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France

The streets erupt

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Since Sunday April 21, 2002 a massive movement, essentially made up of young people, has erupted onto the streets of France. Organizations like the anti-fascist network Ras l'Front, the LCR, sometimes the MJS and the JC (youth organizations of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party) as well as networks organizing through the Internet sounded the alarm that evening, and college and high school students in particular have responded in their thousands.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/alpdemo2.jpg>]

According to AFP, 100,000 people demonstrated on the Monday following the first round election. The demonstrations continued in the days that followed. Typically, actions were initiated from a high school, technical college or university faculty and spread from there: that was the scenario in Lille, Lyon, Rennes and elsewhere. In the evening, the two components merged, the youth and the networks of activists, trades unionists, Besancenot voters, or those who had voted for Mamère, Laguiller, Hue or even Jospin.

In Paris, Ras l'Front called the first action, on Sunday at 10 p.m. Supported by the LCR, the young socialists, the Greens, the gathering had swelled to 20,000 by the time it reached the place de la Bastille. The CP and Lutte Ouvriere were absent on this occasion although they supported the Monday evening demonstration (15,000). Demonstrations have taken place in cities, towns and even villages up and down the country, often on the initiative of the LCR, with varying support locally from political organizations (the far left, the Greens, the PCF, sometimes the Socialist Party), trade unions, anti-racist organisations and feminist groups. The culminating point was on May Day where a massive demonstration in Paris and other in cities all over the country mobilized almost two million people in a clear rejection of Le Pen from a clearly left and trade union standpoint.

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

In some towns, a slogan is raised which expresses a widespread sentiment: *Votez escroc, pas facho!* [Vote for the crook, not the fascist] The media have tried to focus attention to those who say: 'I voted Besancenot for fun but now I regret it.' But the overwhelming sentiment is to stop Le Pen, including by a vote, but to maintain the mobilizations. And all parties on the left, including even the Socialist Party, but notably the LCR, are receiving a flood of requests from people who want to join, rejoin, or in some other way be linked to organized political activity. This massive reaction is the first step in a new wave of radicalisation that will have an important impact in France.