

French Medical Association denounces official inaction on pandemic

By Alex Lantier
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In an interview Sunday with the *Journal du dimanche* (JDD), Patrick Brouet, the president of the Ordre des Médecins (Medical Association) attacked official inaction on the resurgence of COVID-19 in France. This politically criminal inaction, decided by President Macron, is preparing a new spike in deaths, worse than in spring, that would overflow the health care system.

According to Brouet, “if nothing changes, in three to four months, France will have to confront several long autumn and winter months of a generalised epidemic over the whole country, without rear bases of support capable of providing human reinforcements, leaving only a health system incapable of responding to pressing demands.”

Over the past week, admissions to intensive care have risen by 40 percent, hospital admissions by 34 percent and deaths by 25 percent, with a total of 332 hospital and care home deaths. The JDD quotes the calculations of seven scientists, all of which coincide: “Without strong measures to fight the pandemic, the number of patients going into intensive care each day in a month’s time will be about 650, equivalent to what we experienced at the height of the first wave, and will go over 1,200 in mid-November.”

These calculations reinforce those announced by sources in London, indicating an alarming acceleration of the pandemic. According to the UK Office of National Statistics, the number of cases is doubling every week, which will mean 50,000 cases per day by mid-October and therefore hundreds of deaths each day two weeks later. At the time of the spike in cases during the spring, it only took a week for the number of daily deaths in Britain to go from 200 to 1,000.

The resurgence in France would be harder to handle than the first, which was concentrated in the Grand-Est,

Île-de-France and Hauts de France regions, because the virus is now evenly spread across France. Moreover, Brouet explained, in the autumn “it will be necessary to confront Covid while looking after all the elderly sick suffering from flu, and children affected by gastroenteritis.”

Only a policy of allowing the entire population to shelter at home except for essential workers can prevent a devastating generalised resurgence of COVID-19. To prevent an economic collapse and mass impoverishment, such a policy would necessarily include financial support for workers and small businesses during the lock-down.

According to an Ifop poll this weekend, 61 percent of French people would support a generalised policy of everyone working from home except for essential workers. Also, 72 percent support a 15-day lockdown, and 83 percent accept curtailing their movements. In fact it is not opposition by French people, as is so often claimed by the press and TV media, which prevents the adoption of a scientific strategy to fight the virus.

It is the demands of the financial markets and the capitalist aristocracy that workers must at all costs return to work, and therefore children to school, in order to generate the necessary profits for the banks. This policy is defended by the state apparatus in the person of the banker-president, Emmanuel Macron.

“Everything must be done to avoid total lockdown,” Macron reportedly declared during the defence council meeting last Wednesday, according to JDD. He demanded details on “the hospitals’ capacity to absorb the coming wave,” according to one participant at the meeting.

Scientific models show the return to work and reopening of schools is leading to a spike in deaths worse than that in April. In the spring, an official

German report dated March 18 warned of the danger that “more than a million people would die in 2020, just in Germany.” According to JDD, at the defence council meeting of March 12, “a forecast of hundreds of thousands of deaths was raised.” A lockdown was then imposed. “However, a big difference is now evident: this scenario today has been completely ruled out,” writes the JDD .

In short, hundreds of thousands of French people could die along with millions of Europeans as a result of Macron’s determination to maintain the irrational, anti-scientific and unpopular policy dictated by the banks in defence of the privileges of the financial aristocracy.

The political parties and trade unions which negotiate the implementation of the European relaunch plan with Macron are accomplices to this murderous policy. It demonstrates their contempt for human lives, especially those of more impoverished layers of the working class that have been the most affected by the virus, and of the medical staff.

Brouet criticized the illusions promoted by Macron, such as the health system being able to withstand any new rise in COVID-19 cases: “health professionals, who accomplished a miracle last spring, will not be able once again to compensate for structural deficiencies. Many are exhausted, traumatized. No one confronted with death on a daily basis emerges unscathed. Like myself, many regret that an accounting of the first period has not been undertaken...”

Brouet demanded that the state give more control to doctors and ensure the coordination between general practitioners, hospitals and regional health authorities: “The hospital is in the front line, but the majority of people sick from Covid will not go to hospital! It is not the hospital that needs protection but the patients!” He warned that without this reorganization, there will be “the same bottleneck as in the spring for calls to 15 [emergency telephone line], an unequal distribution of the pressure on doctors’ waiting rooms, and doctors being deprived of access to their patients in certain care homes.”

Brouet stressed that Macron’s policy will cut off a large majority of patients from access to treatment. “We sense an adoption in the population and among certain intellectuals of the idea that the lives of the majority of society do not merit being wasted in order

to protect the elderly and the more vulnerable. ... I wish to solemnly warn against an unacceptable philosophical breakdown.”

He continued, “If nothing is done to control the epidemic, intensive care units will be saturated and it will be necessary to pick and choose patients arriving at their doors. Emergency doctors will have the task of choosing who gets access to treatment. However, a doctor must never accept an injunction from society that forces a doctor to refuse treating a patient.”

This comment exposes the essential fascistic character of the policy pursued by Macron in France and by the international financial aristocracy. In order to preserve their profits, they attempt to again impose the barbaric situation where emergency doctors are called upon to decide whether patients live or die, and where elderly patients suffering from COVID-19 would be automatically denied life-saving treatment. To prevent such a situation, it is urgent to remove the control of the economy from the reactionary capitalist elites.

This underscores the significance of the call by the Parti de l’égalité socialiste (Socialist Equality Party) addressed to workers to organize independently of the trade unions and prepare a general strike movement against the return to work in France and internationally, with the aim of bringing down the capitalist governments and transferring political power to the working class.

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