

French government spokesman explains Macron's policies by quoting anti-Semite Maurras

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Speaking on the *France Inter* radio station last Thursday, French government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux quoted monarchist anti-Semite and Petainist ideologue Charles Maurras, falsely attributing the latter's statement, "the legal nation meets the real nation" to the historian and resistance fighter, Marc Bloch. The media's explanation, that Griveaux had committed a gaffe out of historical ignorance, is not tenable.

It is remarkable that a close aide to President Emmanuel Macron utilized a formulation directly inspired by Petain's fascist program under the Nazi occupation. The writings of Maurras have long been relegated to the exclusive province of the French extreme-right.

In the interview, Griveaux declared that "it is the legal nation that meets the real nation" to explain the insistence by Macron, now facing record-low poll ratings, that his ministers travel out to regions of the country. Responding to mocking criticisms by media commentators, Griveaux gave the absurd excuse that he had still "not woken up" at the time of the interview, and, without retracting his earlier quotation, recommended "rereading *Strange Defeat*," Bloch's 1940 work. He did not explain how he came to quote Maurras, or what Bloch's 1940 book had to do with it.

Strange Defeat is Bloch's account of his experience in the defeat of the French army in 1940, and a scathing critique of the policies of the French military command and government. It has nothing remotely to do with the theme of Griveaux's interview—unlike Maurras. The most likely explanation for Griveaux's "error" is that Maurras is intensively read and discussed within the government.

Unlike Bloch's book, the quote from Maurras corresponded closely to the issues that Griveaux was discussing. He had just noted that Macron asked that ministers "go out every week into the regions ... but to

bring there our directors of our central administration, who sometimes have a somewhat Jacobinist view of what happens in the country."

The "Jacobin state" is the "legal state" denounced by Maurras as being dominated by Jews, foreigners, Protestants and Freemasons. He opposed to it the "real country," that is, the monarchism of rural and Catholic regions of the country.

For Griveaux, the "real country" that had to be "listened to" were "elected officials, associations, companies, those who live in the country and find concrete solutions to the problems of the people." He made this statement just before citing the controversial quote, demonstrating at the same time his contempt for the working class.

The "falsely attributed" quote is part of a series of similar episodes, the last and most provocative of which was Macron's celebration of the collaborationist dictator Phillippe Petain as a "great general," prior to the World War I centenary commemorations on November 11.

Maurras was the dominant ideologue of the French bourgeoisie from the time of the Dreyfus affair to the Second World War. He is the founder of the anti-Semitic, anti-Dreyfusard and antidemocratic party, Action Francaise. Its program of a "total nationalism" advocates the abolition of the Republic in favour of a monarchy, where the "real nation" asserts itself against the "legal nation."

Maurras hailed the military collapse of the Third French Republic in 1940 in the face of a Nazi invasion, calling it a "divine surprise." Throughout the Nazi occupation, he was one of Petain's close supporters, dining with him regularly. The French militia, which hunted down resisters and delivered them to the Gestapo, was founded by followers of Maurras, many of whom swore an oath to Hitler and rallied to the SS. Maurras called for the

execution of resistance members and their families.

In 1945, he was condemned to the forfeiture of his civil rights and sentenced to death, later reduced to life in prison, for high treason and providing intelligence to the enemy.

The fact that high government officials in France adopt the conceptions of such a figure, and publicly cite them, underscores the crisis of capitalism in France and Europe. Facing US President Trump and ever-more intense economic and strategic rivalries over world markets, the French ruling class, like its German counterparts, wants to construct a European army capable of securing European hegemony against its American and Asian rivals.

To rehabilitate militarism and justify the gutting of what remains of the social gains won following French liberation and the defeat of fascism—pensions, social security, etc.—the bourgeoisie is compelled to rehabilitate the fascist intellectuals and leaders of the 20th century.

Before the French military brass had proposed to celebrate Petain in October—a proposal repeated by Macron the following month—the minister of culture had already approved an official celebration of Maurras in January, before backpedaling in the face of protests by Jewish and anti-racism associations. While Maurras' name was removed from the commemoration, Jacques Chardonne, a pro-Nazi and ardent supporter of Petain, was kept on.

At a dinner with the Representative Council of Jewish French Institutions (CRIF) at the start of March, Macron insisted upon honouring “Maurras the author.” “We must see [the figure of Maurras] as part of the history of France,” he declared, without provoking any outrage from this organization. Under the leadership of Jean-Christophe Buisson, the joint director of *Figaro Magazine*, the Robert Lafont publishers re-edited the works of Maurras in April.

In 2016, Macron, then the economy minister in the Socialist Party (PS) government of Francois Hollande, provided an apology for the monarchy. “In French politics, this absence is the figure of the king, whom I fundamentally believe the French people did not want to see killed. The Great Terror created an emotional, imaginative and collective vacuum—the king is no longer here!” he said, before adding: “We have since tried to fill this vacuum, to put other figures in its place: such were the Napoleonic and Gaullist periods in particular. The rest of the time, French democracy has not filled the space.”

The transfer of power to Macron in May 2017 resembled more the enthroning of a king than the installation of an elected representative. The corporate

media were seized by a militarist and monarchist fever, comparing Macron to a king who would heal the sick—“made,” wrote *Le Monde*, “of another metal.”

This extreme-right folly, which seized the entire ruling class, underscores the correctness of the position taken by the Socialist Equality Party (PES) in the last presidential elections. In 2017, Macron and Le Pen were two rival candidates representing the same politics of the financial aristocracy: to establish a police state and impose war and austerity on the working class. Macron won because he had the support of the banks, the European Union and the trade union bureaucracies.

In the second round of presidential elections, the PES explained that there was no fundamental difference between Le Pen and Macron. We called for an active boycott of the second round of the elections, to provide the working class with an independent perspective from all factions of the bourgeoisie. In contrast, the New Anticapitalist Party, Jean-luc Melenchon's Unsubmissive France, Workers Struggle and the trade unions, with whom they collaborate directly in imposing the government's attacks, aligned themselves more or less openly behind Macron, supporting the blackmail aggressively promoted by the media for an “anti-Le Pen vote.”

The reactionary, militarist and anti-working class character of the government that these parties have helped place in power is underscored by its sympathy for fascist chiefs and anti-Semites.



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