellow vests” participated. But far from intervening to clarify political questions, to oppose the anti-vaccine policy of the neo-fascists as well as Macron’s reactionary policies, Révolution permanente strives to strengthen the hold of the trade union apparatuses and align them with the far right.

Révolution permanente’s assurances that its intervention in the anti-vaccine movement will push the unions to the left reflects a politically criminal complacency. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been devastated in Europe by the coronavirus, and neo-fascist army officers are threatening a coup on French soil. Meanwhile, the pseudo-left align themselves with the far right, while remaining silent on the declarations published by officers in *Valeurs actuelles* threatening to launch military operations and kill thousands of people in France.

Nothing progressive will come out of the red-brown alliance between the far right, the union bureaucracies and the pseudo-left that they are campaigning for. The record of the NPA’s sordid practice of covering up for far-right movements should serve as a warning to workers about the role that Révolution permanente is currently playing.

Indeed, Révolution permanente was founded as a faction of the NPA after it supported a neo-fascist coup d’état launched by the CIA in Ukraine against a pro-Russian government in 2014. The NPA justified itself as follows: “While the main organized forces are for the moment, right-wing and far-right, we support the social and political forces that are trying to build a left opposition within the movement.”

The result was the advent of an extreme right-wing regime in Ukraine, the outbreak of a civil war between the west and east of the country and the collapse of its economy. Finally, the Ukrainian regime granted an honorary pension to veterans of the Ukrainian nationalist militia, who had participated in the genocide of Jews alongside Nazi troops in the Soviet Union during World War II.

The Parti de L’Égalité Socialiste (PES, Socialist Equality Party of France) is fighting to mobilize workers internationally to stop the pandemic and the capitalist elites’ race to dictatorship. This means closing down non-essential places and expropriating the financial aristocracy to allow for the broadest possible vaccinations. Conducting such a policy presupposes a social revolution that would place power in the hands of the working class not only in France but throughout Europe and the world.

The building of rank-and-file committees in every school and workplace would ensure the safety and health of workers and youth, and mobilize them for a scientific health policy, against both Macron and the danger of a neo-fascist coup. The construction of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), independent of the national trade union apparatuses, however, requires a conscious and merciless break against the confusion sewn by Révolution permanente.



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