

French neo-fascist National Front defends CIA torture

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The defense of CIA torture by Marine Le Pen, the president of France's neo-fascist National Front and 2017 French presidential hopeful, testifies to the bankruptcy and criminality of Europe's political establishment.

Asked about the US Senate's torture report on BFM-TV, she said the United States should stop "giving morality lessons to the whole world," but defended the CIA: "I am not going to condemn this ... On such subjects, it is pretty easy to come on television and say 'Oh my God, that's awful.'"

Asked if one could use torture, she replied: "Yes, yes, of course, it has been used historically. I think people who take care of terrorists and therefore of getting information out of them that saves civilian lives are responsible people."

She proceeded to accept the rationalizations for torture given by defenders of the "war on terror" in the United States: "There can be cases, let me tell you, where tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, a bomb is going to explode in an hour or two and will thus claim 200 or 300 civilian victims, where it is useful to make the person talk." Asked if this meant making people talk through torture, she said, "Through the means one has."

One of her top advisers, Gilbert Collard, echoed her remarks on i-Télé: "It is true that torture can only be an ultimate recourse to save lives. Torture for torture's sake is horrible, but there is a type of cowardice which consists of saying, 'Too bad if innocent people die as long as my hands are clean.' If I have to brutalize someone to save twenty, or ten, or two, or one life, I will do it, admittedly with disgust, but it is a courageous choice."

Such comments inevitably recall the following defense of torture: "I used torture because it was

necessary. When someone has been brought to you who has just hidden twenty bombs that can explode from one minute to the next and he does not want to talk, one must use exceptional means to force him. It is the person who refuses these means who is a criminal, as his hands are covered with the blood of dozens of victims whose death could have been avoided."

These words appeared in *Combat's* 1962 interview with Marine's father Jean-Marie Le Pen, a lieutenant and intelligence officer of the Foreign Legion's 1st Parachute Regiment, which had been involved in France's mass torture of Algerians during Algeria's 1954-1962 war for independence. He then became FN president from 1972 to 2011, when Marine took over the post.

He later retracted his remarks to *Combat* and, relying on France's official refusal to recognize that it used torture in Algeria, sued those who accused him of torture for defamation. He won cases against *Libération* in 1986 and 1988, and the *Canard enchaîné* in 1989. He lost a case against *Le Monde* in 2005, however, when *Le Monde* produced a Hitler Youth-style knife bearing Le Pen's name, that he left in 1957 at the house in Algiers where Le Pen's unit tortured and shot Ahmed Moulay in front of his wife and six children.

The FN's decision to overlook its anti-American rhetoric and leap to the defense of CIA torture speaks volumes both about the "war on terror" and the FN's violently reactionary politics, which belie Marine Le Pen's efforts to distance the FN from her father's image as a Holocaust-denying torturer.

As revelations emerge of a global network of CIA secret prisons and torture sites spanning dozens of European countries, however, it would be absurd to claim that torture implicates only the FN.

Attempts by the FN's factional opponents to use Le

Pen's remarks to boost their position reek of hypocrisy.

Thus Bruno Le Roux, the leader of the ruling Socialist Party's (PS) fraction in the National Assembly, said, "The *gégène* [electrical generator used to torture Algerians during the war] is in the genes of Le Pen. For her it's very, very normal," adding, "Her outburst this morning, saying that sometimes you have to make people talk, it was daddy's *gégène* coming back onto the scene."

If industrial-scale torture is on the scene, this is because of the support given to the CIA and the "war on terror" by all the factions of the European capitalist class—including social democrats and their pseudo-left allies like France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). The PS government and the NPA have maintained a deafening silence on the CIA torture report.

Since France rejoined NATO's integrated command in 2009, they aligned themselves on a policy of global, neocolonial war. The PS and the NPA both applauded NATO's 2011 war in Libya and its proxy war in Syria, based on collaboration with Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias, as revolutions for freedom. They then backed NATO's ongoing intervention in Ukraine, supporting February's fascist-led putsch in Kiev.

Just before the Kiev putsch, French President François Hollande made a state visit to Washington, cosigning a joint editorial with President Barack Obama that declared: "We are sovereign and independent nations that make our decisions based on our respective national interests. Yet we have been able to take our alliance to a new level because our interests and values are so closely aligned."

The US Senate Intelligence Committee's admission that the CIA used torture on a massive, international scale points to the barbaric character of the "values" shared by US and European imperialism. It also highlights the shift to the right in French bourgeois politics that underlay both collaboration with CIA torture and the FN's electoral rise over the last decade.

The issue of torture brought an earlier generation face to face with the unresolved legacy of fascist rule in Europe. Torture in Algeria overseen by far-right officers like Le Pen and the 1961 massacre of Algerian protesters by police under Paris police chief Maurice Papon, a former official of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime who played a key role in the Holocaust, shocked masses of people. The name of Guy Mollet,

the hated social-democratic premier during the most intensive use of torture in the Algerian war, became a byword for betrayal of principle.

Masses of workers and students were radicalized before the 1968 general strike by their hostility to the Algerian war and to the Stalinist French Communist Party's (PCF) decision to seek an alliance with Mollet and vote him emergency powers in Algeria. If a neo-fascist party can reemerge as a leading contender for power in France today, it is due to mass rage and disillusionment with the role of the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left in disorienting this mass opposition in the post-1968 period.

Pierre Lambert's Internationalist Communist Organization (OCI) broke with Trotskyism and the ICFI, joining petty-bourgeois groups like the Pabloite forebears of the NPA in tying workers to the social democrats. The latter rebranded themselves as the PS, led by François Mitterrand, a former Vichy regime official and Mollet government minister. The PS and the pseudo-left have worked together for decades, since Mitterrand was elected president in 1981, to impose wars and austerity measures and block opposition in the working class.

Torture in the "war on terror" defended by Hollande's now-discredited PS and the FN is confronting new generations of workers and youth with the bloody legacy of imperialism and fascism. The defense of democratic rights against torture and police state measures promoted by the entire political establishment cannot be left to any faction of the bourgeoisie. It can only be accomplished through the revolutionary mobilization of the working class in an international struggle against capitalism in Europe.



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