

French conservatives propose right-wing protests against social-democratic government

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France's right-wing Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), has proposed right-wing protests against the Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande.

Speaking on the October 28 "Grand Jury" television program in the context of his race for the UMP presidency against former Prime Minister François Fillon, Copé said that Hollande largely underestimates "the very deep discontent of the real country."

Copé denounced PS "fiscal bludgeoning"—that is, Hollande's plans for minor tax increases on high-income earners—as well as plans for legalizing gay marriage and giving foreigners the right to vote in local elections. He said the PS policies threaten "the superior interests of our country" and "the pillars of our society."

Copé held up as an example the mass right-wing protests against the proposed abolition of Catholic schools by PS President François Mitterrand in 1984. He said, "As we did in 1984 to save free schools, Frenchwomen and Frenchmen should be indignant and worried about the future of our country, and the children of France should mobilize in the streets."

Copé's reactionary appeal seeks to mobilize the wealthy, as well as more backward layers of society, to defend financial privilege and social prejudice. It comes as the popularity of Hollande and Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault collapses as a result of their deeply unpopular measures, including tens of billions in social spending cuts, layoffs, and the gutting of labour rights. Less than six months after Hollande won the presidential elections, his approval ratings stand at 36 percent; Ayrault's ratings are only 30 percent.

The chief beneficiary of Copé's appeal to stage right-wing protests is the leader of neo-fascist Front National (FN), Marine Le Pen. On Thursday, Le Pen said she was ready to participate in events organized by the UMP against the government. "I am not sectarian. When I have something to say, it does not bother me to go demonstrate next to people whose opinions on other subjects I do not share," she said on the "Facing Christians" program organised by *La Croix* and Radio Notre-Dame.

Le Pen accused Copé of adopting her party's positions solely in order to win the contest for the presidency of the UMP, however. She said, "One cannot, as he has, insult, look down on, and reject the FN and its electors, then today act as if he is coming over to its ideas just to win an internal election."

Le Pen responded to Copé's attempt to make a neo-fascistic appeal by proposing that members of Copé's UMP join her party, calling on "UMP adherents close to our ideas to give up their membership card and join us."

The unpopular austerity policies of the PS, which is supported by the petty-bourgeois "left" parties such as the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) and the Left Front, has allowed Le Pen to posture as the sole "real opposition" to the PS inside the political establishment.

On September 4, she told BFM TV-RMC, "I am the leader of opposition to the system, because on the major choices that our country has to make, the UMP and the PS are in agreement." Her comment came shortly before the PS and the UMP ratified the European Stability and Growth Pact that is designed to impose austerity measures against the working class throughout Europe.

Le Pen can exploit social anger with her neo-fascist rhetoric because, after decades of helping sell out strikes and tying working class protests to the big-business PS, the petty-bourgeois “left” parties are simply no longer seen as oppositional tendencies by broad sections of the population. They have insisted that all working class protests be led by the union bureaucracy, which organizes impotent single-day protests while collaborating in attacks on jobs and social rights.

Although a majority of workers sensed that Hollande’s policies would be similar to those of Sarkozy during the election campaign, the petty-bourgeois “left” called for unconditional support for the Hollande ticket. While they noted that Hollande would have “social free-market” policies, they cynically claimed that he could be pushed to the “left.”

As popular opposition mounts against the Hollande administration, the bankruptcy of these petty-bourgeois parties has been exposed.

As Hollande negotiates deep social cuts with the unions aimed at boosting French corporate competitiveness, the petty-bourgeois “left” parties are virtually silent. To the extent that they propose any initiatives, it is for workers to place false hopes in the union bureaucracies—which will inevitably be disappointed, because both the unions and the petty-bourgeois “left” are hostile to a revolutionary struggle of the working class against the PS.

The absence of an independent revolutionary perspective visible to masses of working people facilitates the FN’s claims that its reactionary policies are the sole political alternative in France.

As Europe enters into a deep social and political crisis, with economic contraction and soaring unemployment, far-right tendencies are emerging throughout the continent, facilitated by the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left groups’ blocking of political struggle by the working class.

In Greece, the troika—the European Commission, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank—and Greek ruling class, with the support of the unions and the petty-bourgeois “left” such as SYRIZA, have imposed savage austerity measures on the working class.

Rising attacks on social and democratic rights have

coincided with the development of fascist tendencies, such as the Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) organisation, which has risen to 14 percent in the polls. Attacks by Golden Dawn against striking workers, immigrants, political opponents, artists and homosexuals take place virtually on a daily basis.

As the ruling class seeks to launch similar brutal attacks against workers in France, the only way forward for the working class to halt the development of the FN is to mount a revolutionary political struggle against the PS and its petty-bourgeois defenders. The international socialist perspective put forward by the International Committee of the Fourth International provides the political basis for such an offensive of the working class against the social democratic and petty-bourgeois “left” agencies of imperialism.



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