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زبانهای اروپایی

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04.05.2023

Macron's police state wages war on French workers



Demonstration at Place de la Nation in Paris on Monday, May 1, 2023. [AP Photo/Thibault Camus]

On May Day, the international day of working class solidarity, French President Emmanuel Macron unleashed hordes of heavily armed riot police as millions protested the pension cuts he has imposed despite overwhelming popular opposition. Street medics treated 200 wounded protesters, including 30 seriously wounded, along with 2,000 cases of serious tear gas inhalation.

This onslaught was more than simply a mark of the contempt of the “president of the rich” for the vast majority of the population that work for a wage. It is a warning to workers in France and internationally on how capitalist governments react to growing mass opposition. The Macron government has turned to a level of political repression not seen since the fascist Vichy regime.

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As workers continue to protest cuts opposed by over 75 percent of the French people, Macron rules through police violence. The level of carnage unleashed by the cops in four months of protests against Macron's cuts is fast reaching the staggering toll of the repression of the "yellow vest" protests against social inequality. Then, in the course of more than a year, over 10,000 people were arrested, 4,400 were wounded, 30 were maimed and one bystander, 80-year-old Zineb Redouane, was killed.

In 2023, at each of the 14 nationwide protest strikes held by the country's all-trade union alliance, hundreds have been arrested and hundreds more wounded. Cops charge peaceful protesters in front of news cameras, shoot out their eyes with rubber bullets, blow off their hands with grenades, assault journalists filming them, and beat and taunt defenseless protesters who have been grabbed out of the marches.

At this point, this government is ruling entirely on the basis of organized violence against the population.

The repression in France explodes the lie that NATO is at war with Russia in Ukraine to defend democracy. Macron is trampling democracy underfoot, as he slashes tens of billions of euros from pensions to finance his tax cuts for the rich and a €90 billion surge in military spending to escalate the war. The same social and class interests driving the NATO imperialist powers to war with Russia also drive them to police-state rule—even in the wealthiest imperialist countries.

But despite repeated violence, Macron has been unable to bring the mass movement under control. It has developed a powerful forward momentum.

The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in its [call for May Day 2023](#) that a revolutionary movement is developing alongside of the escalation of the war:

The same economic, geopolitical and social contradictions that drive the imperialist ruling elites onto the path of war provide the objective impulse for the radicalization of the working class and the outbreak of revolutionary struggles.

The massive police violence against the French working class leads inescapably to one conclusion: There is no room for compromise and nothing to negotiate with Macron. The way forward for the working class is to bring him down through a general strike.

Polls show that two-thirds of the French people support a general strike to block the economy. However, this will require the full social and industrial power of the working class, in opposition to the efforts of the Stalinist Communist Party and trade unions to stop the mass movement.

There are many indications that in ruling circles internationally alarm is growing over the mounting working class anger in France. Macron's passage of the cuts into law has not ended the protests. It has rather delegitimized his government—even as strikes against wage cuts, social austerity and inflation grow in Germany, Britain and countries across Europe and beyond. On May Day, various capitalist governments ended their studied silence on Macron's police brutality and issued statements of concern.

At the UN Human Rights Council, Sweden called on France to “take measures to, in a transparent manner, address allegations regarding excessive use of force by police and *gendarmierie* against protesters during demonstrations.” Russia said France's “harsh and sometimes violent measures aimed at dispersing peaceful citizens” are a cause for concern.

China called on France to “stop measures that violate the rights of migrants,” and the United States urged Paris to support “efforts to counter crimes and threats of violence motivated by religious hatred.”

Denmark's SaxoBank also issued a briefing paper speculating that, in response to the political crisis caused by the lack of parliamentary support for his austerity policies, Macron might resign.

But these forces do not speak out of sudden concern for police brutality in France or a desire to see a more democratic capitalist regime emerge. They operate prison systems detaining millions, led by the United States, the world's biggest jailer, where police kill an average of three people per day. Rather, they are starting to lose confidence in Macron's ability to manage the situation and advance the interests of the capitalist financial oligarchy.

They fear what a revolutionary eruption in France could mean for their own ability to impose the same dictatorial policies of wage cuts and social austerity at home, and—for the NATO imperialist powers—of war on Russia in Ukraine.

Around the world, the capitalist ruling elites remember how the May 1968 French general strike triggered an international wave of revolutionary struggles by the working class. In Europe alone, governments fell in Britain, Portugal, Greece and Spain, while tens of millions of workers joined strikes and protests in Germany, Italy and beyond. This played an important role in radicalizing a generation of young students and workers around the world.

Fifty-five years later, over three decades since the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, an upsurge of the class struggle is taking place around the world.

Driven by the insoluble geopolitical and financial contradictions of globalized capitalism, sinking ever deeper into a new NATO-Russia world war, the capitalist ruling elites have no reforms to offer. To mounting working class opposition and anger, they respond only with police violence.

The working class must bring down the Macron government. Workers face the task of organizing themselves not to pressure the ruling class for national democratic reforms but to mount an international struggle for power. This requires the building of rank-and-file organizations through which the broad mass of the working class can mobilize in militant actions and prepare general strikes to bring down the governments and bring to power workers' governments.

The more the movement in France develops, the more it exposes the treachery of the union bureaucracy and political figures such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon. All are desperately hoping the movement will abate.

Workers cannot rely on the French union bureaucracies which, despite their pretensions to being more "radical" than their counterparts elsewhere, play a counterrevolutionary role. They offer workers no perspective to defeat Macron and instead repeatedly call off strikes to appeal for "mediation" with France's fascistic police state. Their failure to organize a general strike when it was demanded by a large majority of the French people, and a massive majority of French workers, makes clear that they serve to block and delay, not to organize, workers' struggles.

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, calls for the holding of general assemblies at workplaces and schools across France, to vote for resolutions demanding the removal of Macron and the stopping of his cuts. From these assemblies, workers and youth can form rank-and-file committees to coordinate strikes and protest actions and prepare for a general strike to bring down Macron.

Above all, such rank-and-file committees can coordinate workers' struggles in France with the growing wave of strikes and political opposition in the working class internationally. In the struggle against Macron, French workers' best allies are their class brothers and sisters fighting the same reactionary policies and financial elites internationally.

Mobilized in the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and armed with a revolutionary perspective, workers must make the struggle to bring down Macron the first step in a struggle to expropriate the ruling financial oligarchy and build a global socialist society.

World Socialist 03.05.2023