

How Révolution Permanente blocks an independent mobilization of the working class

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The high school protests shaking France, which have mounted alongside mass housing protests calling for a general strike in Spain, have turned into a confrontation with the French capitalist regime. It places the necessity of the direct intervention of the working class at the center of the situation. The many protest signs invoking May 1968, when anger at police repression of student protests erupted into the greatest general strike in French history, reflect the broadly sensed need to mobilize the full power of the working class against a bankrupt social order.

The key obstacle to such a mobilization are petty-bourgeois groups like the French Morenoite *Révolution Permanente*, that try to cut off the youth revolt from an independent, revolutionary mobilization of the working class. Despite a few combative phrases, its analyses are a tissue of evasions, covering up the revolutionary tasks facing the working class. Passing over the escalating NATO war with Russia and growing protests across Europe in silence, RP promotes illusions that the union bureaucracies will make the state “back down.” In an October 7 statement, it writes:

The involvement of workers must also deepen. Solidarity is fundamental, but it must find expression in collective action in the workplaces and strike mobilizations capable of building a united front against repression and the government’s attacks.

But the working class is not a supporting actor in the youth movement. The youth movement, erupting outside the control of the union confederations, has revealed the utter unpopularity of the government and the bloody violence of the police state. It has defied police repression and a wave of mass arrests of over 6,000 youth, overwhelmingly minors. By itself, however, it cannot impose demands for education and social spending, stop imperialist war and the militarization of society, or end police-state violence.

The revolutionary force that can shut down the economy, occupy factories and workplaces, and take power out of the hands of the warmongering capitalist oligarchy is the working class. As the *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES) explained in its statement: the youth movement can be a powerful lever to mobilize the working class and prepare a general strike. Youth and workers already in struggle can build independent action committees to go to factories, workplaces and working class neighborhoods, discuss with workers and prepare a broader struggle.

RP’s call for “a united front against repression and the government’s attacks” is deliberately vague: a united front of whom, organized how, under what political leadership, and for what program? RP does not say, because this would pose the question of the political organization of the working class independent of the union bureaucracies—the very question RP exists to suppress. RP continues by reiterating its well-worn demand that the union leaderships develop a “battle plan,” writing:

The decision by the inter-trade union alliance, announced the previous day, to schedule the next interprofessional mobilization on November 5 reveals an intention to bypass the high school movement ... All trade unionists who recognize the urgency of maintaining solidarity with the high school students must therefore challenge their union organizations. As calls for mobilization on October 17 multiply, it is necessary to demand a plan to unify the anger and sustain it despite the school holidays.

The union bureaucracy is indubitably seeking to wear down and sell out the high school movement. But the urgent task, therefore, is not to compel the workers to wait upon its plans. It is, instead, to independently organize youth and workers who are in struggle, so that they can mobilize the working class in revolutionary struggle that the union bureaucracies want to prevent.

RP opposes such an independent, rank-and-file organization of the working class. For the youth movement, it proposes that students and teachers “organize themselves independently, debate their demands, elect delegates, and establish links between schools.” However, it makes no such call for independent, rank-and-file committees or assemblies establishing links between workplaces independent of the union bureaucracies.

Rather, it calls on workers to “challenge” the union bureaucracy from the inside—that is, to remain within it, and to continue subordinating their struggles to its timetables and its talks with the capitalist state. Proposing to “build a force capable of compelling the government to back down,” RP concludes by calling for the organization of students in alliance with strikes controlled by the union bureaucracy:

What is now needed is to give this movement continuity and organization: assemblies, mandated delegates, coordination between high schools and universities, and workers’ strikes that give concrete expression to the sentiment of solidarity. ... This moment must be seized to go on the offensive: unite the strength of the youth with that of the workers, broaden the mobilization, and build a social confrontation capable of defeating the government and its attacks.

It must be bluntly stated: this is the path not to a general strike and socialist revolution, but to betrayal and defeat. Recent history teaches bitter lessons on the type of alliances RP is proposing. The union bureaucracies wore down and ultimately shut down the largest strike movement in France since 1968, during the mass strikes and youth riots against Macron’s pension cuts in 2023. After union officials went on television to declare before millions of people that they were terrified of

social anger against Macron, they ended all strike action against cuts, which were opposed by an overwhelming majority of the population, after Macron promulgated them as law.

A politically independent struggle to mobilize the working class against imperialist war and capitalist reaction is the path to avoid a new sell-out of the struggles of workers and youth.

RP's silence on war and the international movement in the working class

What is most striking about RP's statements, and indeed its entire coverage of the French school protests, is not what it says, but what it omits. Even as the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine ever more openly threatens to escalate into total war involving the use of nuclear weapons, and as protests spread across Europe, RP does not link the French high school protest to any event outside France's national borders. It ignores the urgent necessity of arming workers and youth in struggle in France and internationally with a socialist perspective to oppose war and the capitalist oligarchy.

RP's statement makes no mention whatsoever of the war. It does not mention the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine, the war on Iran, or the tens of billions of euros being poured into the French military. It does not mention that, on October 6 itself—as hundreds of thousands marched through France—the French military conducted the first test of its M51.3 submarine-launched ballistic missile, days after Moscow issued a nuclear warning over NATO threats against Kaliningrad.

This is not an oversight, but the consequence of RP's national-reformist perspective. Proposing only to “compel the government to back down,” it refuses to pose problems that cannot be resolved in a national framework, via tactical policy shifts of the capitalist state. And so, even as it criticizes the union bureaucracies for bypassing student protests, RP bypasses the struggle against imperialist war needed to halt the transfer of financial resources from education to the military.

It is impossible, however, to resolve the social crisis and halt the bourgeoisie's turn to neo-fascism and police-state violence without opposing imperialist war. As the PES statement explained, drawing the historical parallel to the world wars of the 20th century:

The war escalation and the explosion of the class struggle are not separate questions. The same governments that tell workers there is no money for schools, hospitals, pensions and housing are spending hundreds of billions on armaments. And the military-police apparatus strengthened in the name of external security is being deployed against opposition at home. ...

In the years before the First World War, Europe was shaken by mass strikes and growing revolutionary working-class struggle, while the imperialist powers accelerated an arms race and passed from one international crisis to another. When war erupted in 1914, the ruling classes invoked national defense to demand that workers abandon the class struggle and subordinate themselves to their own bourgeoisie.

RP's silence on the necessity to oppose French imperialism's wars on Russia and in Africa is a warning on the class character of this tendency. Tendencies which had proven incapable of opposing imperialism before 1914 capitulated to the Sacred Union with the bourgeoisie when World War I broke out in 1914.

What is RP's perspective for a “red week” to force the government to “back down”?

On October 8, RP issued a further statement laying out its perspective for a youth movement allied to the union bureaucracy in the protests of this coming week. In “Youth Revolt: We Need a Red Week to Extend the Movement to the World of Work,” it wrote:

In this sense, after a successful week of protests, the high school and university student movement must now focus on building a “red week,” a week of action in conjunction with the world of work, which, through its striking power and its ability to disrupt the economy, could strengthen the balance of power. This alliance is necessary to achieve its demands and force Macron to back down.

This formulation sums up RP's politics. The goal it sets before the working class is not the overthrow of the capitalist state, but to force it to “back down.” Such a tactical “backing down” by Macron, if it even took place, would not stop the wars or bring down the Macron government. Nor would it lead to the expropriation of the capitalist oligarchy who have amassed their vast fortunes by bankrupting the French state and its social programs.

The horizon of RP's “revolution” is more favorable negotiations with Macron. Completely failing to address the roots of the wars and the social crisis in the international crisis of capitalism, it would cut off workers and youth in France from millions of workers and youth in Spain, in Belgium, in the United States and beyond who are still in struggle.

Such national-opportunist, petty-bourgeois positions are the political DNA of RP as a tendency, which is founded on a repudiation of the International Committee of the Fourth International's (ICFI) defense of Trotskyism against Stalinism and Pabloism. RP is the French affiliate of the Morenoite tendency led by the Socialist Workers Party (PTS) of Argentina. This tendency descends from forces led by Nahuel Moreno, who initially sided with the ICFI in the 1953 split with the pro-Stalinist tendency led by Michel Pablo that had emerged inside the Fourth International. However, they ultimately sought an unprincipled reunification with Pabloism in 1963.

RP for many years functioned as a tendency within the Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) in France, which was founded based on an explicit rejection of a Trotskyist program. Oriented to maneuvers with the capitalist state and the union bureaucracy on the national stage, it opposed the ICFI's struggle for socialist internationalism and the political independence of the working class.

This underlay the perspective RP advanced amid the 2023 struggle against Macron's pension cuts, when millions of workers wanted to block the economy and bring down Macron. At the time, as the WSWS documented, RP leaders Juan Chingo and Romaric Godin insisted that “the situation is not revolutionary,” and Chingo declared that the strike movement must not overthrow capitalism but rather develop “a genuine counterweight to the power of the bourgeoisie.”

Chingo hailed “bourgeois representative democracy” and proposed that workers “make experiences with bourgeois representative democracy,” through measures like combining the two houses of the French parliament into a single chamber.

RP's call to “force” Macron to “back down” in 2026 is the continuation

of its call to work within the framework of bourgeois rule in 2023. Both are formulas for subordinating the working class to the capitalist state, denying the revolutionary tasks flowing from the capitalist crisis, and channeling social anger into bureaucratic negotiations with a government that wages war and slashes living standards.

The alternative is the independent organization not only of the youth, but above all of the working class. The coming weeks of protests must be seized upon to push for the broadest possible extension of the struggle into the working class. This means building committees of action to link the struggles of workers and youth in France to those of their class brothers and sisters internationally and a fight to prepare a general strike that can bring down the Macron government, stop the wars and open a path to socialist revolution.



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