Révolution permanente tries to bolster union bureaucracies amid French mass protests

Anthony Torres
2 November 2026

The October 17 protests have opened a crisis of bourgeois rule in France that is now plainly apparent. More than 800,000 people marched, the police were overwhelmed in city after city, and the Macron government responded with curfews, bans on demonstrations and the threat of a state of emergency. Nevertheless, a similarly massive mobilization followed on October 24, amid an eruption of protests and strikes across Europe.

In this situation, all the forces claiming to speak in the movement's name are being compelled to take a position. The union bureaucracy, which is negotiating with the government, has postponed strike action until November 5, and Mélenchon's La France insoumise party is seeking to channel the mobilization toward the 2027 presidential election. Among parties presenting themselves as more "radical," Révolution permanente (RP) now admits that the situation is "pre-revolutionary."

In an article by Juan Chingo titled "From the Twilight of Macronism to the Crisis of State Authority," RP declares that "October 17 opened a pre-revolutionary period in France." Chingo acknowledges that "the entry of the masses onto the stage of history" has "qualitatively transformed the already advanced crisis of Macronism."

This admission by RP does not change its nationalist and petty-bourgeois orientation toward the union bureaucracies. When the Socialist Equality Party says that the situation is "pre-revolutionary," this means that it is necessary to agitate and fight for a revolutionary policy in the working class, which is the only progressive way out of such a situation. But that is not the conclusion RP draws.

RP concludes, on the other hand, that workers should try to convince the Stalinist bureaucracy of the CGT union to pursue a more militant policy. This is a decoy and a trap for the workers who will soon mobilize in struggle. The entire history of the workers' movement demonstrates that workers must organize independently of it to wage revolutionary struggles.

On paper, this is a 180-degree turn for RP. In 2023, during the mass strikes and protests against Macron's pension reform, Chingo declared that "The situation is not revolutionary." He called not for the overthrow of bourgeois rule but for building "an authentic counter-power to the power of the bourgeoisie." With such arguments, aligning itself with the union leaderships and refusing to raise the question of workers' power, RP adapted itself to the union sellout of the struggle to defend pensions against Macron in 2023.

RP's change of tone should fool no one. What has changed is not its orientation but the conjuncture: RP can no longer deny the revolutionary crisis, so it tries to channel it. But the channel is the same as before: the union apparatuses and Mélenchon. Chingo now hails the empty phrases with which CGT General Secretary Sophie Binet is trying to direct the movement behind union leaders who are negotiating with Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu's government. Chingo writes:

> On October 21, as she left Matignon, Sophie Binet called for taking a new step through the strike and for organizing assemblies in workplaces in order to generalize it on November 5 and beyond. The CGT made this call official in its statement the following day. This shift into a higher gear shows the pressure the mobilization is exerting on the traditional organizations of the workers' movement. But it raises a decisive question: how can these declarations be transformed into effective preparation for the strike, without leaving the youth isolated until November 5?

To genuinely prepare a general strike and join the youth in struggle, the working class must organize and mobilize independently of the union leaderships. Workers and youth need to build action committees in order to coordinate their struggles with those spreading across Europe and beyond, and to resist the attempts at demobilization coming from the union leaderships. Only in this way can workers carry out the tasks before them, prepare a general strike, and pose the question of power that flows from it.

The union bureaucracy is not a neutral instrument that can be "pushed" to the left. It is a social layer with its own material interests, integrated into the capitalist state and the management of companies, whose function is to contain the class struggle. Its verbal "radicalization" is a tactical maneuver to keep control of the movement, not a real shift to the left.

On October 21, the union leaderships went to Matignon to negotiate with Lecornu and postponed all national action to November 5. This meeting was a debacle for all those who say that the leadership of strikes can be left to these apparatuses. Binet's call for the November 5 strike is not a concession to the youth. It is the mechanism by which the bureaucracy delays the workers' mobilization, setting the next strike weeks away and leaving the youth isolated in the interval.

RP, by hailing this policy as a "shift into a higher gear," is participating in the union bureaucracies' maneuver. It is trying to present a program that claims to be "revolutionary" while adapting itself to the union bureaucracy's negotiations with the capitalist state. Above all, it deliberately avoids the decisive questions protesters are raising against the bourgeois state: war, the militarization of European countries, and the danger of a far-right dictatorship.

War is not a question external to the French crisis: it is the decisive issue.

© World Socialist Web Site

The same governments that say there is no money for schools, hospitals and pensions are spending hundreds of billions on rearmament. Lecornu's €54 billion austerity budget is inseparable from the €800 billion "ReArm Europe" plan. And the military-police apparatus reinforced in the name of war against Russia serves to repress opposition at home.

Chingo leaves aside all the elements of the world crisis and all the workers' demands that give the situation its pre-revolutionary character. The words "war," "Russia," "Ukraine," "NATO," "Iran," "Gaza" and "genocide" do not appear in his text. The text has an entirely national orientation and mentions nothing of what is happening beyond France's borders. Even regarding France, Chingo says nothing about dictatorship or war. The words "dictatorship," "neo-fascism," "RN," "militarization" and "war economy" do not appear.

RP is silent on the fact that the war in Ukraine is a NATO proxy war, in which the imperialist NATO powers are the principal aggressors. It is equally silent on the fact that the task is to unite American, European, Ukrainian and Russian workers against this war.

It must be said bluntly: RP's analysis does not prepare the working class to fight war and social reaction, to prepare the general strike, or to fight for power. It politically disarms the workers and youth mobilized in struggle against Macron and the capitalist oligarchy. Indeed, RP calls for the formation of interprofessional assemblies, but ones that would serve as auxiliary forces for the maneuvers of the union bureaucracies:

> Interprofessional assemblies can, starting now, make it possible to decide on actions, organize solidarity and forge direct links with the mobilized youth. The generalization of the strike must be built between now and November 5. One of the challenges is to set back in motion the sectors that have been in the vanguard of the struggles against Macron, whether refinery workers, railway workers, RATP workers, energy workers or sanitation workers. We must build on their experience and debate how to overcome the sense of powerlessness and skepticism left by the defeat of 2023.

The fact that the question of workers' assemblies is already being raised underscores that the working class is already seeking ways to outflank the union leaderships. RP's call for interprofessional assemblies apes a Trotskyist call to build action committees. But an essential difference separates them. RP envisions assemblies that would serve as relays for the bureaucracies in a struggle waged within a trade-union framework of negotiations with the state. Action committees, by contrast, are meant to pursue an independent revolutionary policy.

To overcome the disappointments of the union sellout of the 2023 struggles and to arm workers for a revolutionary struggle, it is above all necessary to organize and fight for a policy independent of the union leaderships. One must oppose imperialist war, the police state, the far right and austerity, by preparing internationally the general strike and the workers' struggle for power.

But this is precisely what RP refuses to do: to place itself politically at the head of the protesters' demands.

Trying to give its analysis a revolutionary veneer, Chingo ends his article by quoting Trotsky. In *Whither France?*, written shortly before the 1936 general strike and the Second World War, Trotsky wrote: "Whatever may be the slogans and the motive for which the general strike is initiated, if it includes the genuine masses, and if these masses are quite resolved to struggle, the general strike inevitably poses before all the classes in the nation the question: Who will be the master of the house?"

RP does not want to quote more than one sentence of Trotsky and cuts the quotation off there. But to orient the working class in the real political situation, and to answer RP's petty-bourgeois and nationalist orientation, one must quote what RP cut away. It remains valid for a new era of struggle against the far right and global imperialist war, and it raises the questions on which RP is silent:

> The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers. Politically this implies that from now on the leaders will continue to pose before the proletariat the task of the revolutionary conquest of power. If not, they must not venture to speak of the general strike. But by renouncing the general strike, they renounce thereby all revolutionary struggle, that is to say, they betray the proletariat to Fascism.
>
> Either complete capitulation or revolutionary struggle for power – such is the alternative which flows from all the conditions of the present crisis. Whoever has not understood this alternative, has no business in the camp of the proletariat.

RP's entire policy aims to conjure away the alternative posed by Trotsky. Rather than placing before workers the alternative of a revolutionary policy or counterrevolution, RP speculates on a democratic, protest-oriented but non-revolutionary policy on the part of the union apparatuses. But the question for workers is to organize independently in rank-and-file committees and to arm themselves with a perspective. That perspective is the preparation of a European general strike and a struggle for power, in France, across Europe and internationally.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site