

French National Front threatens to burn an “ovenload” of its critics

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On Friday, June 6, Jean-Marie Le Pen, honorary president of the neo-fascist National Front (FN), verbally attacked well-known artists in an interview, one of whom is Jewish and who had criticized the FN after the European elections. He threatened them, saying: “We will make an ovenload of you next time”, alluding to the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis in crematorium ovens.

This remark, coming amid the rise of the French far right, triggered a wave of comments in French and international media. The neo-fascist party received the most votes of any party in the European elections on May 25, with 25 percent of the vote, and in the municipal elections on March 30 it took control of a dozen city councils. It had a total of 1,500 newly elected councillors.

Many of the press comments have concentrated on the problems created for the NF by Jean-Marie Le Pen’s remarks, and on the dispute that emerged between Marine Le Pen, the current FN president, and her father Jean-Marie.

Marine Le Pen carefully avoided openly condemning her father’s remarks, calling them a “political error” harmful to the FN’s new image. If some leading neo-fascists have taken their distance from Jean-Marie Le Pen’s remarks, many have voiced support for him, such as Alain Soral and his Equality and Reconciliation Association and the notorious anti-Semite humourist Dieudonné, both of whom are close to the FN.

The FN, with the active support of the parties of government, has over a number of years sought to downplay its fascist origins. It has distanced itself from openly anti-Semitic and Nazi themes, whilst the ruling class tried to give it a more “respectable” appearance. Its congress in Tours in January 2011 was supposed to mark the party’s “transformation”, with the handing of

power from father to daughter, towards a party less opposed to parliamentary democracy and capable of ruling France.

Jean-Marie Le Pen’s remark underlines that the superficial face-lift of the NF is a political smokescreen. Le Pen’s statements aim to comfort the followers of Nazi ideology within or on the periphery of the NF. This party’s development depends on the incitement of anti-Semitic and anti-democratic sentiments linked to the Holocaust and to the heritage of French fascist collaboration with the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War.

What these elements signify for the working class in the framework of the social counterrevolution pursued across Europe is visible in Greece, with the promotion of the violently pro-Nazi Golden Dawn party, and in Ukraine. There, massacres are being organised in the east of the country by the army, at the head of which are fascist elements organised in the National Guard and various private businessmen’s militias.

In the corrupt and reactionary political context which predominates across Europe today, the openly fascist remarks of Le Pen do the FN no harm. Researcher Alexandre Dézé describes the cynical division of labour between the Le Pen father and daughter: “It’s profitable for Marine Le Pen. Jean-Marie Le Pen upholds what makes the party unique, and at the same time serves to justify the strategy [of Marine Le Pen] to reform the demonized image of the party, because she poses as an opposition to her father.”

The FN’s integration into the French political establishment and media, many of whom treat Marine Le Pen as potentially France’s next president, is a warning to the working class. It testifies to the rapid evolution of the whole of the capitalist class towards the far right.

Outside a tiny minority, the French people are profoundly hostile to the crimes of European fascism. The FN is gaining influence only because it can posture as the only party of opposition to a brutal austerity program of the Socialist Party, supported by the reactionary pseudo-left parties, such as the New Anti-capitalist Party. These forces show each day their hatred for the working class by imposing the austerity measures decided by the bourgeoisie.

Faced with the ruthless will of the bourgeois “left” to destroy workers’ living standards and pursue unpopular neo-colonial wars, the FN has been able to get elected with significant support among workers and youth. That is also the result of decades of efforts by the Stalinists, Social Democrats and the pseudo-left to oppose socialist consciousness in the working class. Many workers voted FN in the absence of a visible alternative, and in the illusory hope of “pushing for a change” in official politics.

A particular responsibility falls to the pseudo-left. It is intimately tied to the unions, Social Democrats and Stalinists, doing everything possible to defend the government against an independent movement of the working class. This is the role of the NPA. After supporting the fascist putsch in Ukraine in March, the NPA promoted the May Day rallies organized by the unions, which all support President François Hollande.

This is also the case with Workers Fight (LO), which also supported the fascist putsch in Ukraine in February. In an article on the FN dated June 9, LO builds a demagogic “argument” purporting to show that youth and workers voted for the FN because they had illusions in a bourgeois parliament—illusions peddled by the Social Democrats and Stalinists—whilst elections only finish up producing “political wheeling and dealing”. LO insists therefore that workers and youth should defend “their interests by using their own means.”

According to LO, it is impossible to fight for socialist politics and principles in a bourgeois election. Rather it is necessary to concentrate only on strikes and demonstrations; that is, not to lead a political struggle against the government, but to march hand in hand with the reactionary program of the unions.

LO has already shown in practise what it proposes to youth and workers: an alliance with the unions and government. In the municipal elections of 2008, it

participated in joint slates of candidates with the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and Socialist Party (PS) in 70 towns: 38 lists were headed by the PCF and 26 by the PS.

LO also subsequently expelled those members who refused to accept this position. In the second round of the presidential election in 2012, it supported the election of François Hollande (PS). Its “collective struggle” with the CGT union led at Aulnay-sous-Bois to the closure of the PSA car plant.

Faced with the pernicious effects of its own politics, LO tries to cover its tracks and wants to maintain the possibility of pursuing its support for the union bureaucracy and the government, who are responsible for the rise of the NF, and to block any political fight by the working class for a socialist perspective against the rise of the far right.



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