

French youth speak to the WSWS in Amiens: “I’m looking for a movement that wants neither Le Pen nor Macron”

By Antoine Lerougetel
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Many young people turned out in the Northern French city of Amiens on April 26 following calls on social networks for demonstrations. The Communist Youth Movement (MJC), the youth wing of the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF), supported calls for demonstrations.

The demonstrations took place at the same time that both presidential candidates visited a Whirlpool factory in Amiens, drawing widespread media attention. The factory is due to close in 2018, causing 300 workers to lose their jobs. On the March candidate Emanuel Macron, who grew up in Amiens, was accosted by workers at the plant for his support for austerity policies and for the El Khomri labour law, which the government of Francois Hollande rammed through the legislature to reduce job protections for workers and further informalise employment. Neo-fascist Marine Le Pen also visited the plant in a demagogic attempt to pose as a friend of French workers. The Whirlpool plant will be relocated to Poland as with the Amiens Goodyear factory, which closed 3 years ago.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to demonstrators, many of whom remain divided as to whether to abstain in protest of both right-wing candidates or vote for Macron in order to prevent Le Pen’s victory. Participants in the demonstration reflected on the experiences drawn from four months of protests in 2016 against the Socialist Party’s labour law. Macron supported the law in his role as a leading official in the government, and police brutally suppressed the protests.

Over a hundred young people gathered in front of the Maison de la Culture in Amiens.

Susie and Mona, two art students who supported

Unsubmissive France candidate Jean Luc Mélenchon in the first round but who are not members of any party, spoke to the WSWS.

Susie said, “It does not surprise me that Le Pen got into the second round, it was expected. If she wins there will be more violence, more racism, more hatred. With Macron, it’s at the finance level that it’s going to change a lot. For the workers and the poorest this will not help much.”

WSWS reporters asked Susie what she thought of Le Pen’s attempt to appeal as a defender of the interests of workers. Susie replied, “She’s campaigning like Macron. He never came during his campaign in the first round.

“It’s been a while since Ruffin [François Ruffin, standing for parliament in Amiens in the legislative elections in June, backed by the PCF, the Greens and Mélenchon] has been asking him to come. She dares to go there because she’s a liar. I’m not against people who vote Le Pen, it’s just that she manipulates them. The left has a bad reputation.”

Mona added, “They’re so fed up with the Hollande government that Le Pen has been able to profit greatly from it. She used the terrorist attacks and laid it on thick. People were so frightened and thought she would act against terrorism. All she’s going to do is close the borders. There will be blockages, she’ll do totally anti-democratic things.”

The WSWS asked Susie and Mona about the danger of a third world war. Mona said, “It’s a possibility, the situation is so unstable. We’re young and it appears very far away. I did not know that France is preparing nuclear war. It’s true that Trump is trigger-happy. France could be a target. What can we do?”

The WSWS also interviewed three Amiens youth, Zauri, François and Akim, none of whom want to vote for either Le Pen or Macron.

Interjecting in support of one another's points, they told the WSWS: "We want to demonstrate against both, they both have closed and very risky policies... They do not meet our expectations. Macron will have exactly the same policies as Hollande.

"He is a presidential candidate thanks to Hollande. He'll do nothing thing for young people. He said that we should get used to terrorism and a state of emergency... With Le Pen, it will be racism and civil war, as is happening in America with Trump. It will be 'France first,' just like Donald Trump says about America."

Catherine, a student at Amiens University, said, "This demonstration is called 'against Le Pen,' but I am here first because I am curious about who is here, because if this demonstration calls for a vote for Macron, I will be against it. I'm looking for a movement that wants neither Le Pen nor Macron. A Macron presidency would be very free market, continuing with all the privatizations, the deterioration of the conditions of workers and government workers. Under Marine Le Pen it would be the same thing, plus racism, fascism. In both cases very negative."

She continued, "I know Le Pen is at Whirlpool today and Macron only wanted to meet the unions. Le Pen wants to appear to be a defender of the workers. They vote Le Pen because they are disappointed with the politicians and because they believe that Marine Le Pen is the only one who will defend them, but it is manipulation. These people are completely desperate."

The WSWS asked Catherine why many workers do not trust the more well-known left-wing parties, including the NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party), LO (Workers Struggle) and the PCF.

She replied, "I do not know enough about this, but the PS is a rotten party, it is corrupt. Then there's the PCF, Mélenchon, it is the same. Mélenchon said he would not recommend what way to vote, it's all a bit murky. People want to know what is going to happen after this election. Will Unsummissive France really vote for Macron now? If Mélenchon wants to continue he should support an uprising of people, who are fed up, and he's not doing it.

"Yes, I am aware that we are moving towards a third

world war," she added. "It makes me angry, sad and I wonder how we came to this. How is it possible that Trump came to power? We have to think internationally. It's the whole world that could be at war and not just France. It is in the interest of everyone to come together and find the common cause that will make us change the system in depth and, yes, fight the people who want to carry out this war."

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