

French presidential candidate Le Pen threatens Germany and Algeria

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On April 13, the National Rally's Marine Le Pen laid out an aggressive foreign policy at a public meeting in Paris. The neo-fascist candidate for the French presidency called to end cooperation with Germany and to refuse visas for Algerians, while threatening Muslims in France with violent police repression.

The Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) in France has called on workers and young people to mobilize to actively boycott the second round of the presidential elections between Le Pen and incumbent president Emmanuel Macron. Given the reactionary character of both candidates, the only way forward is to reject them both and build an independent movement among workers and youth against the next government. The PES bases this opposition on Marxist internationalism and the struggle for international working class unity.

Le Pen's bellicose remarks vindicate the policy proposed by the PES to workers and youth in the elections. Macron supports a reckless NATO policy threatening Russia with war, after Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. This gives Le Pen the opportunity to criticize Macron and to pose as a less bellicose figure than the incumbent; however, this is only false and demagogic posturing.

On the one hand, Le Pen hinted that she would seek a less aggressive policy towards Russia and also China, which currently serves as Russia's main international ally. "As soon as the Russian-Ukrainian war is over," Le Pen said, she would call for "a strategic rapprochement between NATO and Russia."

On China, she also criticized US foreign policy as "too aggressive towards Beijing." Washington, she continued, "needs enemies in order to bind its allies under its domination." She claimed that, if elected, France would pursue "relations with Beijing as equals."

These statements aim to put Macron on the spot and

to complement her populist demagoguery through the presentation of a military policy less reckless than the current president's. Indeed, masses of workers know that the Soviet Union played the main role in liberating France from Nazi occupation. Media criticisms of Le Pen which call for Paris to join Washington and Berlin in an all-out confrontation with Russia provoke broad popular distrust and disquiet.

But Le Pen's foreign policy is not a policy of peace, any more than her promise to return to the 60-year-old retirement age stands for a policy of social equality. Le Pen simply proposes to target other enemies, notably Germany, the main power in the European Union (EU), and Algeria, the former French colony that won its independence in a heroic struggle in a bloody colonial war in 1954-1962.

Le Pen began by fiercely criticizing Germany as an incorrigible obstacle to the military and energy interests of French imperialism.

"Germany is asserting itself as the absolute negative of the French strategic identity," Le Pen said. She added that "irreconcilable strategic differences" separate Paris and Berlin, adding: "I will not let Germany destroy our nuclear energy."

Le Pen proposed to break with Berlin, while Macron has stepped up cooperation with Berlin, trying to turn the EU into an aggressive military power. "We will stop all cooperation with Berlin, [including] French support for Germany's claim to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council," she said. She accused Berlin of not cooperating with Paris on military projects, such as a new European fighter jet or tank.

The arming of Europe against Russia and China, accompanied in Berlin by attempts by the ruling elite to legitimise the memory of the Nazis, is deeply reactionary. But the attempts to construct an

independent policy by various representatives of French imperialism, such as Le Pen, are not a progressive alternative. Le Pen opposes Macron not because she rejects militarism or a world war but because she has a different target list.

Le Pen does not rely like Hitler or the 20th century fascists on a mass movement of fascist paramilitary militias based in the petty bourgeoisie. Such movements do not exist for now, and masses of workers and young people are moving to the left. But her electoral politics put forward an ultra-authoritarian policy for the current police-state machine, based on the traditions of the 20th century French far right.

Her threats against Germany reflect the enormous military tensions that are rising within NATO and the European Union amid the threat of war with Russia. She bases her line on substantial sections of the French ruling elite, in the top brass and defence industry. She also echoes the fascist parties which, before collaborating with the Nazis, distinguished themselves between 1870 and 1940 by their Germanophobia, anti-Marxism and anti-Semitism.

Le Pen appealed to the thousands of officers, both retired and active-duty, who signed calls for a coup in the neo-fascist magazine *Current Values*. These calls were made by anti-vaccination generals hostile to a scientific fight against COVID-19 and favorable to the failed putsch of April 21, 1961 against Algerian independence. Around them, a large group of officers threatened last year to intervene militarily inside France.

Macron has been silent about these threats, while Unsubmissive France (LFI) candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon only called on Macron to control his generals. In the presidential campaign, no candidate warned of the threats the army poses to the French people or to countries it occupies in Africa. But preparations for imperialist war abroad clearly go hand in hand with preparations for class war at home.

After this year's withdrawal of French troops from Mali amid mass demonstrations against the French presence, Le Pen is putting forward an aggressive policy in Africa also intended to justify repression of Arab and African immigrants within France.

Le Pen threatened to expel any Algerian who did not obey French "customs" and laws. She said, "Algerians who already live in France and behave according to

French law, respect our customs and love France, have no reason not to stay. The others, admittedly a minority, will have to leave."

She also called for "clear and unabashed" dialogue with Algeria, in which Paris would acknowledge without apology its imperialist crimes, like resort to mass murder, torture and internment in concentration camps during the Algerian war. She said: "Acknowledging the past, its glorious elements and its darker areas, does not mean repentance. I want to establish friendly relations with the Algerian people."

She also threatened to block Algerian nationals' travel to France, though millions of French people of Algerian origin host their relatives in France and want to travel to Algeria. She proposed to "condition any new visa granting to Algerian nationals, any authorization of fund transfers, any acquisition of property in France by Algerian dignitaries to the readmission by the Algerian consulate in France" of Algerians deemed "undesirable" and expelled by France.

The fact that the bulk of media criticism of Le Pen's agenda focuses on her less aggressive policy towards Russia underscores the reactionary evolution of the entire French ruling class. An anti-vax pandemic policy, neo-colonial wars in Africa and the threat of military intervention within France itself are unanimously supported by the ruling elite, including in Macron's circles.

As the PES explains in its boycott call, this shows the necessity to build a movement among workers and youth against both Le Pen and Macron. As part of this struggle, the PES will intensify its common struggle with its German comrades in the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, who are fighting German rearmament and the legitimization of fascist militarism. In its struggle against imperialist war and military repression, the PES follows the Marxist axiom that the struggle against imperialism begins with opposing the imperialism of one's own country.



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