



France: Ongoing Yellow-Vest Protests Against Pension Cuts Is a Growing Conflict with No Possibility of Victory

France: Yellow-Vest protesters have been demonstrating every Saturday for over a year despite brutal police repression. They are protesting the government's plan to downsize the national pension system so that people must work longer for smaller pensions. President Macron is an investment banker who supports shifting control of the pension fund from the state to private investment firms. The idea is that the fund will do better if decisions serve profit goals instead of political goals. [There is no doubt that is true, but private investment firms also have problems, including fraud, insider deals, and other forms of corruption that siphon away profits almost as badly as political corruption. As long as individuals are required by law to pay into a system not of their choosing and which they have no option to leave, corruption will flourish and pensions will suffer. When coercion enters, virtue and excellence leave. The people of France are headed into a long and debilitating conflict in which both of their options are doomed.] -GEG

The people are angry with their government. Where? Just about everywhere...

So what makes ongoing strikes in France so special? Nothing, perhaps, except a certain expectation based on history that

French uprisings can produce important changes – or if not, can at least help clarify the issues in contemporary social conflicts.

The current ongoing social unrest in France appears to pit a majority of working people against President Emmanuel Macron. But since Macron is merely a technocratic tool of global financial governance, the conflict is essentially an uprising against policies that put the avaricious demands of financial markets ahead of the needs of the people. This basic conflict is at the root of the weekly demonstrations of Yellow Vest protesters who have been demonstrating every Saturday for well over a year, despite brutal police repression. Now trade unionists, public sector workers and Yellow Vests demonstrate together, as partial work stoppages continue to perturb public transportation.

In the latest developments, teachers in Paris schools are joining the revolt. Even the prestigious prep school, the Lycée Louis le Grand, went on strike. This is significant because even a government that shows no qualms in smashing the heads of working class malcontents can hesitate before bashing the brains of the future elite.

However general the discontent, the direct cause for what has become the longest period of unrest in memory is a single issue: the government's determination to overhaul the national social security pension system. This is just one aspect of Macron's anti-social program, but no other aspect touches just about everybody's lives as much as this one.

French retirement is financed in the same way as U.S. Social Security. Employees and employers pay a proportion of wages into a fund that pays current pensions, in the expectation that tomorrow's workers will pay for the pensions of those working today.

The existing system is complex, with particular regimes for 42

different professions, but it works well enough. As things are, despite the growing gap between the ultra-rich and those of modest means, there is less dire poverty among the elderly in France than, for example, in Germany.

The Macron plan to unify and simplify the system by a universal point system claims to improve “equality”, but it is a downward, not an upward leveling. The general thrust of the reform is clearly to make people work longer for smaller pensions. Bit by bit, the input and output of the social security system are being squeezed. This would further reduce the percentage of GDP going into wages and pensions.

The calculated result: as people fear the prospect of a penniless old age, they will feel obliged to put their savings into private pension schemes.

International Solidarity

In a rare display of old-fashioned working-class international solidarity, Belgian trade unions have spoken out in strong support of French unions’ opposition to Macron’s reforms, even offering to contribute to a strike fund for French workers. Support by workers of one country for the struggle of workers in another country is what international solidarity used to mean. It is largely forgotten by the contemporary left, which tends to see it in terms of opening national borders. This perfectly reflects the aspirations of global capitalism.

The Macron economic reform policy was essentially defined in Brussels.

But Wall Street is interested too. The team of experts assigned by Prime Minister Edouard Philippe to devise the administration’s economic reforms includes Jean-François Cirelli, head of the French branch of Black Rock, the seven trillion-dollar New York-based investment manager. About two thirds of Black Rock’s capital comes from pension funds all

over the world.

Larry Fink, the American CEO of this monstrous heap of money, was a welcome visitor at the Elysée Palace in June 2017, shortly after Macron's election. Two weeks later, economics minister Bruno Le Maire was in New York consulting with Larry Fink. Then, in October 2017, Fink led a Wall Street delegation to Paris for a confidential meeting (leaked to *Le Canard Enchaîné*) with Macron and five top cabinet ministers to discuss how to make France especially attractive to foreign investment.

Larry Fink has an obvious interest in Macron's reforms. By gradually impoverishing social security, the new system is designed to spur a boom in private pension schemes, a field dominated by Black Rock. These schemes lack the guarantee of government social security. Private pensions depend on stock market performance, and if there is a crash, there goes your retirement. Meanwhile, the money managers play with your savings, taking their cut whatever happens.

Read full article here...



Mainstream Media and

Hollywood Painted Virginia's Pro-2nd-Amendment Rally as 'Extremist' Despite its Peaceful and Uneventful Nature

Mainstream media and Hollywood portrayed pro-Second-Amendment supporters in Richmond, Virginia as potentially violent 'neo-Nazis'. However, the demonstration of more than 22,000 people, was completely peaceful. Under protest were the new gun-confiscation measures proposed by Governor Ralph Northam, who declared a state of emergency before the event. Prior to the rally, CNN reported that the FBI was working with law enforcement to prepare for violence, but none occurred. [Thank God our fears were unfounded that the Deep State might throw a few mind-controlled zombies into the crowd posing as Nazis or white supremacists to kill some innocent bystanders so the press could go bananas over the alleged need for gun confiscation. It is a relief to be wrong for a change.] -GEG

Talking heads in the media and Hollywood tried to paint the pro-Second Amendment supporters in Richmond, Virginia as racist or potentially violent, creating a much gloomier image than the one that transpired in reality.

Folks walking around the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond with semi-automatic weapons strapped over their shoulders had anti-gun activists up in arms and concerned, but the pro-Second Amendment protest – which was against new anti-gun measures proposed by Governor Ralph Northam – ended up being quite peaceful.

'Westworld' actor Jeffrey Wright was similarly bothered by the gun-wielding protesters. He tweeted that the protest was "*gun circle jerk*" and said it had a "*Klan-like rally smell*" to it.

This is despite the fact that plenty of videos and pictures showed minorities protesting for gun rights too.



Jeffrey Wright

 @jfreewright

The organizers aren't at all bothered that a gun circle jerk in Richmond, VA on #MLKDay has a Klan-rally smell to it? Wonder why. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/richmond-braces-for-enormous-gun-rights-rally-monday/2020/01/18/0dc41a76-3702-11ea-9541-9107303481a4_story.html ...



Richmond braces for enormous gun-rights rally Monday

State officials are preparing for a volatile mix of weapons, anti-government fervor and out-of-town extremists.

washingtonpost.com

447

1:14 AM – Jan 20, 2020

Twitter Ads info and privacy

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Michael Coudrey

 @MichaelCoudrey

An attendee at the rally in Richmond Virginia dispels the media smears against rally-goers.

He says the media is mischaracterizing them, & that they are just law abiding citizens who want to advocate for their constitutional rights.#VirginiaRally



27K

5:58 AM – Jan 20, 2020

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