

French pseudo-left parties block struggle by the working class to stop Gaza genocide

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The emergence of a global movement of mass protests against the Israeli genocide in Gaza marks a historic stage in the class struggle. This movement is objectively directed against all capitalist governments that support the State of Israel against Gaza. Calls are spreading to mobilize workers internationally—in the US, Belgium, Spain, Turkey and Italy—to block arms deliveries to Israel, while NATO is already at war with Russia in Ukraine and Syria.

A race is on between the escalation of the class struggle and the plunge of bourgeoisies into a third world war. This reveals not only the immobility of the trade union bureaucracies of the NATO imperialist powers arming Israel (US, Germany, the UK, France) but also the political gulf separating the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the leadership of the world Trotskyist movement, and its French section, the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), from the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left parties.

PES members interviewed leaders of the main pseudo-left parties in France who were participating in union-led pro-Gaza demonstrations. These interviews for WSWs shed light on the untenable and reactionary arguments underpinning the national politics of these parties in the current crisis:

- They acknowledge Israel's massacre of Gazans but refuse to call for international strikes to stop arms shipments to Israel, arguing either that it is not necessary or that they are too weak to do so.
- They propose only periodic, one-day protests, dominated by trade union bureaucracies that negotiate with Macron's imperialist police state, that are cut off from the links with workers' struggles in other countries needed to stop the genocide and war.
- They derive this orientation either from the false theory of "socialism in one country" advanced by Stalin against the Left Opposition founded by Trotsky in 1923, or from parties that have broken with Trotskyism to ally with Stalinist bureaucracies.

The SEP rejects all these untenable positions. Mobilizing the international working class against genocide and world war is both possible and necessary. Parties that claim they are too weak to do so, while having received millions of votes in various elections, only reveal their political bankruptcy. The PES calls, on the contrary, for the preparation of the mobilization of the working class, in France and internationally, through strikes and a political struggle against the arms deliveries to Israel and its genocide in Gaza.

Stopping the genocide and war requires the formation of rank-and-file organizations and the International Workers' Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. This would allow the unification of workers' struggles, the blocking of industry and the bringing down of capitalist governments complicit in genocide. The fundamental weakness of the current movement, dominated by union bureaucracies, is that it does not fight against Macron or the other NATO imperialist governments, which support the genocide, even as the number of protesters continues to grow with each mobilization.

The objective conditions exist to mobilize the working class in France and internationally, to block the economy, stop the genocide, and strip power from the warmongers in each national capitalist government. This poses the question of the international socialist revolution.

To realize this potential, however, it is necessary to build not only new organizations of struggle in the working class, but also an international revolutionary leadership opposed to the various nationalist political tendencies linked to counter-revolutionary bureaucracies. The tendency in France that must be built in this sense is the SEP, which defends the Trotskyist perspective of the ICFI against Stalinism and the petty-bourgeois politics of the pseudo-left.

The role of the counter-revolutionary Stalinists of the PCF and the PCRF

In the pro-Gaza demonstrations in Paris, WSWs journalists met with bureaucrats from the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and their political satellites. Ian Brossat, the spokesman for the PCF and a senator from Paris, told the WSWs that he defends "the necessity of a ceasefire. We cannot let the Palestinian people be massacred like this."

Brossat euphemistically described Macron's overt support for Netanyahu during his trip to Israel as Macron's "silence" on Gaza. Regarding Macron's policy, he said, "We have a France that today is very silent, very discreet, and is not sufficiently offensive for the necessity of two states, Israel of course but a Palestinian state, too, which must be free and sovereign."

On the working class calls in the US, Belgium, Turkey and beyond to stop Israel's arms shipments, he briefly said, "It's to their credit."

But when the WSWs asked if the PCF and trade union leaderships would call on workers in France to join this international movement, Brossat refused to take a position. He limited himself to repeating that the PCF calls for occasional street demonstrations: "As far as the Communist Party is concerned, we are at this demonstration and we will be at all the mobilizations that allow us to express the necessity of a ceasefire, of peace."

The WSWs also interviewed Franz and Marie, two members of the Revolutionary Communist Party of France (PCRF), which broke away from the PCF to align with the Greek Communist Party (KKE). The PCRF defends Stalin's crimes—the Moscow Trials and the assassination of the Old Bolsheviks, the Great Purges of Marxists in the Soviet Union in 1936-1938, and Trotsky's assassination in 1940. It thus justifies its support for the political immobility that the trade union bureaucracies are trying to impose on workers.

Franz said, "We fully support the Palestinian popular resistance that is organizing in Gaza and the West Bank. The Macron government, like the

French bourgeois imperialist state in general, is in total support of Israel.” He also platonically applauded the call to stop arms deliveries to Israel: “These are forms of class struggle that must be carried out, in the sectors of weapons production as in the sectors of circulation, so that these deliveries do not occur.”

But when asked about the possibility of calling on workers to bypass the trade union bureaucracies and join the international movement to block arms shipments to the Gaza genocide, Franz insisted it was impossible. He said, “In several localities where we are established, we have discussions with trade union leaderships. But it's more with trade union leaderships at the local level ... We're not going to have the pretension of trying to discuss with the national confederal leadership of the CGT.”

Marie tried to justify this capitulation to the Gaza genocide by citing Stalin's theory of “socialism in one country.” She rejected the construction of an international revolutionary movement: “We are against the theses of Trotskyism ... We are for national revolutions in each country, while the Trotskyists say that it will only happen on a global level. We say no, it can happen in certain countries.”

Asked about her opinion on the validity of the theory of “socialism in one country” after the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, Marie defended Stalinism. She claimed that the dissolution of the USSR was the fault of the partial criticism made in 1956 by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev of the mass murders committed by Stalin against Marxists in the Soviet Union.

She said, “From Khrushchev's report in 1956, we've been in a downward slope. Now we see in the Soviet Union what is happening ... There have been a lot of lies told about Stalin, we tried to bring down the application of his socialism. He was on the right path.”

These comments from the PCRf and the PCF underscore that in the final analysis, the obstacles to a working class struggle against genocide in Gaza has its roots in a nationalist support for the political genocide carried out by Stalin against the Bolshevik and Trotskyist movement.

The Anti-Trotskyist role of LO and the NPA

Not all organizations intervening in the pro-Gaza demonstrations defended such an openly Stalinist, nationalist position. Most descend from various petty-bourgeois renegades from Trotskyism. But these forces work closely with the Stalinist bureaucracies in the union bureaucracy and academia, acting to block a struggle against the war, Macron, and the genocide in Gaza. This is notably the case with the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and Workers' Struggle (LO).

The NPA descends from forces led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel who split with the ICFI and Trotskyism in 1953. Rejecting the Trotskyist analysis of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, the Pabloites concealed how the Stalinist apparatuses dissolved workers' committees and resistance forces after World War II, in order to block a socialist revolution during the fall of the fascist regimes. Pablo and Mandel called for dissolving the Fourth International through “deep entry” into Stalinist and nationalist organizations.

Pabloist militants founded the NPA in 2009 by rejecting any affiliation, even purely symbolic, with Trotskyism, and by launching calls to recruit Stalinist, social-democratic, or anarchist leaders into their organization.

WSWS interviewed Damien, a railway worker and member of the national leadership of the NPA. He said, “What's happening in Gaza is a horrible massacre, anyway we're not the only ones to denounce it. There are hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of people in the world denouncing the ongoing massacre. Concretely, this is an operation of ethnic cleansing ... The Macron government is complicit, even responsible

like all imperialist governments on this planet. He went to Israel to support Netanyahu's policy.”

When asked about calls to mobilize the working class in France and internationally against the genocide in Gaza, Damien said, “We stand in solidarity with these initiatives. These videos [of protests] go around the world every time.”

However, having proclaimed international workers' solidarity against the genocide, he, like Brossat of the French Communist Party (PCF), refused to call for mobilizing workers against the genocide and arms deliveries to Israel. He limited himself to proposing sporadic street demonstrations called by the trade union bureaucracies: “We, in any case, call for participation in all ongoing mobilizations. So, of course, to come out en masse in the streets. ... The step before us is to make these demonstrations more massive. That's the stage we're at.”

The same position came from Workers' Struggle (LO), a group founded in 1956 that advocates building a national movement in France. LO rejects Trotsky's call for building the Fourth International and still denounces French Trotskyists who intervened in workers' resistance struggles against Nazism in Europe during World War II. LO also insists that the 1953 split between the ICFI and the Pabloite tendencies oriented towards the Stalinist bureaucracies was not of principled importance.

WSWS interviewed Pascal, a leader of LO, who adopted a hostile position to the Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation, equating it with the atrocities of the Israeli armed forces. He told WSWS, “Following the odious attack by Hamas on October 7, the Israeli government's response is a warlike one. We are witnessing the massacre in Gaza.”

Pascal denied outright that a genocide is underway in Gaza, saying, “We talk about a massacre, today we see the figure of 11,000 dead in Gaza with tens of thousands injured. There are clashes of settlers with the support of the Israeli army, that's it. I would not speak of genocide but of massacre.”

Pascal distanced himself from the policies of NATO powers towards the war, attributing them solely to the financial interests of arms manufacturers: “Macron stands behind the State of Israel, he talks of peace but has chosen his side. French imperialism is behind American imperialism, it's total support for the State of Israel. ... Obviously, the arms dealers live off the existence of conflicts.”

But when the WSWS asked why the union bureaucracies do not call for strikes to block arms deliveries to Israel, Pascal replied: “I have no idea. Today's demonstration is called by all left-wing parties, unions, associations.”

However, he firmly rejected the idea that LO could call on its millions of voters to mobilize to block arms deliveries to Israel. He said, “We get votes in elections, but ultimately we are a small party. We don't have a high street presence for the working class in France to fight tomorrow, to struggle to end this conflict.”

In reality, both the NPA and LO have received millions of votes in presidential elections during which the capitalist media falsely presented their candidates as “Trotskyists.” Their refusal to fight to mobilize this support in workers' struggles against genocide and war demonstrates that they conduct their politics within the framework of “social dialogue” between the national trade union bureaucracies and Macron's police state. But it is precisely this narrow and rotten national framework that must be broken through to stop the war and genocide in Gaza.

Lambertism and La France Insoumise of Jean-Luc Mélenchon

Finally, the WSWS interviewed several leaders of the Lambertist tendency in pro-Palestinian mobilizations.

These parties emerged from the Internationalist Communist Organisation (OCI), which was the French section of the ICFI from 1953 to 1971, a position now held by the Socialist Equality Party (PES). In 1971, the OCI split with the ICFI and broke with Trotskyism to participate on a national perspective in the building of the bourgeois Socialist Party (PS) of François Mitterrand and the Union of the Left between the PS and the PCF. One of its members, Lionel Jospin, became the PS prime minister of an austerity PS-PCF-Greens government from 1997 to 2002.

The most prominent ex-OCI member today is Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a former minister in the Jospin government who now leads La France Insoumise (LFI). He received nearly 8 million votes in the 2022 presidential elections, as urban working class voters sought an alternative to both Macron and neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen.

WSWS interviewed Jérôme Legavre, a member of the Lambertist Independent Workers Party (POI) and LFI deputy in the National Assembly, at a pro-Gaza mobilization.

Asked about the Israeli offensive against Gaza, Legavre said, “What is unfolding before our eyes, besides the fact that it is a massacre and an unspeakable carnage ... We are witnessing a campaign of cleansing and ethnic purification. I am totally and unconditionally on the side of those who, from the start of the bombings, have demanded an immediate ceasefire.”

Legavre added that Macron is conducting “a policy of support for the policy of the Israeli government, across the board.”

When the WSWS asked if he thought a government that supports a genocide could be legitimate and what LFI wanted to do, Legavre refused anything beyond parliamentary action. He said, “The legitimacy of the Macron government, there’s a lot that could be said. ... We will be absent [at the next protest] and file yet another motion of censure” against Macron in the National Assembly.

WSWS noted that LFI’s motions of censure are systematically rejected because LFI only has a small minority in the Assembly, and then raised the issue of mobilizing the working class in struggle against the war.

Asked why French union bureaucracies do not call to mobilize workers internationally to stop the war, Legavre replied, “I don’t know, I have no answer to that. There is a clear position ... they are on the line of a ceasefire.”

When WSWS raised that Mélenchon has 8 million voters, concentrated in the working class districts of major French cities, and asked why Mélenchon does not call on his voters to strike against the genocide, Legavre replied: “It is not a call from Mélenchon for a general strike that would have provoked the general strike, but there is one thing that is sure. It is he who has gone the furthest.”

When the WSWS asked if the difficulty LFI has in calling for strike action and for an international struggle is linked to the presence within it of forces like François Ruffin, who work with Macron and call for support for Israel, Legavre replied: “I have not followed this. I know there are controversies on this ground. But right now, a people are being massacred. So frankly, these little quarrels, I find them trivial and I don’t give them any importance. As for Ruffin, I don’t care about him.”

WSWS also briefly interviewed Daniel Gluckstein, the assistant of the late Pierre Lambert, who led the OCI during its split with the ICFI. In 2015, Gluckstein split with the POI as it entered into a direct alliance with Mélenchon. Gluckstein’s supporters are now grouped in the Independent Democratic Workers Party (POID), which covers the left flank of the POI and Mélenchon.

When Gluckstein realized he was facing a journalist from the WSWS, he hysterically denounced David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of WSWS and the US Socialist Equality Party (SEP), and refused the interview.

He said, “I don’t give interviews to David North! We are a democratic and workers’ organization. You are what you are. I don’t give interviews

to David North!”

This outburst underlines Gluckstein’s charlatanism. It is impossible to defend the historical record of Lambertism, its alliance with the discredited bourgeois PS, and its capitulation to the national union bureaucracies, as French imperialism and its allies intensify their wars and support for genocide in Gaza. Gluckstein, who knows very well the criticisms made of Lambertism by the ICFI and the PES, is therefore obsessed and terrified by David North.

However, Gluckstein carefully avoids mentioning the ICFI or the PES in the POID press, in order to block any serious discussion of political and historical issues in his own party. That is why he is terrified by the presence at a demonstration of a WSWS reporter who simply asks for an interview.

The hallmark of a revolutionary period is that the course of events unmasks political charlatans and poseurs like Gluckstein and his associates. The global movement of workers and youth against the genocide in Gaza, the global war waged by NATO, social inequality, and police state rule conflicts at every point with the pro-capitalist bureaucracies. It imposes the necessity of a political break with the nationalist and anti-Trotskyist servants of these bureaucracies.

The defence of Trotskyism by the ICFI and the PES articulates the political program on which this political break and an international revolutionary struggle against capitalism can be carried out.



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