France : workers and youth should organise to stop fascist attacks !

Marc Lasalle, Paris Tue, 11/06/2013 - 06:57
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Clément Méric, 18, member of the Action Antifasciste Paris-Banlieue (a group linked to anarchism) was killed by a fascist gang in the centre of Paris, on June 6. The news has shocked the radical left in France. The next day, rallies were organised in dozens of cities and towns, including one with a thousand people in Paris. On June 8, a 10,000 strong demo in his memory marched in Paris chanting "No pasaran!"

Shocking as this fascist murder is, it is not an isolated act. Since last autumn, the workers' movement has made only small and sporadic appearances on the streets. While President François Hollande and his Socialist Party government keep attacking the workers, the youth and the immigrants, there has been little response from the trades unions and left parties. A major attack against workers' rights went through with just symbolic opposition from the biggest confederation, the CGT, and was actually signed by the CFDT, the other main confederation.

The Aulnay workers, on strike for several months to defend their Peugeot car factory in the northern suburbs of Paris, recently decided to abandon their action. They had to fight in almost complete isolation, with little support from other factories and especially from CGT. As usual, when the reformist left-wing comes to power, they can count on their many allies and friends in the union leadership to stifle resistance against the government and, especially, to stop any nation-wide protest mobilisations.

For several months, an utterly reactionary coalition, including the right wing party UMP, and with the strong support of the catholic church, has taken to the streets against the ?marriage pour tous?, the reform allowing same-sex couples to marry. Some of these demos called several hundred thousand people onto the streets. While most of these were middle class catholic families, these demos also galvanised the forces of many reactionaries and fascist groups, including Bloc Identitaire, Civitas (catholic fascist) and Jeunesse Nationaliste Révolutionnaire, the group responsible for the murder of Clément.

The leadership of this reactionary bloc dreamed of toppling the government, by organising a ?Printemps Français?, a French spring. Stealing slogans and chants from the workers' movement, these groups wanted to embody also a ?social? opposition to the government. Clearly, all this infused them with a renewed energy. In the first months of this year, homophobic attacks increased by 30%, targeting individuals and gay bars. Nevertheless, neither the left parties, nor the trades unions, nor the radical left took any initiative for an organised reaction to stop all this.

For several years, the votes for the racist and reactionary Front National have been steadily increasing. The ideas of this party are also spreading into new layers of society, especially in the rural areas most harshly hit by the crisis. While the FN has not appeared openly on the recent right wing demos, it certainly is the political party that could gain from the current events.
Unfortunately, the Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA) has been something of a passive onlooker of this mounting danger. The ritual formula in the speeches of its leaders — we are in a race with the FN — has not been translated into any political strategy or concrete action against the fascist groups or FN.

The NPA statement on the fascist killing says, ‘The death of Clément is a warning. We need to act all together with the largest unity to denounce those responsible, to mobilise to fight back and to stop them from being able to cause damage.’

Indeed. The NPA and the French workers’ movement needs to react quickly and launch an antifascist/antiracist movement to stop these groups and racist parties. United defence groups should be created to protect demos, immigrant areas, gays and lesbians against attacks by fascist and by the police. The goal should be to halt any fascist demos, to stop them from spreading their racist and homophobic lies.

The crisis of European capitalism produces the terrain for the growth of fascist groups, such as Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary or the EDL in England. It is vital for the European workers to coordinate against the attacks of the bourgeoisie but also to build strong internationalist links to put a stop to nationalist and racist demagogy.

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