

French political establishment tries to bury the Oslo neo-fascist massacre

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The political establishment in France is trying to hide the significance of the massacre of 77 people in Oslo by neo-fascist Anders Breivik, in order to conceal the great dangers posed by the promotion of right-wing conceptions and parties by the French and European ruling elite as a whole.

That is what emerges from the political blank stare with which the official media has responded to the comments of Jean-Marie Le Pen, honorary president of the National Front (FN), the French neo-fascist party. The latter, a filthy figure in French politics for decades, has legitimized the fascist ideology that motivated Breivik, evoking, to explain the Oslo slaughter, the naïveté of the Norwegian government confronted with the “danger” of “massive immigration.”

The political establishment has to a large extent kept silent on these comments. Mild criticism, directed against Marine Le Pen, the current FN leader, emanates from second rank politicians—such as Minister for Budgetary Affairs Valerie Pécresse and the former Socialist Party (PS) presidential candidate in 2007, Ségolène Royal.

Le Monde cites these comments: “Questioned on RMC radio, Ségolène Royal [currently seeking the PS nomination for the 2012 presidential election] claims that ‘by saying nothing she [Marine Le Pen] is in agreement’. Mrs. Royal judged the lack of any reaction from the president of the FN ‘very strange and shocking’. On the political right, several UMP politicians [the ruling Union for a Popular Movement Party] also denounced ‘the deathly silence’ of FN president Marine Le Pen, according to the government’s spokeswomen Valérie Pécresse. She

concluded by saying that ‘nothing has changed at the FN.’”

The comments by Royal and Pécresse are thoroughly dishonest and aimed at lulling the population to sleep. Given that the FN is an extreme right-wing party espousing essentially the same ideas as Breivik, there is nothing at all surprising in the reactionary comments of Jean-Marie Le Pen. Royal and Pécresse imply that the FN could become a respectable party and that Le Pen’s comments might be limited to a minority voice within it.

There is no evidence to support such a conclusion. Marine Le Pen defended her party, denouncing the attempts to “politically exploit” the Oslo tragedy.

A second *Le Monde* article pointed to the conflicts within the National Front. Some FN activists have openly hailed Breivik as a “resistance fighter” and “a visionary confronting the rise of Islam in Europe.” They were suspended from FN membership, but not expelled. That changed nothing in the FN’s general political sympathy for Breivik’s ideas.

France’s big business parties have adopted more and more right-wing policies in recent years, and the timid criticisms of the political establishment directed at the silence of Marine Le Pen will not change the trajectory of French and European politics. The political establishment has in fact cultivated neo-fascist forces as a barrier and weapon against the radicalization of the working class. In this policy, they have had the co-operation of the entire French political establishment, including the petty bourgeois “far left.”

It is important to note that the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) of Olivier Besancenot and Alain Krivine has been very discreet following the Oslo massacre and has not commented on Jean-Marie Le Pen's declaration. The NPA merely published a brief regional communiqué and an article by an ex-leader of the Norwegian electoral Red Alliance.

The NPA is not able to attack the extreme right on a principled, class basis because that would cut across its relations with the Socialist Party (PS) and the French Communist Party (PCF), both of which reject offering serious opposition to the policies of President Nicolas Sarkozy. The latter has attempted to divert attention from his deeply unpopular social austerity measures and the neo-colonial war on Libya and Afghanistan by targeting the Muslim population in a chauvinist and racist campaign. The NPA and the other "far left" parties, in reality part of the French political order, by their acquiescence to the PS, PCF and the unions have objectively assisted in the emergence of nationalist and right-wing notions in official French politics.

Every European country is prey to intensifying class struggle in the context of the world financial crisis that broke out in 2008. Each major political crisis and each setback for the working class, the latter attributable directly to the worthlessness of the trade unions and the "left" parties, has been followed by a renewed assault on democratic rights, focused above all on ethnic minorities and immigrants, and a further lurch to the right by the French political set-up.

In France in 2003, the right-wing Raffarin government attacked public sector workers' pensions. This social regression was intended to extend the pay-in period of public workers in line with those in the private sector. While workers in large numbers were opposed to this "reform," the unions found common ground with the Minister of Social Affairs François Fillon at the time. Only a few months later the government led a campaign banning the wearing of headscarves in schools.

During the 2007 presidential elections, both Sarkozy and Royal pursued right-wing campaigns based on law and order. Sarkozy, who sought to make inroads into

the FN electorate, had moreover obtained the political support of Gianfranco Fini from the Italian *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance), the "post-fascist" descendant of Mussolini's party, which was allied to Silvio Berlusconi's government.

In 2009, the unions, the Socialist Party and the "far left" called for one-day demonstrations in support of the alternative PS policy of economic recovery, which was not a real alternative to Sarkozy's project, but represented an attempt to legitimize handing over hundreds of billions of euros to bail out the banks.

Following this, the Sarkozy government launched a "debate" on national identity and prepared a ban on the wearing of the Muslim burqa punishable by fines—as well as the implementation of other racist measures, such as the expulsion of the Roma. The PS, PCF and the Greens participated in the parliamentary commission on the burqa ban, chaired by André Gerin of the PCF. The NPA through Besancenot declared that it was not opposed in principle to the imposition of fines on Muslim women wearing the garment.

The policy of these successive governments, and the complicity of their "left" hangers-on, created conditions in which the extreme right could make a breakthrough in the 2011 regional elections, and recently among a layer of union representatives. Marine Le Pen took advantage of Sarkozy's policies and of the sympathy of a section of the media to give a "respectable" image to the FN.

If the French political establishment can only offer the pious and empty wish that the FN distance itself from Breivik and the Oslo massacre, this is because, after years of inciting political reaction, it is incapable of conducting and, in fact, is hostile to a political struggle against the neo-fascist forces.



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