

WSWS speaks to Socialist Party supporters at Vincennes campaign rally

Antoine Lerougetel
18 April 2012

A WSWS reporting team covered the rally of Socialist Party (PS) presidential candidate François Hollande's Sunday at the Château de Vincennes esplanade in Paris.

A banner read: "Hollande is for hope". Apart from PS flags, Communist Party (PCF) banners were in evidence, apparently in anticipation of an alliance with an upcoming PS-led government. Enthusiasm was subdued, apart from PS members and supporters at the front.

Hassan, a small trader and immigrant from Morocco who has lived in France for 30 years, came with his wife, his daughter—a second-year high school student—and his young children to support Hollande. He said he hadn't yet decided to join the PS.

Asked how he was affected by President Nicolas Sarkozy's austerity measures, he said: "Sarkozy has only told lies. He hasn't maintained purchasing power. It's always the same story: he makes the immigrants the scapegoats. But French people are interested in jobs, the cost of living. Pensions—by 65 people are worn out. France is supposed to be a secular republic. But not for the people who can't pay the rent, etc. For them it's a dictatorship. Austerity is not for the rich, but for the poor."

His wife added: "I've got five children. There's no equality. Schools in Paris are much better funded than those in the *banlieues* [outer suburbs]. There's no future for our children. Conditions are bad in state schools compared with the private sector."

Hassan condemned the military intervention in Libya: "Sarkozy is indirectly a criminal."

WSWS reporters pointed to last week's *La Tribune* interview with Hollande, in which he discussed

renegotiating the pro-austerity European fiscal pact, "but not on the austerity portion, which is necessary."

Hassan commented: "I don't agree with that. They're scapegoating the people. Being poor is an accident of life. Yet again the poor are the victims of politics and the politicians. You support certain ideals. You don't know who you can believe. Politics in France is going off the rails. For me socialism is a party which fights everything coming from the far right, social unity, but not with the rich. We can't put our trust in Hollande if he supports austerity."

In line with the PS's reactionary policies during its previous terms in office, some of its supporters at the Vincennes rally praised the social austerity and imperialist wars backed by the bourgeois "left" parties.

Cécile, a computer software consultant, came with her baby in a pushchair: "Under Sarkozy, I'm affected by my partner's situation. At 45 he's considered too old to be employed. He's been out of work for a year. I'm worried about how older people are treated. The state employment agency is useless."

Cécile backed austerity policies that would result in lower taxes on the middle class: "Whatever candidate is elected, austerity is necessary. We pay more tax than the people with high salaries. With Hollande it would be more egalitarian. Sarkozy's methods shock me; he doesn't try to reach a consensus. I'm shocked by his constant playing footsie with the [neo-fascist] National Front."

Cécile downplayed the risks posed by austerity policies for the living standards of the working class in France: "I don't think that what's happening in Greece and Spain and Italy could happen in France. Perhaps I'm mistaken. There'll have to be rules to impose a bit more humanity, to stop the systematic stigmatizing. Socialism for me is sharing, human solidarity, the

chance to climb up the social ladder (*l'escalateur social*) as I've been able to do. A good state education is vital for this.”

On Sarkozy's military intervention in Libya and Syria, Cécile said: “As you suggest, I don't think he's concerned with the wellbeing of their peoples”. Reminded that the PS and Hollande gave full support for these actions, she excused this policy: “We're not in cloud-cuckoo land. France has its interests.”

WSWS reporters spoke to a pair of students who said that they thought austerity was necessary and—despite the examples of Greece, Ireland, and Spain—would help economic growth.

One of the students remarked, “It's to reassure the markets. Once Hollande gets into power and there's a return to growth, they can get rid of austerity. Austerity and growth are necessary. We'll have to see the results”. The other said: “You can't say austerity has really been applied yet in France, not like in Greece or Spain. We could get there if the golden rule of the Fiscal Pact is imposed.”

This student thought that the intervention in Libya was “to pillage Libya's natural resources,” but that the bourgeois “left” parties' support for it was motivated by concern for human rights.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact