France's Confusing Political Demonstrations on July 24 – Another Planned for July 31

July 30, 2021

At least 150,000 French people in cities large and small throughout the country demonstrated on July 24, an extremely large number given that July and August and months in which demonstrations never take place because most French people go on vacation. To get an overview of the size and scope watch this video of the demonstrations: click here.

The protestors raised a variety of slogans. Some called for President Emmanuel Macron to step down; some opposed the *pass sanitaire,* a health pass that would prove vaccination; others opposed all vaccinations. The most common chant was "Liberté"—Freedom.

The demonstrations involved health workers, labor union members, the Yellow Vests movement, anti-vaxxers, and fascists. Florian Philippot, former vice-president of the National Front and now leader of the small fascist movement *Les Patriotes* put himself at the head of the large demonstrations at the Trocadero in Paris. Another demonstration is planned for Saturday, July 31.

What is one to make of these complicated and confusing protests? To try to understand them, I spoke with Patrick Silberstein, a retired physician, longtime left activist, and a founder of the publishing house Syllepse. Here is our conversation: