

# Far-right demonstration in Paris calls for resignation of President Hollande

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The French far-right organised a “Day of Anger” last Sunday calling for the resignation of French Socialist Party (PS) president François Hollande. Police estimated that 17,000 marched through Paris.

The *Médiapart* news site reports that the collective “had announced a movement of ‘convergence of struggles’, organised under eight different banners: taxation, education and youth, family, national identity, respect for religious convictions, free enterprise, respect for fundamental liberties.”

Many far-right groups attended the rally, including the Nationalist Revolutionary Groups; the Nationalist Front; Land and People; and Yvan Benedetti, ex-National Front and leader of Oeuvre Française, dissolved last July after the neo-fascist murder of a student, Clément Méric. There were also supporters of far-right Islamist comedian Dieudonné M’bala M’bala, who publicly associates with Holocaust deniers such as Robert Faurisson.

Neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic slogans chanted at the rally included “Israel out of Europe,” “France for the French,” and “Enough of Hollande, Work, Family, Fatherland”—the last three words of this chant being the motto of the fascist Pétain regime that collaborated with the Nazi Occupation during World War II.

The rally received various signals of sympathy from right-wing French politicians. The Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) did not call for support for the Day of Anger but its former education minister, Luc Chatel, vice-president of the party, stated: “I don’t support it but I understand it.”

Christine Boutin, a former right-wing housing minister and leader of the small Christian Democrat Party, said that she agreed with “that combination of angry people,” though she declined to attend for fear of violence.

The National Front (FN)—led by Marine Le Pen, whose father Jean-Marie infamously dismissed the Holocaust as a “detail of history”—hesitated over calling for support of the day of action. Her niece, FN deputy Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, changed her mind after her local branch had participated in the organisation of the Day of Anger demonstrations because of “the environment, the support of the pro-Dieudonné people, [and] the conflictual nature of exchanges on the Internet.”

The staging of the rally, in which the most depraved and reactionary elements posture as the only opposition to Hollande, reflects the total absence of political leadership in the working class in France. There is deep opposition in the working class, from the left, to the austerity policies and neo-colonial wars of Hollande. He has become France’s most unpopular president since 1958, when the office was created after World War II.

Under conditions in which pro-PS middle class groups like the pseudo-left New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) are widely seen as the “left” of the political spectrum, however, this opposition finds no expression. What comes to dominate are the most degraded elements of far-right politics.

In recent local by-elections, the neo-fascist FN has been outscoring the PS. Forecasts for the European elections in May give the FN the highest scores, in front of the main parliamentary parties, the PS and the conservative UMP of former president Nicolas Sarkozy.

The Day of Anger is an instance of a Europe-wide development of fascistic tendencies using chauvinism, homophobia, and Islamophobia to mask their police-state, pro-capitalist agendas in order to divide and disarm the working class. Last year, they organised

mass rallies in France against gay marriage and, on January 19, a demonstration of thousands against abortion.

The pseudo-left forces have not only suppressed working class opposition to Hollande, but promoted successive governments' wars and chauvinist policies, shifting French politics massively to the right and helping integrate the FN into the political establishment.

The French Communist Party (PCF), Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Left Party, and the NPA have supported legislation against the Islamic veil and the burqa. They and the unions gave unconditional support for the election of Hollande knowing full well that he would carry out austerity policies dictated by the European Union and the banks.

They have carried out no campaigns against Hollande's minister of the interior Manuel Valls's persecution of Roma and undocumented immigrants, massive electronic surveillance of the population, or his neo-colonial wars abroad. They made a pro forma attempt to protest the pension cut negotiated between Hollande and the union bureaucracy last year. However—as they did not oppose the measure and feared working class opposition to Hollande, and as they are widely and correctly seen as supporters of Hollande—these protests fizzled.

On Monday, the announcement of record figures of 3.3 million for the fully unemployed (10.6 percent) and 489 million for the partially unemployed, exploded Hollande's lie, constantly repeated throughout 2013, that he would reverse the rise of unemployment.

That same day, far from calling for the resignation of the PS government, the trade unions and the employers' organisations, the so-called social-partners, were meeting the prime minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, to begin negotiations on how to implement the brutal austerity measures enshrined in Hollande's Responsibility Pact of the unions with the employers, involving tax breaks of €30 billion for employers and €20 billion of cuts in social expenditure, designed to enhance the competitiveness and profits of big business at the expense of the working class.

The immediate response of the Medef employers' organisation has been, predictably, to reject any idea that firms could be obliged to take on labour and to demand the doubling of the tax breaks to €60 billion.

A January 14 ~~statement~~<sup>manifesto</sup> by the union committee—regrouping the Communist Party-dominated CGT (General Confederation of Labour) and FSU teachers' union and the PS-allied CFDT (French Democratic Confederation of Labour) and UNSA (National Union of Autonomous Unions)—called primarily for more consistent pro-business policies.

The statement called for “greater clarity and coherence in the financing and aid given to businesses to boost investment and employment...the generalisation of conditionality for aid and tax exonerations for businesses [on] the creation of jobs.”

These developments underscore that the mass opposition to Hollande's reactionary policies that exists in the working class can only find expression through a politically independent movement directed also against the PS and pseudo-left forces.



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