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French elections

Olivier Besancenot Statement on Election Outcome

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Monday 23 April 2007

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The following declaration was made immediately after the first results were announced on the evening of Sunday 22 March. From the table of results published at the end, it is clear that the first projections slightly over-estimated the Besancenot vote. However, 4.1% for the LCR candidate is an impressive achievement, in the context of heavy pressure on anti-neoliberal voters to cast a 'useful' vote on the first round, ensuring the passage of SP candidate Ségolène Royal to the second round - especially given the experience of 2002 when Chirac was challenged in the second round only by extreme right-winger Le Pen.

The votes of the Communist Party (PCF) and Lutte Ouvriere fell back, in the latter case sharply, compared with the votes achieved in the last presidentials in 2002.

Declaration of Olivier Besancenot

[<http://internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L320xH213/Lillerally2-8563f.jpg>]

"Nearly 1.8 million voters rallied around my candidacy. That's 600,000 more than in 2002. Despite the pressure for the "useful vote" which for the last several weeks has served as the only program of the campaign of Ségolène Royal, more than 4.5% of voters cast their votes for my name. It is an invaluable encouragement for the struggles of tomorrow. I thank those who just voted for me. We succeeded together in this campaign, beyond our score, to respond to social expectations of the population. For the right to employment, an increase in purchasing power, or the right to housing. . . . The net minimum wage [salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance, SMIC] of 1,500 euros, an increase in all the net incomes of 300 euros, the requisition of vacant houses, the prohibition of dismissals, and the fight against discriminations — as many questions now located in society and the world of work, as many mobilizations to come to make our choice and our force count.

Nicolas Sarkozy is now in the lead and is qualified for the second round facing Ségolène Royal. The Right has come, over the last five years, to follow a systematic policy of demolition of our social conquests, and Sarkozy now wants to apply the shock treatment of MEDEF [Mouvement des entreprises de France — the largest union of employers in France] to French society. That is to say, more inequalities, more injustices, and less freedoms. Le Pen is eliminated from competition, and that is excellent news. But Sarkozy conducted an extremely reactionary campaign. Hunting on the grounds of the FN [Front National — National Front], this man and his program are an immediate major danger.

[<http://internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L320xH213/Lil1-f96f2.jpg>] **Lille rally**

No candidate owns his votes, and each is obviously free to cast his or her vote on 6 May. But, for five years, the LCR [Ligue communiste révolutionnaire, Revolutionary Communist League] has fought the policy of Chirac and his Prime Ministers in the street as well as at the ballot boxes. It is in this sense that I call on you on 1 May to demonstrate in all the towns of France for the urgent social measures that I defended in this campaign and against the antisocial project of Sarkozy. Against this arrogant Right, the second round necessarily takes the form of an anti-Sarkozy referendum for all those who intend to resist its policy. On 6 May, we will be on the side of those who want to prevent Nicolas Sarkozy from attaining the presidency of the republic. It is not a matter of supporting Ségolène Royal but voting against Nicolas Sarkozy.

Confronting this hard Right, the Socialist Party [Parti Socialiste — PS] and its candidate are indeed not equal to the task. Throughout this campaign I proposed redistribution of wealth. I note that it is not the project of the PS which is located on the same ground as the Right accepting liberalism and hailing the profits of big companies. Even on the ground of patriotism and nationalism, the PS seeks to compete with the Right, on the ground of patriotism and nationalism. That is why the LCR's position is not support for Ségolène Royal.

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I call on those who recognized themselves in our proposals to regroup, so that together we can create a force capable of defending them in social mobilizations. Whatever presidency emerges from the ballot boxes on 6 May, it will be necessary to continue to oppose liberal policies, and the LCR will continue to work toward the broadest possible unity in the struggles to come. Then, if Sarkozy is unfortunately to carry the presidency on 6 May, but also if Ségolène Royal gets elected, she will know that there is an opposition to her left and not only to her right.

We need a new anti-capitalist force, to be useful as we have been for the last five years in the struggles and resistances, based on the new political generation who emerges after the mobilizations against the CPE [contrat première embauche, first employment contract], in banlieues and inside companies. The LCR proposes to you to build together this force that is capable of fighting capitalism and offering the hope that another world is possible.

Paris, 22 April, 20h30.