

French ruling class supports police rally at the National Assembly

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21 May 2021

Wednesday's demonstration by thousands of police officers outside the National Assembly, called by a group of police unions dominated by the neo-fascist Alliance union, is a sharp warning. The police enjoy the near-unanimous backing of the establishment parties while they call for the building of an authoritarian police state.

The rally was called after the death on May 5 of a police officer in Avignon, Brigadier Eric Masson. It had transparent political aims. While the Macron government's recently-passed "global security" law is currently being reviewed by the country's constitutional council, the police demanded minimum sentences for individuals who allegedly assaulted police officers. The police denounced the judicial system and in particular the minister of justice, former defence lawyer Éric Dupont-Moretti.

Fabien Vanhemelryck, the head of the Alliance-police union, booed Dupont-Moretti and, to a standing ovation from the crowd of police officers, shouted: "The problem with the police is the justice system." This was a call to break the judicial system and establish a police state.

The hatred of strikers and social demonstrations that animated the pro-police demonstrators was expressed in the comment of one protester, who confided his love for the police to Europe1: "They are the last bastions of peace. They are fed up with this permanent guerrilla warfare."

In attendance at the rally were Macron's interior minister and former Action Française member Gérard Darmanin, the No. 2 of the neo-fascist National Rally, Jordan Bardella and numerous far-right figures, including polemicist and supporter of the Vichy collaborationist regime Eric Zemmour. Bardella said: "If we come to power, we will re-establish the authority of the state and we will protect materially, legally, administratively and by law our police."

A federation of 14 police unions had called the

demonstration, including Alliance, the CFDT, and the Workers Force-linked Unité-SGP union. The General Confederation of Labour-Police called for a demonstration without backing the main slogans. SUD-Intérieur, the police union linked to the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), did not call to support the demonstration.

This almost unanimous support for a far-right demonstration came not only from the trade union apparatuses, but also from the political parties associated with them. The Socialist Party, the Stalinist Communist Party of France and elements of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (LFI) lined up behind the far-right police union, when there was no mistaking either the political character of the demonstration or the context in which it took place.

"The police must have a say in the justice system," said PS first secretary Olivier Faure, who attended the demonstration outside the Assembly. The PS national bureau issued a statement expressing its "attachment to and full support for the police" and promising to send a delegation of MPs to the demonstration.

Anne Hidalgo, the PS mayor of Paris who is preparing a presidential candidacy, participated in the demonstration after telling Europe1: "I will be there with the mayors of my team, of my majority. We must support our police officers, because they are the ones who allow us to live peacefully in our neighbourhoods." She also claimed that "their work is very difficult, because they are not sufficiently equipped."

Fabien Roussel, the PCF's presidential candidate, announced his participation in the demonstration, citing his desire to ensure "that everyone feels at peace."

Yannick Jadot, the Greens member in the European parliament, participated in the demonstration after tweeting that he wanted to demonstrate his "attachment" to the police and his "expectations of them to re-establish

the bond of trust with the French.”

Unsubmissive France, which did not participate in the demonstration, stated that the main obstacle for them was their fear of being attacked by neo-fascist police. Adrien Quatennens, an Unsubmissive France deputy, stressed that “in absolute terms, given what we stand for, for the police, we would have our place there. But I am not sure that the security conditions are present for us to participate.” He was also quick to point out that he felt “a form of frustration” at not being able to attend the demonstration of the police unions.

So, as the ruling elite prepares the campaign for the 2022 presidential elections, almost everything that the ruling class has presented for decades as “left” in France has applauded the far-right police demonstration.

These bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, having supported decades of austerity and war, followed by an irresponsible and criminal coronavirus policy that has resulted in the deaths of over 108,000 people in France, are aligning themselves with the police force as a bulwark against the social anger of the working class. This same process is taking place not only in France, but internationally.

By sending Darmanin to participate in the police demonstration, the Macron government is continuing its strategy of attacking Marine Le Pen from the right. Darmanin, who already criticised Le Pen in a televised debate as being “soft” on Islam, is trying to gather support among the police, who are currently voting by 74 percent for Le Pen.

The deadly management of the coronavirus pandemic by governments and the level of social inequality reached under capitalism are incompatible with democracy. Following Donald Trump’s unprecedented coup attempt on January 6 in Washington, storming the Capitol in an attempt to prevent Congress from certifying his electoral defeat, democratic norms are collapsing everywhere. In Spain, top military brass denounced the March 2020 workers’ strikes, which demanded that non-essential workers be allowed to take shelter in their homes, and called for a coup.

In France, the military-police apparatus, aware of the unpopularity of Macron, who has relied on them to repress strikes and “yellow vest” protests, is calling for dictatorship. Thousands of French officers close to the far right have signed calls for an army intervention in France, that is, a coup d’état.

The defence of democratic rights requires the building of an international workers movement, fighting on the

basis of a revolutionary and socialist programme, against a failed capitalist social order. This requires a fundamental break with all those parties that attempt to tie workers to Macron, the Socialist Party or their various satellites. Among these must be counted the corrupt national trade union apparatuses, which organise token strikes while holding meetings through their police union federations with the state apparatus that represses them.

Thus, at a press conference before the far-right protest, Mélenchon complained: “The authority of the state from week to week is diluted and dispersed in the face of behaviour that is inadmissible in a Republic. First the military calling on their active colleagues to rise up, then retired police officers calling on those on active duty to precede the military with bad actions.” He pointed out that the demonstration had an “ostensibly factional” character, attacking “the judicial institution.”

Yet Mélenchon proposes nothing more than to rely on Macron. To combat the threat of a coup, he calls on the public authorities backing the military-police apparatus to investigate the threats of a coup that come from that same apparatus.

The alternative to the ruling class’ rush to neo-fascist dictatorship is the independent mobilisation of the working class in defence of democratic rights. The International Committee of the Fourth International has called, in the face of the failure of the health policy of the capitalist states during the pandemic, for the formation of an International Workers’ Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. This call opens a way for workers to organise and fight for a scientific policy in response to the pandemic and a defence of democratic rights.



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