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French left

LCR back with a bang

- News from around the world -

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September is the time of the "rentrée" in France - the "coming back" when political life starts up again after the summer break. Though, this year more than most, the shock waves of the May 29th referendum have meant that the summer was not so quiet. Every political organisation or current worth its salt holds a summer university, usually at the end of August or the beginning of September, to prepare for the coming year.

The LCR (French section of the FI) was no exception. It held its 14th summer university at Port-Leucate at the end of August. Nearly 800 people attended, 40 per cent of whom were not (or not yet) members of the LCR.

[<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L292xH198/ob1-5a148.jpg>]

Coming in the wake of the referendum campaign, in which the LCR and its main spokesperson, Olivier Besancenot, played a key role, the media were out in force. What mainly interested them was the debate on perspectives after the referendum victory.

The summer university and the debate received wide coverage on television, radio and the press. It also attracted more than 1,000 people, some of whom had come specially for it. The LCR had invited a whole range of speakers from the "No from the left" campaign - among others Marie-George Buffet (national secretary of the Communist Party), Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the "For a Social Republic" tendency in the Socialist party, peasant leader José Bové and Annick Coupé of the Solidaires trade union federation (SUD unions).

The debate ranged over social and political perspectives, programme and possible alliances. Jean-Luc Mélenchon argued for "a new union of the Lefts, from Fabius to the Trotskyists" - problematic, since Fabius, though a partisan of the "No" vote, is certainly not anti-capitalist, and even his newly-discovered anti-liberalism is far from convincing. Marie-George Buffet called for "a majority popular union, not just to protest, but to win".

Olivier Besancenot called for a "permanent social and political front", stressing that before talking about the 2007 elections we had to talk about organising the fightback against the continuing neo-liberal offensive of the de Villepin government. On that front there are already some mobilisations coming up - in particular the blocking of the first private freight train on 16-17 September and a national trade union day of action on October 4th.

At the same time the debate on the left will continue. On September 10th-11th the Communist Party is holding its annual Fête de l'Humanité. For the first time the LCR will have own stand and Olivier Besancenot will take part in the central debate on - once again - perspectives after the victory of the "No".