

French pseudo-left tries to block struggle against Macron's cuts

The pathetic farce of Mélenchon's aborted "march on the Elysée Palace"

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After President Emmanuel Macron rammed through his pension cuts in the face of overwhelming popular opposition, without even a parliamentary vote, social anger is exploding across France. Two-thirds of the French people want a general strike to block the economy and bring down Macron. The main obstacle to this is the motley crew of cowardly, ineffectual and cynical toadies that the capitalist media falsely pass off as the "left."

This is the lesson that flows from the abortive "march on the Elysée palace," Macron's official residence, held yesterday by legislators of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's New Popular Ecological and Social Union (NUPES).

NUPES officials announced the event last week—billing it, ludicrously, as a re-enactment of the October 5-6, 1789 women's march on the royal palace at Versailles during the French Revolution. They announced that as many as 250 deputies of the National Assembly would march on the Elysée to demand that Macron withdraw his cuts. The message they aimed to convey was that workers should leave the task of mounting "revolutionary" opposition against Macron to them and to France's corrupt union bureaucracies.

In the end, they only succeeded in illustrating why masses of workers hold them in utter contempt.

In October 1789, tens of thousands of hungry Parisian women, impoverished by surging inflation, marched on Versailles to demand bread. They protested, stormed the royal palace, killed royal guards who tried to interfere, and brought the king and queen back to Paris to live under the armed watch of the population. Four years later, both monarchs had been executed for scheming to retake power in league with foreign aristocratic armies. The system of feudal property the

monarchy defended had been abolished.

In contrast, the political courtesans of both sexes who make up the NUPES are opposed to revolution. They are desperate to maintain the absurd pretence that they represent the left, while also declaring themselves on bended knee to be "at the disposal" of Macron, the president of the rich.

Initially, all of the parties in the NUPES were to take part in the march: Mélenchon's own Unsubmissive France (LFI); the Socialist Party (PS), which can boast of having Macron as its former economy minister; the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF); and the Greens.

LFI political coordinator and deputy Manuel Bompard tweeted, "We will go in procession to demand the withdrawal of the pension law."

Green deputy Sandrine Rousseau declared that the march, with Green participation, would "directly establish a balance of power with the president." Drunk on her own rhetoric, Rousseau even fantasized about telling Prime Minister "Elisabeth Borne to resign along with her government!"

After mounting NUPES in-fighting, however, all but a handful of PCF parliamentarians pulled out. On Monday, PCF General Secretary Fabien Roussel declared that the "NUPES has outlived itself" and called for "a new left and which is not limited to Jean-Luc Mélenchon." Early Tuesday morning, LFI officials claimed the march on the Elysée had been cancelled and called for a rally at Châtelet Square instead, while the PCF accused LFI of "spreading fake news."

Ultimately, the Stalinists hand-delivered an impotent letter to the Elysée palace, politely asking Macron to "give up on your ill-fated project." They warned

Macron that “Your refusal to listen to listen to the people stokes its anger and is creating an unprecedented social, political and economic crisis.” However, the only practical proposal they found to make was the following: “Mr. President, in this perspective of ending the crisis, we solemnly ask you to agree to meet with us.”

It is clear that the “struggle” against Macron, from the standpoint of the Stalinists, should be strictly confined to the gilded halls of the Elysée palace. Having announced their desperate desire to meet France’s despised president of the rich, they closed their letter by writing: “Remaining at your disposal, we ask you to believe, Mr. President of the Republic, our sincere greetings.”

In short, the Stalinists acted like a cabal of the king’s ministers, desperately pleading with the monarch to change his policy to save them all from the outraged populace. Indeed, they are terrified that a mass mobilization of the working class against Macron will blow apart all their parliamentary stipends, the corporate subsidies to their union bureaucracies, and the shareholder handouts to their newspapers upon which their affluent lifestyles depend.

Clearly, for purposes of political identification, the next time NUPES officials refer to the French revolution, they should all wear powdered wigs and silk stockings.

The *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, calls for a mass mobilization of rank-and-file workers and youth to prepare a general strike against Macron. It explains that such a movement can only be built independently from the union bureaucracies, in a movement from below.

The PES irreconcilably opposes the corrupt and cynical politics of petty-bourgeois allies of the union bureaucracies like the NUPES. Their conduct today fully merits the condemnation the 19th century revolutionary Auguste Blanqui made of the petty-bourgeois democrats who betrayed the 1848 revolution.

“The guiltiest of all,” Blanqui said, “are those in whom the people, deceived by their fine phrases, saw its sword and shield; those whom it enthusiastically proclaimed the arbiters of its future.... May the workers always keep in mind this list of cursed names, and if a single one, yes, a single one were ever to appear again

in a revolutionary government, let them all cry with one voice: Treason!”

If the working class builds a revolutionary movement, Blanqui wrote, “all obstacles, all resistance, all impossibilities will disappear. But if proletarians let themselves be amused by ridiculous promenades on the streets, by the planting of ‘trees of liberty,’ by the ringing phrases of lawyers, they must expect holy water to begin with, insults to follow, eventually bullets, and always misery. Now let the people choose!”



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