

At Lyon congress, French National Front prepares itself as party of capitalist rule

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The neo-fascist National Front (FN) held its congress in Lyons on November 29-30, the first since the Tours congress in 2011, where it inaugurated its policy of “de-demonizing” itself under the leadership of Marine Le Pen. With the two traditional French bourgeois parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and the Gaullist Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), in open crisis, the neo-fascists are putting themselves forward as a viable party of capitalist rule.

Amid rising, generalized discontent with the French political establishment, the FN has made considerable gains, notably this year in the municipal European elections and, lastly, the elections to the Senate. It won two deputies to the National Assembly, the control of a dozen towns and, for the first time, two senators. In the European elections, it came top out of all the parties.

The FN's advance can be explained, above all, by the total and open bankruptcy of the French political establishment—particularly of pseudo-left parties such as the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) which provide the PS President François Hollande's administration with political cover and seek to block the working class from carrying out a political struggle against the PS.

In the weeks before the congress, the FN had the benefit of a real promotion campaign in the media. Many outlets presented it as the future winner of the 2017 presidential election. In the 2002 presidential election, the media were still backing Chirac against the former FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had made the run-off.

Over the last decade, however, the bourgeois parties, including the PS, have systematically adopted far-right policies. At present, according to the business daily *Les Echos*, “in the leadership of the PS as well as the UMP, the hypothesis of her [Marine Le Pen's] presence on the second round is now already built into their

strategies for the presidential election and even appears to be considered the only certainty of this election.”

The main aim of the FN congress, under the banner of “The March to the 2017 presidential elections,” was to present the FN as France's main capitalist party of rule.

Like France's other political parties, the FN is preparing brutal repression of mass opposition, especially in working class suburbs, to the financial aristocracy's hated policies of austerity and war. In his opening speech to the congress, Jean-Marie Le Pen, Marine's father and the FN's president emeritus, described the “tasks still to be accomplished” by his party. He warned “against mass immigration. We are only at the start of the beginning.” He predicted that “torrents of migrants” would flood France and foresaw “a submersion of the country and a growth of urban terrorism.” He got a standing ovation.

The mention of “urban terrorism” in the context of the PS' current and bloody repression of protests against police violence, foreshadows the application at home of “anti-terrorist” methods previously used abroad. These measures are more and more openly prepared by the ruling class, and that is why it is promoting the FN so aggressively.

The neo-fascist leadership openly acknowledges that they are being boosted, above all, by the policies of the rest of the political establishment. A member of Marine Le Pen's entourage told *Libération*: “Without doing anything, we are at the center of the political life.”

Asked about political differences which arose inside the FN leadership in the run-up to the congress, FN spokespersons denied there was any internal conflict on questions of program. They insisted on presenting the picture of a united party and announced that there would be no discussion of programmatic questions at the congress.

The bringing into the FN's leadership, elements like Interior Ministry official Florian Philippot, a supporter of ex-PS member Jean-Pierre Chevènement, has not changed the FN's character, though there were visible tensions before the congress. In the election to the FN central committee, Jean-Marie Le Pen's granddaughter, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, a more openly far right figure received the largest amount of votes. Philippot only came fourth.

The FN sent other signals to the bourgeoisie as well. In her introductory remarks to the congress, Marine Le Pen declared: "Our Europe goes from the Atlantic to the Urals, not from Brussels to Washington." This consciously hearkened back to De Gaulle's formulation during the post-World War II era against the United States and for a rapprochement with the Soviet bureaucracy.

Behind the formulation, "a new cooperation between nations," the FN advocates the domination of continental Europe by French imperialism. While De Gaulle's formulation entailed close collaboration with West Germany, Le Pen's implies a conflict with a reunified Germany.

The list of the FN's international guests included several far left European parties: the virulent Dutch anti-Muslim Geerd Wilders, Matteo Salvini of the Italian Lega Nord, Hans-Christian Strache of the Austrian neo-fascist SPÖ party, Philip Cleys, the president of the far right Flemish party Vlaams Belang, Jiri Janecek of the Czech Ok Strana party and Krasimir Karakachanov of the Bulgarian nationalist VMRO party.

Above all, the FN displayed its close ties to the ruling Russian oligarchy. The vice president of the Duma and member of Putin's United Russia party, Andreï Isaïev, spoke to the congress. *Le Monde* wrote: "Addressing the audience in Russian, he voiced a thundering 'dear comrades' to a hall which gave him a standing ovation. Recalling the 'historic friendship' between France and Russia, Mr Isaïev criticised the 'faceless bureaucrats of the European Union, puppets of the United States.'" Also present at the congress was Andreï Klimov, vice-president of the commission for foreign affairs of the Council of the Federation, the upper house (Senate) of the Russian parliament.

Before the congress, the *Mediapart* news site had revealed the existence of a €40 million loan to the FN by a Russian bank, of which €9 million has already

been transferred and that the FN justifies by citing the need for financing of its "march to the presidential election," which French and European banks, they claim, have refused to grant.

The press has reported numerous trips by FN leaders to Russia. Aymeric Chauprade, Marine Le Pen's foreign affairs advisor, was once again in Moscow on November 25, for a round table organised by the president of the Russian Parliament, Sergueï Narychkine, on the theme "How to overcome the crisis of confidence with Europe."

The FN president reportedly traveled to Moscow in June 2013, February 2014, and April 2014. According to FN officials interviewed by *Mediapart*, she met with Vladimir Putin.

In order to broaden its electoral base, the FN is attempting to ensure the electoral support of other 'sovereignist' or Euro-sceptic movements like those of former Chevènement, former Gaullist minister Philippe Seguin, the sovereignist Philippe de Villiers and the former right-wing minister of Jacques Chirac, Charles Pasqua.

It is the abject abandonment of the working class over the decades since May-June 1968 by the pseudo-left and its systematic attack on Marxism and a revolutionary socialist political perspective which is responsible for the situation where such a reactionary party can grow.



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