

Prime Minister Attal outlines fascist agenda for French government

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On Tuesday, incoming Prime Minister Gabriel Attal delivered the traditional presentation of his government's general policy before the French National Assembly. He outlined a far-right agenda of cuts to unemployment insurance, health care and pensions, strengthening France's police forces and their ability to target immigrants and youth, and accelerating the return to universal military service amid NATO's war on Russia in Ukraine and Israel's war on Gaza.

The French government's agenda is shaped by capitalism's downward spiral into World War III. Last year, President Emmanuel Macron slashed pensions, despite overwhelming popular opposition and mass strikes, to divert €100 billion to the military by 2030. While France's corrupt union bureaucracies called an end to protests, stating that they did not want opposition to Macron to grow beyond their control, it is now widely known among workers that Macron rules against the people.

Attal's fascist policy speech confirms that an explosive confrontation is brewing between his government and the working class. He spoke amid farmers' protests across France and Europe, a nationwide rail strike in Germany, and strike calls by French school teachers and transit workers. Yet his speech, laced with invocations of French national identity, arrogantly thrust workers' demands aside, offering nothing but poverty and repression.

Attal began by calling on the French people not to doubt the national government. He said, "The particularity of human society is to look to the future developing before its eyes. A society never loses itself. If it doubts, it loses." He added that, "France rhymes with power [puissance in French]. France is a guide-post, an ideal. ... I will not allow our identity to be diluted or dissolved."

Attal's speech confirmed that these constant, noxious invocations of nationalism are nothing but a defense of the capitalist oligarchy's power over the working people.

Attal called to slash unemployment insurance, eliminating the Specific Security Benefit (ASS) program for the long-term unemployed. They will be put on the Active Solidarity

Revenue (RSA) welfare program, and RSA recipients will be made to work at least 15 hours a week to receive a €607.75 monthly benefit. A large layer of workers would have to work at below the minimum wage, doing work they could no longer count towards retirement.

This explains Attal's promise to "cut regulations" and "de-minimum wage-ify" France. The minimum wage (SMIC) is indexed on inflation, which has surged, bringing it to €1,398.70 (€1 766,92 pre-tax) monthly for a full-time job. With average monthly wages stagnating at €1,880 for employees and €1,940 for manufacturing workers, against €4,500 for managers, this means ever-larger layers of workers are paid barely above the SMIC. With inflation still high, the SMIC could overtake their wages and then compel employers to raise wages at least in line with inflation.

To continue plundering the workers, the government is looking for pseudo-legal ways, beyond the resort to part-time work, to let capitalists employ millions of workers at sub-SMIC wages.

Attal also pledged to increase costs for health care, by forcing patients to pay for medical visits they miss and raising patient co-pays on drugs. He pledged to cut State Medical Aid (AME), a longstanding target of the neo-fascists, which finances medical care for non-citizens.

After mass youth rioting last summer provoked by the police murder of a teenager, Nahel, Attal proposed to further strengthen police-state repression. He pledged to hire 8,500 more cops to form 238 new military police units, and to increase the number of forced labor sentences. This includes new programs to sentence youth under 16 to "educative labor", and "parents of delinquents" that the state deems to have "ignored their parental responsibilities" to "labor in the general interest."

As European ruling circles discuss reintroducing conscription for war with Russia, Attal pledged to accelerate Macron's plans for mandatory universal military service. He justified this by arguing it would bind youth to a unified French people: "Finally, our civic rearmament means reinforcing the republican unity of our youth, allowing all

France's youth to form one nation. ... This is the role of universal national service. I will begin work to implement it by the autumn of 2026."

Attal is an ex-member of the social-democratic Socialist Party (PS), which he left in 2016 with Macron, and he made predictable references to identity politics and collaboration with the union bureaucracies. In his closing remarks, he stressed that he is not only France's youngest prime minister, at 34, but also its first openly gay prime minister. "To be French in 2024," he said, "means you can be prime minister while being openly homosexual."

"I will never renounce dialog," he added. "My method has always been the same. Each French citizen carries a truth about our country. We—the political forces, trade union organizations, and local elected officials—must listen and respond."

Despite Attal's rhetoric, his agenda has an indubitably fascist character. It is ever clearer why in 2018 Macron hailed France's Nazi-collaborationist dictator, convicted traitor Philippe Pétain, as a "great soldier." Macron does not lead a fascist regime, but his policies—impoverishing workers via inflation and social cuts, and suppressing mass opposition by police-state violence and invocations of French militarism as war devastates Europe—are ones Pétain would have recognized as his own.

Attal's contempt for the population came out in his response to the farmers' protests. He pledged to delay taxes on diesel and trumpeted that European subsidies would be paid in full to farmers by March 15. While Attal presented this as a major concession, farmers pointed out that March 15 is actually the legal deadline for payment of the subsidies.

Attal's speech vindicates key points made by the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES) in last year's pension struggle. There is nothing to negotiate with the French capitalist state, which brazenly defends the privileges of the capitalist oligarchy against the people. Politicians and union bureaucrats who negotiate with it only implicate themselves in its crimes—from its repression of workers at home to its backing for genocide in Gaza.

The way forward is to prepare a struggle of the working class in France, allied to workers in struggle across Europe and internationally, to bring down the Macron government. This nerve center of police-state repression, social counterrevolution and imperialist war is incompatible with the most fundamental interests of the working class.

This means making a political break with pseudo-left parties, allied to the union bureaucracy, who tie working class opposition to the dead end of parliamentary maneuvers and union officials' horse-trading with Macron. These parties felt compelled to criticize Attal. "Attal is very unhappy because the people refuses to believe that it lives in

Paradise," Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the France Unbowed (LFI) party wrote on X/Twitter, calling Attal's speech "the most reactionary in a century."

Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) leader Fabien Roussel criticized Attal's speech for its "great social violence against the weakest, whether unemployed or working," pledging to oppose Attal "in the National Assembly and in struggles."

However, they only presented yet another censure motion targeting Attal—a motion backed by around 140 votes in the 577-seat Assembly, and which will predictably, as before, go down to defeat. Mélenchon, Roussel and their allies still work to demobilize working class opposition as they did most blatantly in last year's pension struggle.

The essential precondition to stop the war escalation and the march towards fascist dictatorship is waging a struggle to bring down the Macron regime. However, such a struggle can only proceed as a struggle against the entire capitalist system, to transfer power to the workers and build socialism. The main political alternative to Macron that the French capitalist class is grooming, the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen, would only intensify the drive to build a fascist police state regime in France.

This requires linking the struggles of workers in France to those of their class brothers and sisters in Europe and internationally, by building rank-and-file organizations of struggle in every country, and building the PES as the Trotskyist revolutionary vanguard against Stalinism and pseudo-left politics.



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