

Which way forward for the working class after the fall of the French government?

Parti de l'égalité socialiste
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Last night, President Emmanuel Macron named his close associate, Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu, his fifth prime minister in less than two years, after Prime Minister François Bayrou's minority government fell Monday. Bayrou had proposed €44 billion in social cuts to fund France's sovereign debt and its military build-up. Now, with a hung parliament, a divided electorate, and record 85 percent disapproval of Macron, yet another weak government will confront the workers.

As the union bureaucracies call protest strikes for next week protests are erupting today, as workers and youth across France take to the streets in "Block Everything" protests. This loose coalition of local protests, organized on the Telegram app, calls to blockade key infrastructure and for Macron to resign—a demand supported by two-thirds of the population. Against them, far-right Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau is mobilizing 80,000 riot police.

The working class is entering into struggle against a universal turn by the capitalist oligarchy towards fascistic forms of rule. As Trump orders military units to occupy Washington and Chicago, and Britain's Labour Party launches mass arrests of anti-Gaza genocide protesters, French workers are facing a police state. Calls to "Block Everything" reflect a developing sense that only a general strike, mobilizing the full strength of the working class, can fight back against austerity and repression.

There will be no way out of this crisis without the independent mobilization of the working class, based on socialist policies for the expropriation of the capitalist oligarchy. No such response can be expected, however, from any organization embedded in the existing political system. For workers and youth seeking a way to fight, the key issue is building new organizations of struggle among rank-and-file workers, based on a socialist program and revolutionary perspective of ending capitalist rule and establishing workers' power.

There must be a reckoning with organizations that have blocked struggles against Macron—above all, the party and union bureaucracies of the New Popular Front (NFP) led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Yesterday, its social democratic, Green and Stalinist members briefly and unsuccessfully offered themselves as ministers to Macron, as its union officials refused to support today's protests.

Mélenchon has affected a more radical posture, endorsing calls for a general strike and demanding Macron resign. However, he proposes to use workers' struggles only as a tool to install a new capitalist government. As he said on a prime-time TV interview

after Bayrou's fall, he wants new policies after Macron falls, to give "the good people, the entrepreneurs of this country ... visibility on what will happen."

This is a political trap for the workers. Any capitalist government taking office after Bayrou will wage war abroad and rule by dictatorship and class war at home. Under pressure from Trump's trade war, French imperialism is arming itself and plunging headlong into war, even as the banks demand France pay down its gigantic debt (114 percent of GDP) via deep austerity.

The French state has €330 billion in yearly tax revenues; 71 percent of its spending is on social programs like pensions, healthcare, education and family benefits. But Paris has pledged to spend €100 billion more on the military, €100 billion in interest on the debt, and tens of billions more to pay down France's debt. This means virtually eliminating social programs and building a fascistic police state to crush mass opposition this would provoke.

The bourgeoisie is making such plans. Indeed, Jordan Bardella, the president of the neo-fascist National Rally (RN), recently addressed a letter to France's CEOs. Discarding the RN's cynical, xenophobic rhetoric on protecting the French people from foreigners, he bluntly promoted the RN as the party best placed to restore order and slash social spending by not €44 but €100 billion.

Even if Mélenchon became president, however, his policy would not be fundamentally different. The NFP's program pledges to send troops to Ukraine, bolster the police, and defend capitalist property. In power, it would soon resort to brutal repression to crush opposition to its measures to stabilize French capitalism.

One must recall the role of the NFP's Greek affiliate, SYRIZA (the "Coalition of the Radical Left"). Elected in 2015 on promises to end EU austerity, it responded to financial speculation against Greek debt by capitulating, imposing deep austerity and building concentration camps for refugees.

The working class finds itself at a historic turning point, at which the lessons of the 1930s and the struggles of the working class against the rise of fascism must urgently be learned. Two stark alternatives are presented. Either the capitalist oligarchy builds a fascistic dictatorship to crush the working class, or the working class wages a revolutionary struggle on a socialist program to expropriate the oligarchs. This requires breaking through the straitjacket of the union bureaucracies and building genuine, rank-and-file organizations dedicated to prosecuting the class struggle.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calls for the transfer of power from the

trade union bureaucracies to the workers in all factories and workplaces. Such new forms of class organization, uniting workers in France and throughout Europe, are necessary to organize resistance to and defeat the corporate-financial oligarchy's program of fascism, genocide and war.

The Parti de l'égalité socialiste proposes the following demands, on which a political offensive can be waged in the working class to build support for the IWA-RFC:

Impound public bailout funds, expropriate the capitalist oligarchy!

Workers must reject the lie that there is no money for social programs and jobs. The trillions of euros of public funds monopolized by the capitalist oligarchy in France and across Europe must be impounded and used to fund jobs and social programs. This requires a struggle by the working class to expropriate the oligarchy and turn Europe's major enterprises into a network of public utilities, serving the interests of the people.

Bring down Macron, abolish the Fifth Republic's executive presidency!

The French bourgeoisie rules against the people by police repression and mass arrests of strikers. The executive presidency of France's 1958 constitution, the nerve center of plots against democracy, must be abolished. Ultimately, ending attacks on democratic rights will require the transfer of power to organizations of the working class: Just as there can be no socialism without democracy, there can be no democracy without socialism.

No to imperialist war, dismantle NATO! End the military build-up!

Plans to send French troops to Ukraine, rejected by the overwhelming majority of the people, must be stopped. France must leave the imperialist NATO alliance, which threatens to trigger a nuclear war with Russia, as part of an international struggle by the working class to dismantle NATO and end its wars. Not a penny should go to military spending increases for "high-intensity war," that is, mass killing like the current fratricidal slaughter of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers.

Stop the Gaza genocide! No persecution of opponents of

genocide!

Workers in France and internationally must block the production and delivery of arms to Israel. The prosecution of opponents of the Gaza genocide on bogus anti-terrorism or antisemitism charges must end. Israeli officials responsible for the genocide, like French and NATO officials complicit in it, must be prosecuted.

Stop the persecution of immigrants! For the international unity of the working class!

The struggle for socialism is inseparable from the struggle for the international unity of the working class. Workers must oppose the persecution of immigrants, the setting up of mass detention camps for refugees, and humiliating laws like those banning Muslim clothing in French schools. This is essential to overcoming attempts by the ruling elite to divide workers along national lines and thus block a European struggle against war and capitalism.

For the United Socialist States of Europe!

Workers and youth in France have powerful allies in the millions of workers across Europe and internationally opposed to war, fascism, genocide and austerity. Bureaucrats and parliamentarians will stand in the way. Workers must build rank-and-file organizations of struggle and a political movement to transfer power to the working class in France, across Europe and internationally, replacing the capitalist European Union with the United Socialist States of Europe.



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