

French neo-fascist officials endorse Norway atrocities

Kumaran Ira
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Members of far-right parties across Europe have endorsed the mass killing last Friday carried out by a right-wing anti-Islamic extremist in Norway, Anders Breivik. At least 76 people were killed in a bombing in Oslo and at a youth camp of the social-democratic Labour Party on nearby Utoya Island.

Two prominent members of France's neo-fascist Front National (FN), Jacques Coutela and Laurent Ozon, published blog posts defending the mass killings carried out by Breivik, a former member of the fascistic Progress Party in Norway. Prior to the killings, Breivik posted messages expressing hatred of Muslims and immigrants. He also denounced "cultural Marxism" and "multiculturalism," as obstacles to the defence of national culture.

Coutela, who was an FN candidate in the Yonne district in the March 2011 cantonal elections, praised Breivik on his blog as a "resistance fighter." He added that Breivik was "the first defender of the West" and "Charles Martel II"—a reference to the medieval Frankish king Charles Martel, who repelled Muslim armies invading southern France through Spain at the battle of Poitiers in 732.

Coutela wrote, "He's not an icon, but simply a visionary facing the rising Islamization of Europe, with the complicity of our governments and of [European Union authorities in] Brussels." He called for the mass expulsion of "these miscreants who want to impose *halla* meat, mosques, paedophilia, and the occupation of our streets."

Similarly Ozon, who was appointed by FN leader Marine Le Pen to the FN's political committee, posted messages on Twitter supporting Breivik's action. He wrote that to "explain the drama in Oslo" one had to cite "the explosion of immigration: it went up by a factor of six between 1970 and 2009."

In Italy, the Berlusconi government's conservative coalition partner, the far-right separatist Northern League, also defended Breivik's fascistic views. Francesco Speroni, a leading member of the Northern League, said "Breivik's ideas are in defence of western civilization."

The defence of Breivik's views and of his terror attack by the FN and other European extreme right-wing parties are a serious warning to the working class. They express the neo-fascists' violent hostility to immigrants and to any organization they perceive—however incorrectly, in the case of Norway's Labour Party—as having socialist policies.

In the aftermath of the mass killing in Norway, the FN has cynically tried to distance itself from the killing. On Sunday FN leader Marine Le Pen declared, "The National Front obviously has nothing to do with the Norwegian massacre, which is the work of a solitary unbalanced person that will have to be mercilessly punished."

On Tuesday, the FN announced that Coutela had been temporarily suspended from party activities. FN general secretary Steeve Briois told AFP that Coutela had been "suspended today from his position, pending appearance before a disciplinary commission." Ozon has not been subjected to any sanction so far, however.

In suspending Coutela, the FN is trying to win support in the media and the political establishment by posing as a "responsible" party. This strategy has had some success in the official media, which has sought to promote the FN since Marine Le Pen took over as party leader in January. (See "French media gives glowing coverage of new National Front Leader").

When interviewed by *Le Point*, Nicolas Lebourg, professor at the University of Perpignan and an expert on the far right, said: "The National Front is doing well,

for the time being, thanks to a successful public relations strategy in the face of the polemics created by the Norwegian attacks.”

He added, “Marine Le Pen had a very rational reaction. She took a law-and-order position that corresponds to her orientation since taking over [as FN leader] at the Tours congress—notably by rapidly suspending Jacques Coutela, who had defended the killer—and she has put herself in a good position for the future by clearly condemning the attack.”

Such light-minded positions—glossing over the historical and political implications of the rebirth of violent fascist politics in Europe—doubtless correspond to the views of large sections of the political establishment in France and throughout Europe.

They have promoted parties like the FN or the Northern League to divert class antagonisms along reactionary, chauvinist lines. They do not want to see the FN widely discredited, because they are complicit in its rise.

In France, faced with working-class opposition to his unpopular austerity policies, President Nicolas Sarkozy whipped up anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment to divide the working class and appeal to the FN electorate. He passed anti-democratic measures such as a ban on wearing the burqa in France, with the support of the entire political establishment—including the French Communist Party and “far left” parties such as the New Anti-Capitalist Party.

None of these forces mounted a political campaign against the Sarkozy government’s policy of targeted deportations of the Roma last year.

This evolution highlights the political bankruptcy of claims that the FN’s decision to suspend Coutela proves that it is a responsible political organization. In fact, to the extent that the media succeed in presenting the FN as a legitimate political party, this will simply encourage more confused and backward individuals to adopt the type of reactionary views espoused by Breivik. The result will be more events like the tragedy in Oslo.



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