

Opposition grows to writing French state of emergency into law

By Francis Dubois
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France's National Assembly voted on July 6 a new prolongation of the state of emergency until November 1 and, with the Senate, discussed on July 18-19 in accelerated proceedings a bill that would inscribe the police powers granted by the state of emergency into common law.

As these bills are examined and discussed in the press, opposition to them is growing. Even inside the academic and NGO circles that largely supported President Emmanuel Macron in this year's presidential elections, it is increasingly widely recognized that he is taking a historic step to build an authoritarian and anti-democratic regime in France.

On July 12, *Libération* and *Médiapart* published an appeal signed by 500 academics and researchers criticizing moves towards a permanent state of emergency. "These are measures that gravely menace liberty and that, according to this bill, could be decided by the interior minister or police prefects not in a situation of 'imminent peril,' but more broadly, at any time or place and ... [that could be] decided based on simple suspicions," it declares, concluding: "We cannot accept such a regression of the rule of law."

In parallel, protests called by a coalition of NGOs, trade unions (including of judges), and of petty-bourgeois parties including the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), the Stalinist French Communist Party, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (LFI) took place in Paris on July 1 and 18. They were called on the slogan "No to a permanent state of emergency." Another protest is scheduled for September 10.

The parties organizing the current protests supported the previous Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande, its "Je suis Charlie" campaign after the January 2015 attack on *Charlie*

Hebdo, and the imposition of a state of emergency after the November 13, 2015 attacks in Paris. They accepted the suppression of democratic rights under the state of emergency, which deputies of the Left Front coalition between the PCF and Mélenchon voted in the Assembly.

The WSWs for its part consistently opposed the state of emergency, stressing that it would serve to build a police state repressing working class opposition to austerity and imperialist war. It stressed that the state of emergency was not in fact a struggle against the Islamist terror networks carrying out attacks in Paris, which the imperialist powers in fact use in their wars in Syria. It located the more profound causes of the state of emergency in the international crisis of capitalism and the collapse of democratic forms of rule that are incompatible with rising grotesque social inequality.

The perpetrators of the terrorist attacks were individuals well known to intelligence services, who allowed them to circulate freely and operate without hindrance. This was the case of the Kouachi brothers, who carried out the *Charlie Hebdo* attack; of Amédy Coulibaly, who carried out the attack in the Hyper Kasher market in Vincennes the same day; and of Saleh Abdeslam, the key suspect in the November 2015 attacks, who hid for four months near his family home in Brussels while he was supposedly being searched for by every police force in Europe.

The recent attacks in Manchester again revealed the close ties between Western intelligence and the individual carrying out the terror attack. He and his family were well known to the security services, as his family had participated in CIA-led wars in Libya and Syria.

The NPA in particular rapidly and vocally aligned itself with these wars. It defended the war in Libya on

the false pretext that it was a “humanitarian” intervention, and Hollande's war in Libya with the false claim that militias dominated by Islamist forces linked to Al Qaeda were leading a “democratic revolution.” This party, integrated into the political machinery that aimed to “sell” imperialist foreign policy to the population, ended up also serving as a cover for the political lies that underlie its repressive domestic policy.

The masses, and above all the working class, are profoundly attached to democratic rights. However, their oppositional struggles will develop along political lines extremely different from those of symbolic protests dominated by parties like LFI, the PCF, and the NPA or other groups close to the PS and the imperialist state machine.

If the warnings that predominate in the current protests point to Macron's dictatorial policy and call for maintaining “the rule of law,” they advance above all the argument that the state of emergency is “not effective against terrorism.” That is, they accept the legitimacy of the “war on terror,” which has served from the beginning as a false pretext for the suppression of democratic rights. One speaker at the protests even proposed to reinforce the intelligence services and to form “on the ground [in Syria] a universal coalition against the Islamic State.”

The speakers at the protest address demands to Macron without mentioning his predecessor, Hollande, to pass over in silence the fact that they supported his policy. They address also the parliament, the July 18 demonstration having passed in front of the Senate, which had just prolonged the state of emergency until November.

If Macron is trying to build a permanent police state in France, it is because he knows that the opposition of the working class will be of an entirely different scale and character than that of the old political satellites of the PS. He has no popular support for his policies of war and austerity, a state of affairs underscored by the unprecedented majority abstention in the legislative elections. His party won a majority in the Assembly with the support of only 16 percent of registered voters.

Broad sections of the population and of youth are openly hostile to Macron's policies; an explosion of the class struggle and a revolutionary confrontation between the working class and the bourgeoisie are

being prepared.

The sections of the media and the political establishment who are now concerned by the permanent state of emergency are proposing to preserve the rule of law and capitalism. But it is crisis-ridden capitalism, with its wars and social and economic crises, which is driving the ruling class to try to destroy democratic rights by setting up a permanent police state.

The only viable defense of democratic rights is through the revolutionary mobilization of the working class in France and across Europe in a political struggle against capitalism. It is the only force in society that can secure the overthrow the capitalist class in order to defend and extend democratic rights that are now under profound threat.

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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