

Macron pays false tribute to French-Armenian resistance fighter Missak Manouchian

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25 February 2024

On February 21, 1944, at Mont-Valérien prison near Paris, Nazi troops shot communist immigrant worker Missak Manouchian and 23 other members of his Sharpshooters and Partisans-Immigrant Work Force (FTP-MOI) resistance unit. On Wednesday, February 21, 80 years later, President Emmanuel Macron had the remains of Missak and his wife Mélinée Manouchian buried in the Pantheon in Paris.

This tribute is grotesquely insincere and politically sinister. It aims to gain the support of the French Communist Party (PCF) bureaucracy and its pseudo-left allies for Macron's embrace of neo-fascist descendants of the fascists who murdered Manouchian. Last week, in an interview with the Stalinist daily *L'Humanité*, Macron provocatively invited the neo-fascist National Rally (RN) to the Pantheon event. "My duty is to invite all elected representatives of the French people," he said.

A new stage has emerged in the European bourgeoisie's fascistic evolution, over the three decades of imperialist wars, social austerity and mounting class struggles since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Macron is despised for ruling against the people, after ramming through his unpopular pension cuts without a parliamentary vote last year to fund rearmament against Russia. Lacking any popular base for policies of NATO war and European Union austerity, Macron aims to consolidate an authoritarian regime in alliance with the far right.

The pseudo-left's support for Macron's false tribute to Manouchian shows the urgency of building a Trotskyist alternative for the working class. The pseudo-left, which backed the union bureaucracies' calling off of strikes against Macron's pension cuts, does not oppose war or police-state rule. The force fighting to build a revolutionary leadership in the working class is the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement, based on its struggle against Stalinism and the petty-bourgeois descendants of renegades from Trotskyism.

Macron's tribute to Manouchian is fraudulent, as it is a matter of public record that his sympathies lie with Manouchian's executioners. In 2018, as he sent riot police to assault "yellow vest" protests against social inequality, he hailed France's Nazi-collaborationist dictator, convicted traitor Philippe Pétain, as a "great soldier." But one cannot applaud both Manouchian and Pétain, whose fascist police state captured Manouchian and gave

him to the Nazis to be murdered.

Macron's attempt to do both is a cynical attempt at political damage control, amid mounting working class anger at his government. Since imposing his pension cuts thanks to the complicity of the Stalinist union bureaucracies, his police repressed mass youth riots against the police murder of teenager Nahel last summer, and he endorsed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a "friend" amid Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. RN leader Marine Le Pen applauded Macron's draconian immigration law, adopted this winter, as an "ideological victory" for the neo-fascists.

Nevertheless, the French Stalinists and their pseudo-left allies have embraced Macron's false tribute to Manouchian. *L'Humanité* called it "an unprecedented, essential remembrance, even though it is in total contradiction with the policies carried out by Emmanuel Macron." It hailed Macron for "completing our nation's recognition of the communist and foreign resistance."

Olivier Besancenot of the Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) reacted only with a Tweet on anarchist songwriter Léo Ferré's well-known song for the Manouchian group, based on a poem by Stalinist author Louis Aragon. Besancenot said, "Manouchian, Aragon, Ferré, one struggle, poem, one song. France owes it to the MOI and the anti-fascist resistance."

Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the France Unbowed (LFI) party called Macron's tribute to Manouchian a victory of communism over neo-fascism. Mélenchon said he felt "secret jubilation" at seeing Le Pen in the Pantheon, attending the event for Manouchian. Now, he said, "after so many years, it is unconditional capitulation. The far right is coming to pay homage to the communist resistance that they so long decried."

This is a pack of lies. Macron and Le Pen are not celebrating the resistance to fascist rule that emerged in the French and European working class during World War II. Such a movement is not what Macron and Le Pen want, but what they fear. They are working with the pseudo-left parties to block a movement in the working class, even as capitalism again plunges into genocide and world war in the 21st century.

The pseudo-left essentially shares the false political and historical perspective on the resistance Macron put forward by as he spoke at the Pantheon. "You are entering here as a soldier," Macron said of Manouchian, claiming he was recognizing "this

part of the Resistance, six decades after Jean Moulin,” a pro-capitalist resistance leader affiliated to General Charles de Gaulle, entered the Pantheon in 1964. Now, Macron said, “An odyssey of the 20th century is coming to a close.”

Macron’s depiction of the resistance as a movement of soldiers, who helped ensure French independence from Germany and whose work is now done, is false. The millions who in the course of World War II joined underground militias, risking their lives to attack Nazi and collaborationist authorities, were overwhelmingly workers or rural toilers. Factory or rural militias, often made up of workers fleeing arrest, spread across Europe. Actions by these militias were, moreover, part of an even larger movement of mass strikes and armed insurrections all over the continent.

The Manouchians were refugees who as children fled the mass murder of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Missak was a Jewish auto worker, Mélinée a typist and friend of the family of singer Charles Aznavour. While they remained in the Communist Party and did not join the Trotskyist opposition to Stalinism or then the Fourth International after Trotsky founded it in 1938, they worked during the war with Arben Dawitian Tarov, a Left Oppositionist who had escaped Soviet prison and arrived in France.

After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, and the French police’s first roundups of Jews for deportation to the death camps in 1942, they entered into armed resistance. In 1943—the year of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, general strikes in Athens and the Netherlands, and the Italian workers’ overthrow of Mussolini—theirs was the main FTP unit active in Paris. They carried out dozens of attacks. Most famously, on September 28, 1943, they executed Nazi SS General Julius Ritter, tasked with organizing mass labor deportations of French workers to Germany.

Hunted by the 2nd Special Brigade of France’s General Intelligence (RG) service, and denied permission to evacuate Paris by the PCF, Missak Manouchian’s unit was captured in November 1943, though Mélinée escaped. The infamous “Red Poster” with their pictures issued before their execution, denouncing them as a Jewish “army of crime,” instead won them the lasting affection of the French people. Manouchian declared, before his execution, that he bore no hatred for Germans.

The fate of the resistance movement cannot be understood outside Trotsky’s struggle against Stalinism. Many workers in the resistance saw themselves as waging a class, not a national war against fascism, directed against capitalism. However, only the Fourth International fought for the mass movement in the European working class to lead to the transfer of power to the organizations of struggle of the working class, and a European and international socialist revolution.

The Soviet bureaucracy, based on its false theory of “socialism in one country,” opposed a European socialist revolution at the end of the war. Stalinist party and union leaderships worked with capitalist governments to fold resistance militias like the FTP into the army, disband factory committees and militias, and replace them with works councils staffed by union officials and corporate management. Policy on the resistance, liberal Belgian defense minister Fernand Demets told his aides in 1944, was to “strangle the chicken without making it scream.”

If the Stalinist and Allied capitalist forces were able to avert revolution in the 1940s, the struggle of the Trotskyist movement and the communist resistance still holds great lessons for today. The Soviet bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, but what Macron called the “odyssey” of the resistance is not over. The struggle for socialism against genocide, world war, authoritarian rule, and the capitalist system that gives rise to them is the unfinished task of the working class.

To break the stifling diktat of “social dialog” between the union bureaucracies and Macron’s police state, the Manouchians’ struggle points to a critical strategic alternative. The Manouchian group was part of a vast network of underground, rank-and-file organizations in the European working class that fought Nazi rule. Macron does not rule over a fascist regime, but building a new, international network of rank-and-file organizations in the working class, opposed to the capitalist state power, is the only way forward for the working class.

Above all, a new revolutionary leadership must be built in the working class, based on the ICFI’s struggles to defend the revolutionary tradition of Marxism.

The ICFI was formed in 1953 to defend Trotskyism against a tendency that emerged in the Fourth International, led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, claiming that revolution was impossible at the end of World War II, and that Stalinist bureaucracies could lead revolutionary struggles. Tragically, the ICFI’s first French section, Pierre Lambert’s Organisation communiste internationaliste, also capitulated to Pabloism. It broke with the ICFI in 1971 to seek alliances with social democracy and Stalinism.

The *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section founded by the ICFI in 2016, opposes the capitulation of the PCF, Besancenot and Mélenchon to Macron’s cynical invocations of Manouchian to justify fascistic policies. Besancenot the Pabloite and Mélenchon the ex-Lambertiste do not represent Trotskyism, but petty-bourgeois anti-Trotskyism. They intervene in the class struggle today to “strangle the chicken without making it scream.”

But the situation, as the PES insisted during last year’s pension struggle in France amid a wave of mass strike struggles across Europe, is objectively revolutionary. The great task facing revolutionary-minded workers and youth is building the PES and the ICFI as the revolutionary vanguard of the working class, against war, fascistic police-state rule, and capitalism. Struggling for the transfer of power to the working class in a socialist revolution, against capitulation to and collaboration with Macron, is the only fitting celebration of the Manouchians.



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