

French neo-fascists committed street crimes to stoke insecurity and fear

Kanda Gabriel
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Adrien Desport, a 25-year-old former member of the neo-fascist National Front (FN), and five other FN militants aged 19 to 25, face charges of torching cars on the night of April 8-9 in the Paris suburb of Mitry-Mory in the Seine-et-Marne district. They have also been accused of damaging private property and falsely reporting a crime.

Desport and other FN militants have acknowledged the wrongdoing. Deputy prosecutor Emmanuel Dupic said, “Adrien Desport seems to be the leader of the gang. The charges are serious, there were numerous victims. And they endanger democracy, according to which one must go through the ballot box to defend one’s ideas, not street raids.”

The FN militants used their own criminal activity to boost FN’s law-and-order campaign on insecurity and to blame impoverished immigrant youths for suburban riots. According to police sources, “They organized drinking parties with cocaine and then carried out punitive expeditions to stoke fears of insecurity and win votes for the FN.”

Desport was also charged with making false complaints to police on March 28, when he claimed that he was attacked with tear gas while putting up campaign posters in Châtelet-en-Brie ahead of local elections. “They gassed themselves to make people believe there was an attack,” said the police source.

At the time, Desport reported the fabricated event on his blog, complaining of the “indifference of the media and of certain elected officials.”

During a police search at Desport’s house, *Le Parisien* reported, “investigators found a police flashlight, a rubber-bullet pistol declared at local police headquarters, tear gas grenades, and a pair of handcuffs.”

Police investigated the matter for two weeks after an

FN activist filed a complaint denouncing the actions of some of his colleagues in Seine-et-Marne at the end of May. On June 9, police arrested the FN members, including Desport. Desport has been placed in police custody, while the other FN militants were placed under judicial supervision until a trial which will begin July 15.

A few days after torching the cars, Desport reported the incident on his blog, condemning the arson, in order to fuel FN’s hysterical law-and-order campaign. On April 11, he published an open letter to the inhabitants of Mitry-Mory denouncing “increasingly pervasive” criminality and the “sense of insecurity” in the city.

Desport wrote that the FN “has proposed for years maintaining police services in Mitry-Mory, which has lost its police station; the installation of security cameras in dangerous zones in the city, which everyone is aware of; the creation of an armed municipal police to eliminate the feeling of insecurity that affects our citizens. We must have personnel and material resources, not subsidies for a few NGOs. Security is for everyone.”

Desport joined the FN in 2009, at the age of 15. He was the FN candidate in the 2011 cantonal election in the Paris area. Between 2013 and 2014, he was appointed FN deputy secretary and press attaché in the Seine-et-Marne region. In 2014, he was awarded with the medal of honor by the FN’s current national leader, Marine Le Pen.

Since the incident, the FN has distanced itself from Desport. FN official Nathalie Pigeot told VICE News that Desport and his associates had been “suspended from the party,” adding that she expected them to be expelled permanently.

In line with moves in the French ruling elite to present the FN as a “normal” party, official media and

parties—from the ruling Socialist Party (PS) to the right-wing The Republicans (LR), as well as pseudo-left allies of the PS such as the New Anti-capitalist Party—largely glossed over or dismissed the incident.

Reporting on the incident, *Le Monde* sought to downplay Desport's significance, writing that he "is not an elected official and never was. The young militant does not have a top position in the FN, which he joined in 2011. He was only a deputy regional secretary, for a time, of the Seine-et-Marne region, ... This citizen of Mitry-Mory saw himself as a leading political figure, however. A few burned cars and a simulated assault could stymie this plan, which was already not off to a good start."

The FN members' criminal offenses raise an obvious question: what was the social atmosphere in which deceit and petty crime could serve to advance a political agenda? This is bound up with the turn of all France's capitalist parties, from the mainstream PS and LR to the pseudo-left parties, to support police repression and law-and-order hysteria. They used these policies as a way of diverting social anger over austerity, while strengthening police powers to monitor and repress rising social anger in the working class.

During his presidency, former UMP President Nicolas Sarkozy championed law-and-order sentiment, appealing to neo-fascist voters. After coming to power in 2012, the PS government of President François Hollande largely took over these policies, poisoning the political atmosphere and making militaristic and law-and-order appeals to FN voters.

While destroying the living standards of the working class, Hollande's government is stoking up pro-FN sentiment, including expelling undocumented immigrants and rounding up and deporting members of the Roma community. At the same time, it constantly advocates reactionary security measures, including broadening the use of surveillance cameras and drones in cities. Recently, the PS adopted a surveillance law allowing the police and the intelligence services to spy on the entire population.

All these measures were based on the hyping of manufactured statistics, lies and the targeting of vulnerable populations. Under these conditions, no one in the political establishment wanted to examine the social roots of Desport's attempt, on a somewhat smaller scale, to stoke law-and-order hysteria based on

faked reports of street crime.



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