

Energy shortage: Macron wants to use war on Iran to wage class war in France

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Trump's blockade of Iran and his threat to exterminate Iranian civilization mark a new era in the international class struggle. The setback suffered by Trump—whose war of aggression has not yet succeeded in imposing a neocolonial regime on Iran—is evident. But the European bourgeoisie is responding by preparing a social and economic offensive targeting workers' rights and living standards.

This is perhaps most clearly the case with French President Emmanuel Macron, who has condemned neither the war against Iran nor the blockade cutting off Europe's energy supply. Ignoring the threat of economic depression, his government is preparing to use it as a pretext to impose austerity measures already overwhelmingly rejected by the French people.

A glaring contradiction exists between his comments and those of TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné, who stressed the looming energy crisis on Friday at a conference organized in Chantilly by the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI) think tank.

France, Pouyanné said, risks entering into “an era of energy shortages, like those already being experienced by some Asian countries. ... If this war and this blockade last more than three months, we will begin to face serious supply problems for certain products, such as kerosene.” He added: “The shortage is not yet present in the Atlantic basin ... but we cannot afford to leave 20 percent of the world's oil and gas reserves [i.e., those of the Persian Gulf region] inaccessible without major consequences.”

Various experts confirmed Pouyanné's remarks. “Shortage is at Europe's doorstep,” warned Thierry Bros, a professor at the Political Sciences Institute, on France Info. Pointing to “ships passing through only in dribs and drabs,” he added: “To govern is to foresee.”

But the Macron government acts as if governing

means foreseeing nothing. It has not condemned Trump's strangulation of Europe's energy supply, any more than it condemned his genocidal threats against Iran. Travelling on Saturday to Athens, Macron was instead downplaying the economic risks posed by the war and implicitly criticising Pouyanné.

Asked by a journalist about the danger of an energy shortage, Macron replied that he had nothing to say on the subject: “We are not in the scenario that is one of the worst-case scenarios you have described, which is not today the most probable and which I need not comment upon ... I think I can tell you at this stage that the situation is under control, and today the situation does not lead us to envisage any shortage.”

In fact, the energy crisis very much threatens shortages not only in Asia, but also in Europe. While it takes, for now, the form of soaring prices rather than a generalised shortage, it is because on March 11 the International Energy Agency's 32 member countries—including the US and European powers—released 400 million barrels of oil from their strategic reserves. It was the largest release of reserves in IEA history. But this will not resolve the crisis if the war continues and, within a few months, these strategic reserves begin to run out.

The war is genuinely blocking France's energy supply, but Macron implied that Total's concerns were panic that could create a crisis out of thin air. He said, “The worst thing, in these moments of tension and geopolitical uncertainty, is for those tensions to be heightened by panic behavior. ... And quite often, shortages are created by panic itself.”

In reality, the risk of energy shortages and economic depression is not an alarmist fairy tale invented by scaremongers. Trump's war against Iran is creating a real crisis. The current surge in oil prices and the

shortages at certain gas stations in France are the forewarnings of a wider economic and military earthquake that will shock the world if workers fail to stop the war.

The warning from the CEO of Total—a company that plays a central role in the French stock exchange as well as in the French state—reveals that Macron is covering up these dangers not out of ignorance, but knowingly. He decided this behind the backs of the French people; indeed, shortly before the start of the war, he sent a private text in English to Trump, calling to do “great things together” in Iran. With breathtaking irresponsibility, he is gambling with his country’s economy and jobs.

His relationship with the genocidal lunatic in the White House constitutes the greatest, though least commented, act of betrayal since Pétain, who claimed that collaborating with Hitler would regenerate France through a National Revolution. Macron tramples underfoot what bourgeois commentators normally call France’s “national interests,” such as its energy security. This confirms a central tenet of Marxism. Indeed, the “national interests” invoked by the bourgeoisie are nothing but a mystification concealing the pursuit of class interests.

If Macron covers for Trump while the latter grips Europe’s economy by the throat, it is because Macron defends imperialism. French imperialism does not want a US defeat, at least for now, as it fears the impact of such a defeat on its own military bases in the Middle East, its arms exports to Arab sheikdoms, and the role of its banks in the world oil trade. Condemning Trump’s genocidal threats against Iran would also call into question Macron’s friendship with the Israeli regime amid the Gaza genocide.

The military crisis of French imperialism is inseparable from the social crisis it wishes to resolve at workers’ expense. Since the sellout of the strikes against pension cuts by the parties of the New Popular Front and the union bureaucracies in 2023, Macron has ruled openly against the people. A series of minority governments has tried to impose drastic austerity. But this policy, based on a refusal to tax the wealthy, has not managed to reduce the deficit, as Paris is also increasing military spending by tens of billions of euros.

The French government is now trying to use the crisis

provoked by Trump’s war of aggression against Iran for its domestic political agenda of class war. Rather than condemning the genocide and US military aggression, the government is exploiting them to create a political framework to intensify austerity against workers.

This is clearly indicated by the statements of Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu. Last week, he declared in a letter to his ministers that “the total cost of this crisis could therefore amount to at least 6 billion euros, to date.” Public Accounts Minister David Amiel responded by declaring that “any new public expenditure that might be made necessary” by the energy “crisis” would entail “the cancellation of previously planned expenditure, euro for euro.”

Macron is thus seizing on the Iranian crisis to enshrine the principle of zero increase in net spending, which, without taxation of the wealthy, inevitably means draconian austerity.

To fight this policy, workers must draw the lessons of the sellout of the 2023 strikes. Workers will need to wage a long-term struggle and, to do so, organise independently, at the level of the rank and file, to wrest control of their struggles from the union bureaucracies. These bureaucracies refused three years ago any struggle that could bring down Macron. However, without such a struggle, it will be impossible to stop the war and the economic crisis.

Above all, workers in France and internationally must unite: all face the danger of an economic depression and a generalised military conflagration. The decisive question is the building of an international anti-war movement in the working class, based on a perspective of stripping power from the warmongering capitalist oligarchies and building a socialist society.



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