

French neo-fascists, New Popular Front hold rival rallies after electoral ban on Le Pen

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On Sunday, two rival demonstrations took place in Paris, for and against the court ruling targeting the neo-fascist Rassemblement National (RN), which prevents its candidate Marine Le Pen from standing in the 2027 presidential elections.

A few thousand people turned out at the RN's call at the pro-Le Pen rally on the Place Vauban, not far from the Eiffel Tower.

At the call of parties in Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP), some 15,000 people demonstrated against Le Pen on République Square. WSWS journalists interviewed demonstrators at République Square and distributed a statement of the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (Socialist Equality Party-PES), "No to Macron and Le Pen! Mobilize the working class against fascism and war!"

The demonstration highlighted the NFP's bankruptcy in terms of fighting the far right. None of the speakers called for mobilizing the working class in struggle against the fascist danger that is rapidly rising in France and Europe, but also with Trump's presidency in the USA. Millions of French people vote RN out of bitterness against the austerity policies of the NFP parties. However, the speakers had nothing to say to workers who are Le Pen voters and who are now angry at a ruling on embezzlement charges on which judges have pardoned other parties.

The speakers were also silent on the protests by millions of workers and youth on Saturday against Trump. Explosive anger is brewing in the American working class against illegal deportations that are multiplying in the USA, and the trade war that Trump is launching against the world, which threatens to devastate working class living standards internationally. The NFP speakers, meanwhile, were entirely focused on a national perspective of support for the Macron government and its ruling against Le Pen.

Manuel Bompard, national coordinator of Melenchon's La France insoumise (LFI) party, attacked the RN as a threat to the French state. He accused the RN of showing its "true face" by demonstrating against the court ruling, that of a party that is "dangerous for democracy and for the rule of law ... It's a violent party that threatens even judges when decisions taken by the courts don't suit them."

Green Party leader Marine Tondelier denounced the RN rally as "in reality in opposition to justice and contrary to the rule of law," adding: "As one man, of one woman, we must be there, as we are every time the Republic is attacked."

Such statements, which are silent on the RN's support for French imperialist wars, police repression and austerity, end up blocking awareness of the very real dangers posed by neo-fascism in France and internationally. As the RN demonstration took place without violence, charges that its demonstration is violent end up sounding like unfounded fears by the NFP that is, in reality, the defender of order.

Indeed, the social-democratic PS and Stalinist PCF, the traditional parties of capitalist government in the NFP, tacitly admitted as much to justify their decision not to join the demonstration. PS First Secretary Olivier Faure said they weren't coming to avoid "giving Marine Le Pen a pretext to say: 'On the one hand you have the left defending magistrates, and on the other the right and far right distrusting them.'"

The WSWS interviewed Mathieu Dubois, secretary of the Stalinist Communist Youth (JC) in the Paris region, who echoed Bompard's arguments. "For once a court ruling is applied against [the RN], they decide to discredit it. Today, we're here to defend the Republic, its institutions and the rule of law," he said. "Talk of a cartel of judges, of red judges, is infusing society, with a very clear influence, which is American by the way, on this."

When the WSWS asked how, over the last 50 years, the PCF has lost the working-class electorate, large parts of which now vote for the RN, Dubois replied: “There has been a very violent increase in the class violence of the bosses. Workers have been isolated, union repression has increased, factories have been relocated, public services have declined, because the state has come to the rescue of the bosses.”

This answer passes over in silence the role of French Stalinism and its alliance with the PS, which has been a linchpin of the bourgeoisie’s social attacks on workers. When the WSWS asked what the PCF’s assessment was of its austerity policies since the 1982 “austerity turn” of Mitterrand’s PS-PCF government, the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR in 1991, and the wars of successive PS-PCF-Green governments, Dubois replied: “The assessment is that we’re in a period of strengthening. We have a significant number of new members.”

In reality, the NFP organizations have no ambition to build a mass movement, or even a large electoral party, in the working class. They are empty bureaucratic shells, whose role is above all to prevent working-class opposition from overflowing to their left. A class gulf separates the feelings of workers and youth from their defense of state institutions.

The WSWS interviewed a group of youth, including Jibril and Sarah, at the demonstration. Jibril said he hoped the ban on Le Pen would mean he would no longer hear the argument that he should vote for Macron in order to keep Marine Le Pen from getting elected. “She always wins, we must always block her,” he said. “In the last two elections, we had to block her and vote for Macron. I don’t want Macron to hold his country in check, and neither does Marine Le Pen.”

The WSWS explained that the PES sought to mobilize the working class against the poisoned choice between Le Pen and Macron, through an active boycott of the second round of the presidential elections, fighting to build a movement in the working class against whichever candidate won. Jibril indicated that he does not think that Macron defends democracy against Le Pen.

He said, “When Elisabeth Borne was prime minister, she organized about 50 invocations of Article 49-3 [to impose austerity measures without a parliamentary vote] in a year or two... Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is complicated. But still, there have been, there are continuing strikes by Ukraine since 2014. And I don’t think it’s up to France to fix the context that there is

there.”

On Macron’s call for French military intervention in Ukraine, Jibril added: “He actually treats wars differently based on ethnicity. Putin has never been his political ally. And so Macron can maneuver to get in a very good position from the point of view of those French people who think... that Macron is the Good Samaritan who is coming to help an oppressed people. But that’s not true.”

Jibril emphasized the solidarity of youth in France with anti-Trump protests in the United States: “First of all, it’s important to clearly show that the people don’t accept what’s happening, to show that they want change, that they want things to change. I support the demonstrations.”

He added, “About the expulsions [by US immigration authorities of students who speak out against the genocide in Gaza], I’m completely against it. They have the right to express their opinion, especially about what’s happening. It’s very important not to let that pass.”

Sarah denounced the genocide in Gaza, adding: “That doesn’t mean we’re anti-Semitic or against the Israelis. We’re against the State of Israel and against what [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu and his state are doing, in fact. And we’re against countries like France that welcome Netanyahu.”

There is deep opposition among youth and workers to the policies of the PS, Macron, and Le Pen. The decisive question now is to arm the movement with a clear perspective to mobilize the working class independently of the NFP and its allies in the trade union bureaucracies, form their own independent organizations of struggle, and connect them to the emerging movement in the international working class against fascism and war.



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