

What way forward in the struggle to bring down Macron?

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Today, as millions of workers and youth march to oppose French President Emmanuel Macron and his pension cuts, it is clearer than ever that the working class is in struggle against the capitalist state.

There have now been over one dozen national strike days of action, over nearly three months. Again and again, however, the workers have come up against the fact that they are in a struggle against the Macron government, and that what has to be done is to bring down Macron.

Bitter experience has shown that any demonstration called on the basis of a perspective of pressuring or convincing Macron to abandon his cuts is doomed to failure. When millions marched and polls showed three-quarters of French people opposed the cuts, Macron used his presidential privileges to ram the cuts through parliament without a vote, claiming he had to keep France credible with the banks. When mass protests erupted across France against this, and polls showed two-thirds of French people support a general strike, Macron simply intensified police repression.

The working class has the power to bring down Macron through a general strike. However, the greatest obstacle has proven to be the trade union bureaucracy and its political apologists, who have worked systematically to exhaust and disorient the protests. They calculate that the longer the protests go on without a clear goal and perspective, the more workers will conclude that it is futile to oppose Macron and ultimately abandon the struggle.

Indeed, after spontaneous mass protests and riots erupted across France against the imposition of Macron's cuts without a vote in parliament, Laurent Berger, the head of the French Democratic Labor Confederation, insisted that workers had to submit to "mediation" with Macron. The goal, Berger said, was

to avoid violence. Workers and youth unanimously rejected his arguments, well aware that Macron had no intention of giving an inch on his cuts.

Yesterday, this "mediation" promptly collapsed on its first day, as Macron's ministers declared they would change nothing. Berger politely stated that France faces "a social crisis that is now turning into a crisis of democracy," and proposed that workers attend yet another protest march. It can be safely predicted that millions will march today, many will be arrested or maimed by Macron's brutal riot police, and that Macron will still refuse to make any concessions.

Macron himself is absolutely clear that the union leaders support his government and the state machine against the movement in the working class. Otherwise, he would not be leaving the country for a diplomatic visit to China. In one of the many meetings and calls between the government and the union leaderships, one or other union official doubtless told one of Macron's ministers something like, "Tell Manu he can go. Don't worry, the strike is in safe hands."

Workers in France face a challenge that increasingly confronts workers in every country who enter into struggle: how to bring down hostile capitalist governments that are determined to crush them.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, advocates the building of rank-and-file committees, independent of the union bureaucracies, to wage the struggle to bring down Macron. On March 27, we wrote:

The Macron presidency, the nerve center of financial and police-state conspiracies against the people, must be brought down. This can

only be done, however, by mobilizing masses of rank-and-file workers and youth in a campaign for the removal of Macron, the abolition of the draconian powers of the French presidency, and the preparation of a general strike against Macron. ...

In every workplace and school, resolutions must be passed demanding the bringing down of Macron. This requires convening general assemblies of workers and youth in their workplaces and schools to debate and adopt these resolutions, as well as the formation of workplace committees to share and publicize these resolutions and thus unite the working class against Macron. This independent mobilization of the working class, making workers aware of their militancy and collective strength, would create conditions for a general strike to bring down Macron.

This crisis is laying bare the class role of every political tendency, especially exposing the union bureaucracies' political apologists among the pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class. All these parties argue that the situation is not revolutionary, and that nothing can or should be done to break the diktat of the union bureaucracies over the class struggle.

While the Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party denounces "leftist" opposition to these bureaucracies as "sectarian," the Lambertist Independent Democratic Workers Party holds out the pipe dream that the union bureaucracies will mount a "revolutionary" policy. Workers Struggle calls for a "plain and simple" withdrawal of Macron's cuts, as if this could be won without bringing down Macron. The Morenoite *Révolution permanente* group says there will not be a revolution, and that workers must first have more experience with "bourgeois representative democracy."

The outrage felt by this layer against calls for an independent mobilization of the working class in rank-and-file committees has led Jorge Altamira, the leader of the pseudo-left Workers Politics (PO) group in Argentina, to denounce the PES. Altamira claims the PES "sabotages any action inside the unions, which they consider to be 'bourgeois,'" and that it calls "to 'generalize' the strike."

This is simply a collection of slanders. The PES intervenes in workers' trade union struggles to fight to free rank-and-file workers from the political control of petty-bourgeois union bureaucracies tied to the capitalist state machine. It does not "sabotage" workers struggles, but it does expose petty-bourgeois parties like the PO that intervene in the bureaucracy to try to strengthen its deadening grip over the class struggle.

The PES, moreover, is not issuing vague calls to "generalize" strike action, but a call for the independent organization of the working class to prepare a general strike to force Macron out, bring down his government, and abolish the exorbitant powers of the French presidency.

The development of such a movement will be an enormous step forward.

It is the essential precondition to win the most immediate demand drawing masses of workers into struggle: the withdrawal of Macron's despised pension cuts. It will serve as an immense impetus for the development of the class struggle throughout the world. And it will lay the basis for a fight to transfer power to independent organs of the working class as the foundation of a workers' state and the socialist reorganization of society.



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