

The developing struggle to bring down the Macron government in France

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This is the report delivered by Alex Lantier to the 2023 International May Day Online Rally held on April 30. Lantier is the national secretary of the Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). To view all speeches, visit wsws.org/mayday.

I bring fraternal greetings from the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES) to this International Online May Day Rally.

On this May Day, millions of workers will march against French President Emmanuel Macron and his illegitimate pension law that is opposed by three-quarters of the French people.

The working class struggle against Macron is of world significance. In every country, workers face the same essential conditions. The capitalist states use military-police violence to violate democracy and impoverish the working class. And as they scheme against the people, these governments rely on corrupt union bureaucracies to disorient and strangle workers' struggles.

Against this, the PES advocates the building of a mass movement of workers and youth, independent of the bureaucracies, for a general strike to bring down Macron.

Macron is cutting pensions to enrich the financial oligarchy at home and wage war abroad. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, he has helped France's billionaires, including the world's wealthiest man, Bernard Arnault, increase their wealth by more than €220 billion.

While the French ruling class wages war on Russia in Ukraine and discusses what to do if Washington launches a war against China, Macron calls for a "war economy" to be established throughout Europe. To raise French military spending by more than €15 billion

per year, he is slashing pensions by more than €13 billion per year.

When Macron announced the cuts in January, the overwhelming majority of the French people opposed him. Millions of workers and youth marched in repeated nationwide protests called by an alliance of all of the union bureaucracies.

Macron responded not as the president of a democratic regime but as the dictator of a police state. He sent heavily armed riot police to assault millions exercising their right to protest and pickets of workers exercising their constitutional right to strike.

The ruling class blocked every means of opposing Macron's cuts within the framework of the existing capitalist state. Macron rammed his cuts through the National Assembly without a vote. In March, the Assembly refused to censure him. In April, France's Constitutional Council rubber stamped the "reform."

Riots broke out across the country after Macron forced his cuts through and again after the Constitutional Council rubber stamped it. The working class is in a political struggle with the capitalist state.

France is in an objectively revolutionary situation. Polls by the capitalist media show that two-thirds of the French people are in favor of a general strike to paralyze the economy and bring down Macron. And after he rammed his cuts through the Assembly, as offices of his party were burning, polls found 62 percent supported harder action against Macron.

How is it then that the will of the people has not been carried out? How is it that Macron remains in power?

Just as Macron rides roughshod over the will of the people, the union bureaucracy rides roughshod over the will of the workers. With the support of a pathetic band of political charlatans, fraudulently dubbed "the left" by the capitalist media, the union bosses work to save

Macron.

As riots erupted against the illegitimate law, the bureaucrats denounced “violence” and warned against “political insanity.” They called off strike action and pleaded with Macron for “mediation.”

A few Stalinist deputies of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s New Popular Union staged a sham “march on the Elysée presidential palace,” presenting Macron politely with a petition begging him to reconsider.

In reality, there is nothing to negotiate with Macron, the president who styles himself king by the divine right of the banks. Our party does not forget the *sans-culottes* who stormed the Bastille and brought down the absolute monarchy that ruled by divine right. We say that the workers today face the task of bringing down Macron.

This crisis again confirms the lessons Marx and the Bolsheviks drew from the great and tragic experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. It was the first time workers rose up, took power and built a workers state, only to be drowned in blood by the capitalist Republic.

The state does not mediate between the classes; it is the product of the irreconcilability of class conflict. The capitalist state imposes the dictatorship of the capitalist class. That is what we are witnessing. The task facing workers is not to reform the capitalist state but to build their own independent organs of struggle once more and transfer power to these organizations in a socialist revolution.

Therefore the PES calls on workers and youth to mobilize from below, independently of the union bureaucracies. The vast social and industrial power of the working class must be mobilized to remove Macron and abolish the draconian powers of the presidency. Only through a powerful rank-and-file movement in the working class can the will of the people be implemented, holding a general strike to bring Macron down.

The PES calls on workers and youth to convene general assemblies in workplaces and schools, to adopt resolutions demanding the removal of Macron. The PES calls for the formation of committees of action, independent of the union bureaucracies, to coordinate this campaign and hold strikes and protests. Our goal is to make workers aware of their collective strength and organize the working class to prepare a general strike.

Above all, the PES fights to draw workers’ attention

to class struggles unfolding outside their own country.

This May Day, the day of international proletarian unity, mass struggles are erupting on every continent, and rank-and-file organizations are emerging around the world to wage these struggles independently of the corrupt bureaucracies.

These powerful struggles show that the movement against Macron is not a struggle to replace one president with another, nor to cobble together a new capitalist government to replace him. They are part of a great and historic struggle against capitalism, to transfer power to the working class and to build socialism. Thank you.



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