

The implications of the anti-Trump “No Kings” protests for the European working class

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Millions of people across Europe and internationally watched on October 18 as 7 million American youth, workers, professionals and retirees participated in the “No Kings” protests. The protests, which follow earlier demonstrations involving 5 million, make clear that Trump faces deep-rooted opposition across the United States.

The emergence of left-wing opposition to America’s billionaire fascist president has far-reaching implications for the international class struggle. US workers are increasingly outraged by Trump’s support for Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza, his mass layoffs of government workers and cuts to pension and health care programs, raids by the ICE immigration Gestapo and the illegal deployment of troops in US cities. Protesters denounced Trump’s assertion of absolute executive power and conspiracy to establish a fascistic dictatorship.

What does this mean for workers and youth in Europe?

In their own struggles against social austerity, police repression, imperialist militarism and the capitalist oligarchy, European workers have a powerful international ally: the American working class. The situation is ripe for building an international movement in the working class, defending democracy and opposing capitalist dictatorship by taking power out of the hands of the oligarchy and building a socialist society.

The protests vindicate the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement. As it split in 1953 from pro-Stalinist renegades led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, the ICFI defended the fundamental strategic conceptions of classical Marxism. Fighting for the political independence of the working class from both imperialism and Stalinism, the ICFI insisted on the revolutionary role of the working class—including in the United States, the center of world capitalism.

Like countless other petty-bourgeois tendencies, the Pabloites wrote off US workers. Revolutionary struggle, they predicted, would take the form of a Stalinist-led “war-

revolution” against America. They could conceive of no situation where workers would need any leadership in Europe apart from national Stalinist or social-democratic bureaucracies, or bourgeois nationalists in ex-colonial countries. The European bourgeoisie “burned its fingers severely with a fascist experiment,” Mandel wrote, and was “all the less likely” to turn to far-right rule in the future.

These arguments have been exploded by events.

Workers in the United States and Europe face a capitalist oligarchy that rules overtly against the people. As they launch a massive military build-up preparing a direct war with Russia over Ukraine opposed by 89 percent of Western Europe’s population, the European ruling classes work closely with Trump. While they are in economic rivalry with American capitalism, they all endorse Trump’s demand to slash social spending by hundreds of billions of euros to raise military spending to 5 percent of GDP.

This orientation is exemplified by French President Emmanuel Macron. In 2023, as he diverted €100 billion to the military budget, he slashed pensions without a parliamentary vote, in the face of mass strikes. These cuts are opposed by 91 percent of French people. But Macron, who declared that France needs a king, ran roughshod over the workers—sending riot police to assault mass protests and relying on the union bureaucracies to call off protests against his cuts.

What do the leaders of what the capitalist media present as the European “left” have to say about the “No Kings” protests? Simply put, nothing. Former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias in Spain, Sahra Wagenknecht in Germany and France Unbowed leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon—all have not made a single public statement on them, in June or in October.

What accounts for their deafening silence on events in America? The meaning of Trump’s threats to invoke the Insurrection Act so he can order military repression of opposition is unmistakable. He is erecting the military-police

machine to consolidate a far-right dictatorship. This is the essence of the move to ban “antifa”—that is, anti-fascist sentiment—as terrorist and the deployment of US troops to occupy cities across America.

Trump’s bid for dictatorship, no less than the emergence of Nazism, imposes on the working class the task of organizing an irreconcilable class struggle to resist and defeat it.

But this is the opposite of what the Corbyns, Mélenchons and countless middle-class groups orbiting around them intend to do. They do not advocate any struggle at all, let alone a revolutionary struggle for socialism. They call for a politically meaningless and impotent “citizens revolution” on the national soil, inside the parliamentary and trade-union structures of the capitalist state. In practice, this commits them to nothing. The working class as a political force has no independent role to play in this purely rhetorical scheme. The representatives of pseudoleftism adapt to the European oligarchy’s rule against the people, and its promotion of Trump’s far-right co-thinkers in Europe, from Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni to Vox in Spain, the Alternative for Germany and Marine Le Pen in France.

Thus, in France in 2023, when the union bureaucracies ended strikes against Macron’s pension cuts, Mélenchon, instead of calling to mobilize the 8 million, mostly working class voters who voted for him in the 2022 presidential elections, built a New Popular Front (NFP) with the big-business Socialist Party (PS) and its Stalinist and Green allies. It then endorsed Macron’s candidates in the 2024 legislative elections. Just last week, the PS voted to install another unpopular minority government under Macron.

The ruling class relies on such forces to block working class opposition to dictatorship. France’s pro-PS daily of record, *Le Monde*, bluntly asserted that the “No Kings” protest was “light-hearted,” purely symbolic, and impotent. Assuming that the Democratic Party could demobilize anti-Trump sentiment among American workers, it cynically tried to reassure itself that no effective opposition to Trump’s Operation Dictatorship could emerge.

“There was in the lightheartedness of the day a form of an admission of impotence faced with a president massively re-elected just a year ago,” it wrote. Citing angry interviews with workers at the protests, it nonetheless baldly predicted: “Trumpism is here to stay.” Concluding its article, it noted with amusement that Trump published a video of himself with “a crown on his head, flying a plane marked ‘King Trump’, showering excrement on the crowd of protesters.”

The “No Kings” protest in reality shows there is mass opposition to far-right dictatorship. This opposition must be politically armed with a perspective to mobilize an offensive of the working class. The party leading this struggle is the

Socialist Equality Party, the US section of the ICFI. In its statement, “After the ‘No Kings’ protests: What Next?” the SEP explained:

The task now is not to wait passively for the next demonstration but to use this opposition as a lever in the fight for a movement of the working class for socialism.

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight to build rank-and-file committees in every workplace as part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and to develop within the working class a conscious socialist movement, strategically aligned and organizationally connected with the developing struggles of the global working class.

Opposition to dictatorship can only go forward to the extent that it is rooted in the social and political struggles of the working class, based on an internationalist socialist strategy. The defense of democracy is impossible without the development of a socialist movement to end capitalism and place the wealth of society under the democratic control of the working class itself.

Workers in Europe must take up this call. European capitalism has relied on two principal lies to strangle the workers. These were first, that there could be no struggle for workers power and socialism in the United States, and second, that European workers could never break free of Stalinism and social democracy. The “No Kings” protests, coming as polls show a majority of American youth support socialism, explodes these lies.

International eruptions of the class struggle against capitalist dictatorship are being prepared. The ICFI must be built as the vanguard of the working class to lead the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.



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