

French media, political parties hush up PS government's coup plan

By Alex Lantier
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Major French media and political parties continued their silence Friday on the extraordinary report in Thursday's edition of *L'Obs* magazine, which revealed that the outgoing Socialist Party (PS) government planned a coup d'état if National Front (FN) candidate Marine Le Pen, rather than PS-backed candidate Emmanuel Macron, had won the May 7 presidential elections.

Plans were made for a major police mobilization to crush anti-fascist protests, and to break the usual electoral protocol and force Le Pen to accept a PS prime minister. As a top state official told *L'Obs*, "The country would have been totally shut down. The government would have had only one priority: ensuring the security of the state." That is, while the PS would have effectively suspended the usual parliamentary forms of rule in France, the goal was to keep Le Pen in power and crush opposition from the left.

The deafening silence on the story, coupled with the absence of official denials of its contents is the clearest indication that *L'Obs* report, based on information from multiple anonymous, high-level sources in the PS, is essentially correct.

The material in the story indicates that PS officials are willing to suspend parliamentary procedures and install a dictatorship via a coup by intelligence and police officials to crush mass protests. This is not just a hypothetical about what would have happened had Le Pen won on May 7: demonstrations are expected to erupt against Macron's plans to unilaterally slash wages and contracts using the PS labour law, and to restore the draft. The question that is posed is whether the new Macron administration is preparing to use such methods against the working class.

Asked about the story by *Le Figaro*, FN vice-president Louis Aliot said the plan was "an act of

hostility to the sovereignty of the people. ... It would have been a first and would have caused a major problem for Marine Le Pen as commander-in-chief of the armed forces." He nonetheless tried to downplay the plan, calling it "unimaginable," and dismissed PS claims that there would have been massive left-wing violence after an FN victory: "There would not have been more [violence] than during the labour law protests."

Neither the PS nor PS officials inside the new Macron administration saw fit to issue a comment or a denial of the story's contents, however, and television news and major pro-PS newspapers like *Le Monde* and *Libération* continued to black out the story, as well.

The political establishment and the media are acting as if the contents of the *L'Obs* article—that is, plans for the suspension of normal parliamentary procedures and the imposition of martial law—are of no particular importance. Contacted by *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) reporters, press officials for the PS, the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the Unsubmissive France (UF) movement of Jean-Luc Mélenchon refused to comment on the story or dismissed it as irrelevant.

PS press officials told WSWS reporters quite improbably that they had not seen the story, although they acknowledged that they had read stories based on the *L'Obs* story in other publications: "I saw it in *L'Express* and *Le Figaro*, but not in *L'Obs*." They then refused to answer any further questions on the matter, saying that all questions should be addressed to the former PS prime minister, Bernard Cazeneuve.

The statements of the various pseudo-left organizations to the WSWS were complacent and unserious. Representatives at the UF press office told the WSWS they had nothing to say on the matter, and that if UF thought it deserved comment, UF national

spokespeople would say something about it. The UF spokespeople have maintained a total silence on the matter.

The NPA press official contacted by the WSWS said, “I saw it. But I’ll admit I didn’t read it because it looked like some type of sensationalist headline.” The official added that no one else who was available at the NPA would be able to comment on it, either.

The WSWS reporters noted that under the PS state of emergency, NPA members have been threatened with lawsuits and banned from attending protests and asked why, under these conditions, the NPA was not more interested in reports of PS plans to attack democratic rights. The NPA press official replied, “It’s a matter of time, we have to take care of the legislative election campaign. I saw the article, but it seemed like a sort of sensational thing.”

He added, “I do not think that the PS could organize a coup against the National Front, it’s not in the cards, and I think that if the National Front had come to power it would have used very powerful methods against us.”

He acknowledged, however, that in France, “There was a change with the state of emergency. There was a more police-style turn in the underlying philosophy, let’s call it the very deep state.” Asked if the “deep state” would be capable of suspending democratic rule via a coup by the security services, he answered: “Today, no. As for later, I don’t know.”

The silence of the PS and PS-linked media and the irresponsible attitude of UF and the NPA must be taken as a warning to the working class. The forces that for decades have passed for the “left” are complacent and largely indifferent to deep attacks on democratic rights that have been carried out and that are being prepared under Macron.

The PS has imposed a state of emergency in 2015 that suspends basic democratic rights and allows the police to arbitrarily detain individuals, ban protests, and assign people to house arrest. It has already been used to disrupt and savagely repress social protests and to whip up an anti-Muslim and militaristic atmosphere. This produced a political collapse of the PS, which was eliminated with only 6 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections.

Now, Macron is taking power based on a fragile coalition of PS and right-wing politicians, with a

political agenda of austerity and war that is widely unpopular. There is every indication that he will be even more brutal than the PS in his methods of repression. The report in *L’Obs*, and even more so the reaction of the rest of the media, is a warning that Macron’s attacks on democratic rights, and even moves to impose a dictatorship in France, would encounter little opposition from the media and political establishment.

Statements by pseudo-left forces like UF and NPA downplaying the significance of the *L’Obs* article reflect the bankruptcy of their type of petty-bourgeois politics. For nearly a half century, these forces and their precursors have oriented to the PS, since its foundation in 1971, on the basis of their rejection of Marxism and the struggle of the working class for power. Today, as the PS collapses and turns far to the right, they are demonstrating that they have nothing to offer to the working class in the enormous political crises and revolutionary struggles that lie ahead.

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