

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article790>



Europe

French referendum crunch nears

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Monday 23 May 2005

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

With just one week to go before the crucial referendum vote on the European Constitution, it's too close to call. Polls are showing sometimes the "No" ahead, sometimes the "Yes". That in itself is a setback for the "Yes" campaign.

All the accumulated forces of the French establishment - the media, the employers' organizations, the two main right-wing parties and the leaderships of the Socialist Party and the Greens - haven't been able to turn the tide. And what has emerged more and more clearly as the campaign has unfolded is that it's the "No from the left" that is making the running.

The chauvinist, reactionary, anti-European and anti-Turkish campaign of the far Right is still there but it hasn't made much impact on the campaign. The "No from the left" is a No that is resolutely European but that wants a Europe that is everything the projected Constitution is not - social, democratic, feminist, ecologist, anti-war, internationalist.

The cutting edge of the "No from the left" is the united front campaign launched at the start of the campaign by the "Appeal of the 200". The campaign involves, among others, the Communist Party, the LCR, Socialists and Greens opposed to the line of their party leaderships, trade unionists and global justice campaigners.

The number of local campaign collectives has multiplied so fast it's hard to keep up with it, but it's now not far from the thousand mark. In the last couple of weeks there have been meetings of 6,000 in Toulouse, 3,000 in Rouen, 2,000 in Clermont Ferrand.

Meetings in smaller towns and cities have seen up to 1,000 attending and in the working-class areas of Paris and its suburbs meetings of several hundred are common. Meetings are even taking place in the smallest villages. And as the campaign has unfolded, it has been reinforced by, and has in its turn reinforced, the wave of struggles that has unfolded since the start of this year.

On Saturday 21st May thousands gathered in the Place de la République, one of Paris's main squares, for a concert-cum-meeting. They were addressed by speakers who reflected the breadth of the campaign: from the political parties there were among others CP national secretary Mare-George Buffet, Olivier Besancenot for the LCR, leading Socialists such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Gérard Filoche and Francine Bavay from the Greens.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/NOally.jpg>]

But also speaking from the platform were peasant leader José Bové, Yves Salesses of the Fondation Copernic, a left-wing think tank that helped to launch the campaign, veteran feminist campaigner Gisèle Halimi and representatives of ATTAC, the CGT rail workers, the radical trade union federation Solidaires and the main teachers union, the FSU.

Messages were read out from supporters on other countries, among them dissident SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine from Germany and British rail workers' leader Bob Crow.

So with one week to go there's everything to play for and the "No" can win. And whatever happens, there is a widespread feeling among those involved in the "No from the left" campaign that something has changed in French politics.

French referendum crunch nears

The campaign has got people talking and thinking about politics more than most normal election campaigns do. That, and the unity that has been forged over the last six months will not just disappear the day after the vote. Particularly if the “No” is victorious, but even if the “Yes” scrapes home, new perspectives can open up for the Left that refuses the neo-liberal agenda.