

Massive security preparations for the G8 meeting in France

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25 May 2011

The French government is to mobilise over 12,000 police, gendarmes and troops to protect the leaders of the eight richest industrialized countries (the United States, Japan, France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Russia) due to meet in the fashionable seaside resort of Deauville in Normandy on Thursday and Friday.

France holds the rotating presidency of the Group of Eight and is host to the G8 leaders, nine other heads of state, and their delegations, a total nearly 8,000 participants. Large demonstrations against the summit are expected.

The leaders of the major capitalist governments fear and hate the masses from whose lives and needs they are entirely alienated. This attitude is expressed in the massive security mobilisation at Deauville. An elite special forces team is on standby. The army has a command post on a hill overlooking the city and police will patrol the hills around the town on horseback and mountain bikes. Access to residents will be based on presentation of a badge provided by the Deauville police station.

Passengers boarding trains from the Gare St-Lazare station in Paris will be checked. All sorts of surveillance and air defences are in use, a temporary no-fly zone and a maritime exclusion zone will be established. Two security zones are planned that will cover virtually the whole town. Access will only be given to participants, journalists, inhabitants and workers. Deauville Saint-Gatien airport and the ports of Deauville and Trouville-sur-Mer will be closed throughout the two-day event.

A Reuters report commented, “French President Nicolas Sarkozy promised to lower the security bill for the event after Canadian authorities were criticised for

spending over one billion Canadian dollars for last year’s G8 and G20 summits. However a combination of low poll ratings for Sarkozy and fears of revenge attacks following Osama bin Laden’s death means security services are taking no chances”.

The summit is the first since the beginning of the revolutionary upsurge of the youth and workers against poverty and oppression that toppled the Tunisian and Egyptian dictators Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak and has spread throughout the Arab world and, since May 15, has crossed the Mediterranean to Spain.

The response of the major powers to the Arab upheaval, the NATO war in Libya, the war in Afghanistan, and the replacement of Dominique Strauss-Kahn as head of the IMF are all expected to be subjects in the two-day talks.

On May 3, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé announced to the National Assembly that President Sarkozy had extended a special invitation to Tunisia and Egypt so that the G8 could devise “action plans” that would help them “face their economic difficulties”.

He voiced the counterrevolutionary agenda of French and world imperialism, asserting that the best way of tackling “extremism” is to assist those who aspired to freedom in making a successful transition to democracy and pledging aid to the national bourgeoisie and state apparatuses of these countries in maintaining the status quo. He declared, “If we let them (Egypt and Tunisia) get bogged down in economic difficulties, the political transition will be threatened”.

Given the venue of the meeting, and the participation of the four biggest countries in the European Union, the leaders will undoubtedly discuss the deepening crisis of the euro, the threat of default on sovereign debt and the austerity measures designed to make the working class pay back the banks, which have provoked mass

resistance in Greece, Portugal and now Spain.

The G8 countries are all currently directly involved in or supporting to varying degrees the neo-colonial wars and armed interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Libya.

Sarkozy is using the chairmanship of the G8 to parade as a world statesman and to boost his rock-bottom approval ratings of around 20 percent, an all-time low for a modern French president. In his speech on Monday at the G20 conference in Paris on “the strengthening of the social dimension of globalisation” he attacked the “anarchic functioning of the financial markets” and called for “regulation”, while defending the free market and competition, claiming that this could lead to “social progress”. At the same time, he expressed fear of a social situation that “threatens to become uncontrollable”.

Sarkozy and the French bourgeoisie, like their counterparts all over the world, rely on the services of social democracy and trade unions to defend big business and the bourgeois state. Sarkozy pushed through cuts in pensions last year in this fashion.

This collaboration is highlighted by the role played by the International Monetary Fund, whose leader for the past three years—nominated by Sarkozy—was the leading French social democrat Strauss-Kahn.

Socialist Party chairman Martine Aubry is supporting Sarkozy’s Economy Minister Christine Lagarde as a replacement for Strauss-Kahn, after his forced resignation as IMF managing director. Lagarde has played a major role in the austerity measures that provoked strikes and demonstrations by over 3 million French workers last year.

Sarkozy is also using the summit to cultivate relations with the stooges of French imperialism in West Africa. He invited the recently elected presidents Alassane Ouattara, Alpha Condé and Mahamadou Issoufou, of the former French colonies Ivory Coast, Niger and Guinea respectively, as special guests.

The presidential office said the invitations were a reward to the three leaders for having achieved power by “exemplary democratic means”. In fact, Ouattara was only able to accede to the presidency of Côte d'Ivoire thanks to the decisive military help of France and the United Nations. His predecessor Laurent Gbagbo was arrested by the French army on April 11 in Abidjan.

The invitations are part of French imperialism’s drive to maintain its influence in its former colonies faced with the rivalry of the great powers, and most especially China, in the ongoing scramble for Africa and its resources.



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