French and the immigrant workers are in the streets to show that they are fed up with the present system, whose dire results have been apparent since the 80’s. The short “Macron démission” slogan [Macron resign] has to be understood as a sign of a population fed up with politicians who make new promises every election that are not only broken, but instead the exact opposite is implemented, anti-social laws voted quietly at night, international accords signed without popular consultation, etc. One example among many others: during his election campaign Macron promised not to touch pensions but one of his first decisions has been to raise taxes for the retired. He must have thought that the elderly does not join protests, but actually…
Where we stand: (Extracts)

Revolutionary socialism

1. We stand with Karl Marx: ‘The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule’ (The International Working-men’s Association 1864, General Rules).

Revolutionary strategy and tactics

3. We recognise the necessity for serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers’ parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable.

6. We totally oppose all economic nationalist campaigns like for ‘British jobs for British workers’ that means capitulation to national chauvinism and so to the political and economic interests of the ruling class itself. We are therefore unreservedly for a Socialist United States of Europe.

9. We are completely opposed to man-made climate change and the degradation of the biosphere which is caused by the anarchy of capitalist production for profits of transnational corporations. Ecological catastrophe is not ‘as crucial as imperialism’ but caused by imperialism so to combat this threat we must redouble our efforts to forward the world revolution.

Special Oppression and Racism

10. We recognise that class society, and capitalism as the last form of class society, is by its nature patriarchal. In that sense the oppression of women is different from all other forms of oppression and discrimination. Sexism and the oppression of women is inextricable tied to the ownership and the inheritance of private property. To achieve sexual and individual freedom women need to fight in the class struggle in general to overthrow class society itself. We cannot leave the struggle against women’s oppression until the revolution but must recognise it as one of the most fundamental aspects of the revolutionary struggle itself or we will never make that revolution. We therefore reject the reactionary “intersectional” theory as hostile to Marxism, to the class struggle and to revolutionary socialism.

11. We also support the fight of all other specially oppressed including lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people and the disabled against discrimination in all its forms and their right to organise separately in that fight in society as a whole.

13. We fight racism and fascism. We support the right of people to fight back against racist and fascist attacks by any means necessary. Self-defence is no offence, we support it. 14. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price.

Revolutionary internationalism

16. We were and are for the immediate withdrawal and/or defeat of imperialist armies in wars like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Ukraine. Whilst giving no political support to the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Sunni and Shia militias in Iraq, Hamas or Fatah in Palestine, Gaddafi (as was) in Libya, Assad in Syria, the ‘Islamic State’ in Syria and Iraq, the theocratic regime in Iran or the Donbass leadership in Eastern Ukraine we recognise US-led world imperialism as the main enemy of humanity and so advocate critical support and tactical military assistance from the working class to all those fighting for the defeat of imperialism as part of the perspective of Permanent Revolution.

18. We are for the overthrow of the Zionist state of Israel and for a Multi-Ethnic workers’ state of Palestine as part of the Socialist Federation of the Middle East.

19. As socialists living in Britain we take our responsibilities to support the struggle against British imperialism’s occupation of the six north-eastern counties of Ireland very seriously. For this reason we have assisted in founding the Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group and we will campaign for political status these Irish prisoners of war and for a 32-county united Socialist Ireland. We reject all ‘two nations in Ireland’ theories.

21. We are for the re-creation of a World Party of Socialist Revolution, a revolutionary international, based on the best traditions of the previous revolutionary internationals, critically understood, particularly the early Third and Fourth Internationals, with their determination to combat and overcome both reformism and centrism. ▲
INTRODUCTION
A major social movement in France, the Yellow Vests movement, has emerged, destabilizing the Macron government’s progress in implementing its counter-reforms. This government has set itself the task of bringing France in line with other capitalist economies. The race for profit and competition, forces all large capitalist companies to seek all the means to win the conquest of markets. To achieve this, to overcome their international competitors, they are asking governments to reform society and make the working classes, the petite-bourgeoisie and that of small and medium-sized businesses, to pay for their gains in competitiveness and for the assurance of their profits. Governments are the political arm and general will of big capitalists.

We, a group of Yellow Vests, old political and trade union activists in political and trade union’s struggles of other workers for decades, and who have been involved in this struggle since its inception, have undertaken the necessary task of giving a Marxist interpretation to this movement. The Yellow Vests movement is, by its roots and composition, deeply proletarian both in its approach and in its profound objectives and ultimately seeks to change capitalist society.

This movement, presented as apolitical, is the political expression of an entire sector of the most oppressed, de-skilled and precarious proletariat, whose only way out of this situation is to put an end to the system of exacerbated capitalist competition.

We believe that this movement has brought a fresh wind and a form of struggle that has been forgotten for decades. We must draw the necessary political lessons so that in the future, other social movements will be better equipped than today’s Yellow Vests.

We believe that the only valid analytical tool is still Marxism, the theory of class struggle plus all its later developments. It is also the work of old militants who are not intellectuals and who ask, for the enrichment of the tools necessary for future action, for the necessary criticism of all those who care about the problems of the emancipation of the working class as a theoretical force that must become material force in the near future.

The instability of the capitalist system, the threats of crisis and/or war it carries within it, requires an indispensable theoretical tool to understand and change it. May these reflections of workers and old activists serve the cause of proletarians from all countries and advance the thinking of the oppressed and exploited for their liberation.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVE BASES OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE YELLOW VESTS?
The Yellow Vest movement is a spontaneous response from the most exploited segments of the French population to at least 40 years of bosses’ offensives through the policies put in place by all governments. This has been ongoing since the second year of Mitterrand’s first term of office.
(May 1981), with an acceleration and aggravation from Sarkozy (May 2007) to the present day.

This movement is part of an international situation aggravated by conflicts between US imperialism, other European imperialisms and large backward countries such as Russia and China (the latter, still developing as a capitalist economy, is now seen as the main competitor of the US). Russia and China are subject to a continuous process of encirclement, “regime change” policies and a crushing of all its support in the smaller countries that still practice a somewhat independent policy towards US imperialism.

An unbridled arms race is taking place everywhere. France is to raise its defence spending to 300 billion euros over 6 years from February 2018, announced the sending of its aircraft carrier into Chinese waters, Germany now asserts its military presence outside its own borders and increases its military budget; all other imperialist powers follow suit.

The danger of a new world war is real. The new hypersonic weapons can very well give rise to an uncontrollable atomic conflict of immense proportions, caused by the situation of tension and competition produced by the merciless warfare that the capitalists are waging for market share. This issue of defending world peace is not yet being addressed or countered by workers who are still unaware of these issues.

A new economic crisis is once again threatening the capitalist system, according to the opinion of a large number of economists, to the point of reaching a consensus. Only the date of hatching is subject to debate.

If states have been able to absorb previous crises under tons of public money, the means and room for manoeuvres today are much less and the struggles of workers throughout the world are beginning to develop and become firmly established in the landscape. The capitalist governments between the anvil and the hammer are beefing up their means of repression.

FIRST FORMS OF SYSTEM CONTESTATION

The spontaneous political solutions that have emerged in other countries, led by the petty bourgeoisie, workers and the middle classes, like Syriza and Podemos, have failed because of shameful capitulations as in Greece or by the corruption of its leaders as in Spain. The impasse of these intermediate solutions is obvious.

It is within this national and international framework that the struggle of the Yellow Vests, a new and specific form in the French proletarian traditions of struggle, has appeared, putting all French political actors to the test. No one can avoid this white-hot test.

This mass movement, whose real basis is the crying necessities of the large segments of the population, impoverished by capitalist politics, has exploded like an underground mine whose existence no one anticipated. The 9 million poor in France, the working-class, petty bourgeoisie and even small capitalists, are bearing the brunt of the capitalist crisis, often in the form of ever-increasing taxes.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF WORKERS IN FRANCE

Organized workers have somehow fought the relentless attacks of the bourgeoisie against their rights, but have been defeated every time. Trade union organizations, even those that claimed in the past to be “class struggle” trade unionism, tend towards “proposal trade unionism”. In practice, they capitulate and live off the benefits
granted as managers of certain social conquests, such as Social Security in the capitalist state.

The elected governments that claimed to be “left leaning” practiced the policy of capitalist boards of directors. Later, with Hollande, they accelerated a policy that was totally contrary to workers. The same people who had voted Hollande to stop the bosses’ offensive, which had worsened with Sarkozy, found that the “socialist” government was applying the same policy as Sarkozy, even making it worse.

From the beginning, foreign policy has been that of French imperialism in support of Zionism and American imperialism. In Syria this is blatantly clear.

Already, the Mitterrand government had not only demoralized and demobilized large sectors of workers, but had also encouraged the rise of a deadly enemy of workers, the National Front, now renamed the Rassemblement National.

The masses, disoriented by the betrayal of the left, sought for a short while an outcome in the far-left vote. But the obtuse sectarianism and the open opportunism of its two components, Lutte Ouvrière and the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League), respectively, have reversed this trend. If they had pursued a policy of building a political front and broadening the struggle, they could have been an alternative or meeting point for the most advanced sectors of workers.

Their politics consist of general and abstract proclamations without national political perspectives during the election campaigns in which they participate, accompanied by some trade union activity. The kind of activity that all anarchist organizations have been doing for centuries without any results.

The Communist Party had no other policy than to preserve its representatives and officials. This orientation forced them for many years to follow the pro-capitalist policy of the socialists, and/or to yield to the demands of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

The fall of the USSR has aggravated the process. Capitulating in front of the reactionary ideological offensive, they thus got rid of the works’ cells, liquidating their most reliable support. This capitulation caused both an internal division and the departure of most of its militants. The PCF has been reduced to a shadow of itself.

For three decades now, as a manifestation of the left’s abandonment of its demands and its presence in the working-class neighbourhoods, an extreme right-wing party, the National Front, has thrived, using anti-immigrant nationalism and collecting votes from certain sectors of the working class.

The strong abstention generated by this abandonment, the sectarianism or insignificance of the far-left and the discontent with the policy of the Socialist Party and its damned soul, the PCF, automatically give high percentages both to the National Front (renamed the National Rally, Rassemblement National, RN) and to any political adventurer pushed to the front line by the capitalists, as in the case of Macron.

Mélenchon, a Social Democrat, former minister and senator, obtained almost 20% of the votes in the presidential election, because of his past he is mistrusted by many
but has created a movement, France Insoumise, which has had some deputies elected and this allows it to remain in the national political sphere.

Once elected, Macron developed a totally capitalist program aimed at aligning French society with the capitalist world most favourable to employers and adopted as many anti-worker laws as possible. It is on the basis of this urgent need, for the capitalists, that he puts in place important counter-reforms aimed at liquidating social conquests and extorting the direct and indirect incomes of workers to counter the effects of the crisis of capitalism.

The Sarkozy and Hollande governments did this by accelerating a trend already at work under Mitterrand. But this was not yet enough in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, which was fighting for control and direction, for an even more pronounced inflection of this policy, which affects the proletariat but also the petty-bourgeois layers.

The momentary triumph of the lobbies behind Macron’s candidacy over Fillon’s shows this, even if both of them share the same deeply anti-worker economic plan that also erodes the positions and assets of the so-called middle class.

Behind Macron can be distinguished the figures of Jacques Attali, Alain Minc, Bernard Henry-Levy and others. Capitalist lobbies of all national and international orders are openly present. In the background, think tanks and the Boards of Directors of large companies are working, as usual.

It is therefore a question of reforming the French capitalist system from top to bottom to align it with the requirements of capitalist trusts and lobbies.

The capitalist offensive involves the complete privatization of both companies and organizations. These then pay the workers their wages indirectly and also manage their health and education. They also profit from the management of public services that are in competition with the private sector.

The mechanisms for transferring the wealth produced by workers to capitalist groups are varied and multifaceted. One of the best known is inflation, the rise in prices. Another is the rise in social security contributions, and/or taxes increases.
FORMING THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE YELLOW VESTS

Opposition to such a policy also takes all kinds of forms.

Extreme right-wing political adventurers are struggling to deceive large layers of the petty bourgeoisie and backward sectors of the working class, to appear as alternatives to politicians on both the right and the left, while their agenda, with a few nuances, is the same as that of the right.

Simply put, they disguise it as a program that favours “small businesses crushed by taxes”, but in reality, their program is to accelerate the counter-reforms of big business, with the help of laws, the police apparatus and making scapegoats of immigrants.

Neo-liberal capitalist thought that triumphed back in the 1980s was applied by all left-wing and right-wing governments. They spread the idea that, apart from privatizations and restructuring, there was no salvation possible, holding out the “glorious 30” (1945-1975), as an illusion conveyed even by a considerable part of the left. Today the bourgeoisie has abandoned this illusion and promotes austerity without relief.

All these elements have produced a rather complex, contradictory political consciousness of the masses, mixing the illusions diffused by the bourgeois media with residual class consciousness by the memories of their parents and/or the propaganda of socialists’ ideas.

The driving force behind this political consciousness is the general worsening of their living conditions (freezing of pensions, salaries). One sentence summarizes this situation: “Our children will live (and are already living) worse than we do”). To fight this reality, the first reaction has been to tighten the belt, help your children, reduce expenses.

But this has caused problems in families, deteriorating living conditions in the working class neighbourhoods, terrible working conditions, mass unemployment, wage freezes and an illusory state of mind of waiting for “things to get better” and to come back to a time of progressive capitalism.

The masses, abandoned by the left-wing parties and far from the sectarian quarrels of the far left, have taken the path, for the majority, of electoral abstention or extreme right-wing voting.

A factor should be added, these are the traditions of demonstrations and street fighting of the French proletariat and immigrants living in France.

Striking workers tend to share their movement. They go out to the street, demonstrate, sometimes fight the police. They all know, from their experience, that there are no gains without a fight. All the conquests (Social Security, paid holidays, labour rights), despite the setbacks, are the result of struggles of their forebears.

Generally, workers seek solidarity with other sectors of the population by calling on and demonstrating in front of public opinion to make their demands known. They seek unity because they instinctively know that it is in the solidarity of workers, which is the surest guarantee of their success. And the answer is quite often positive, the struggles meet with sympathy, more or less active depending on the general state of social dynamics, that is, the balance of power of the class struggle.

Because this last factor, social dynamics is fundamental to the understanding all the movements of the working class, of which it is also a part. The political consciousness of the large proletarian battalions depends on the intensity of their battles.

Thus, the struggle of the Yellow Vests can be a powerful first step in awakening to political consciousness broad proletarian
strata who have seen, through direct experience, the power of a determined struggle, of the state, of the police, justice and so forth.

The fact is that this social dynamic or the relationship of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat has long been unfavourable to workers. But at the same time there is an underground process, difficult to grasp, complex, which is a kind of “collective unconscious of defence and struggle” that develops in a direction contrary to the constant attacks of the bourgeoisie against the living and working conditions of the masses.

In addition to these multifaceted sources of class consciousness, there are also criticisms from anti-system or social democratic intellectuals and the rare Marxist propaganda and social unrest that is always present.

All these elements have shaped a contradictory mentality in which reactionary elements are mixed with elements of class struggle among these often isolated, individual workers. Thus, this primary social consciousness is the baggage of the most backward proletarianized sectors.

This backwardness is sensitive to the calls of bourgeois nationalism promoted by the FN for a long time, even by the PCF, and has allowed some of the most backward workers to vote for the National Front. The high vote for the FN in working-class neighbourhoods can be explained by this rise in nationalism.

This distorted consciousness revolves around criticism of the European Union bureaucracy, criticism of the high levels of taxation, the forms this taxation takes (radars, CSG increases), the expenses and salaries of parliamentarians, of the president, but does not affect either bosses or exploiters.

Much of the hatred of Macron as “president of the rich” derives from three acronyms: APL, CSG and ISF. The APL is the basic housing allowance, which Macron cut by €5 monthly. The CSG is the social security contribution, which he increased for old age pensioners.

The ISF was a wealth tax on capital and property. Macron abrogated the part on capital, on the grounds it discouraged investment. The left says that cancellation was Macron’s “original sin”. Re-establishing the ISF has been a consistent demand by yellow vests, but Macron refuses.

We find here, therefore, a repulsion of the social democratic parties and trade union leaders and, on the other hand, the residues of an embryonic class consciousness. A large part of the class, which is demoralized and no longer votes, is also infected with extreme right-wing ideology.

At the same time, necessity inevitably pushes them to accept wage demands that run counter to the interests of employers and the far right.

Leaders of the far right are trying to navigate between these two contradictory elements. If, during an election period, they manage to deceive part of the proletariat, their social composition, their wealth, their friendships reveal their true face. On the other hand, during social conflicts, they hide and do not say a word, or appear for what they are, the extreme party of the employers.

The bosses, for the moment, do not want them, the far-right, because they do not find themselves confronted with a rise in workers’ struggles. The bosses also fear the reaction and opposition of all democratic sectors to a rise to power of the far-right.

Other workers among the poorest do not find in far-left organizations (which make less than 2% in elections) anything credible, any force that attracts them... but continue to seek an alternative.
POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRONT OF THE MACRON POLITICS AND THE MOVEMENT

Mélenchon’s movement, the “France Insoumise”, is essentially electoral. Its activists are involved in a number of environmental and social struggles. This type of organization, which is good just for election campaigns, was very limited as militant force during the Yellow Vests movement and, of course, will be even more marginal in the event of more acute social conflicts. But their ideas has taken a increasing importance in the movement consciousness till now.

The traditional right-wing representative of employers is deeply divided. Various currents are tearing each other apart, creating a situation where they are behind in the political game. This division is expressed, for example, by the procrastination of their new leader Wauquiez with regard to the movement of yellow vests. If Wauquiez initially gave his “support” to the movement, his position changed radically from the moment it focused on social demands and on the question of power and institutions.

On the side of the Rassemblement Nationale (RN), Marine Le Pen, leader of the movement, often appears insecure with the sole clear objective of becoming the main party of the employers and winning the presidency of the republic. The centre is non-existent. The PCF is reduced to little. The PS is in decomposition.

On the trade union side, while Macron’s offensive was in full swing, the CGT leadership only proposed as opposition union walks once a month until the workers who has followed the call, became tired. CGT management then explained to its base that “the guys don’t follow us...”.

The break-up of the Labor Code has passed despite a long-term, misdirected struggle as well as the increase in the CSG for pensioners, the maintenance of the wage freeze for civil servants, the elimination of the wealth tax, subsidies (CICE) of all kinds for employers.

THE TRIGGERING OF THE MOVEMENT

Neither Macron nor anyone else saw the movement coming. The action of a woman, Priscilla Ludowsky, tired of paying for her gas every time more expensive, took her keyboard to tweet a petition to protest against the increases and to paralyze the country on November 17. Within a few days, the petition had obtained 500,000 signatures and quickly exceeded one million.

So, it was at that very moment that the movement of the yellow vests began. It was the spark that blew up the powder barrel. The car’s mandatory yellow vest has become the emblem of the movement. The movement’s desire to unite against party lines was based on a total mistrust of political parties and trade unions. Everyone was accepted but the yellow vests refused any political or union recovery in order to keep control of their movement.

This movement (initially almost exclusively against taxes and the increase in petrol and diesel) is political in nature. The claim was based on the need to increase
the purchasing power of employees, pensioners and others. The most affected were necessarily workers far from their workplace in areas where public transport is non-existent, where car use is an obligation. A field where left-wing parties and trade unions must intervene.

The sectors of the poorest proletariat, and/or small entrepreneurs and farmers heavily affected by fuel increases, have put themselves in order of battle. The small bosses’ demands were to reduce taxes, to remove the new gas taxes. But for the majority it had to go much further. The question of purchase power was at stake.

The contradictory nature of the demands corresponds to the classes engaged in the struggle: the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. They can fight side by side because they suffer the blows of the great capitalist class represented by Macron.

Other contradictions within the working class will later appear for the leadership of the movement or because of YVs demands.

The weight in the movement of the most proletarianized working class is major, pushing it towards demands that hit the employers. However, without any major centre or party to organize it, orient it and train its leaders, its course is slow and erratic.

The extreme left, which appears critical of the parliamentary left, was unable or unwilling to do organized work within this spontaneous mass movement that emerged before their eyes. Their dogmatic conception, in fact, is an indirect coverage of the government, and their mistrust was their first reflex when an anonymous person called for a demonstration against fuel increases.

From the beginning, all left-wing political tendencies, and trade unions, opposed or hesitated in the face of this movement, with the exception of a few small groups, two tendencies of the NPA and the POI, which was recovering from a crisis and a split. This opposition has found as a pretext the participation of the extreme right and the confused aspect of the first demands put forward. The leadership of the CGT and the POID still maintains this position.

Even today, trade union leaders and many left-wing political activists still refuse to clearly support the movement. While this uprising is a threat to the government and the bourgeoisie.

From the very beginning, there were divisions throughout this magnificent incursion of the most proletarianized sectors of French politics. These divisions cross the movement, all the political forces that compose it, as well as the opposing political forces.

It could not be otherwise, since the heterogeneous movement is composed of people who embarked on politics with no political preparation other than their needs and could only reflect the consciousness transmitted by all the propaganda means of the bourgeoisie.

However, this Yellow Vests movement is a political school that teaches politics at full speed. The Yellow Vests progress along this path independently of the consciousness of each participant.

ORIGIN OF THE CURRENT FORM OF THE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE MASSES

For 30 years, Marxism, socialism and communism have been spread in very narrow circles, far from the masses. The only ones who still do the propaganda do so through poorly read newspapers.

This policy of addressing the lowest level of understanding is assumed and even claimed. The most advanced sectors of the
class must be satisfied with what they already know and with a few reviews. No real controversy, no ideological work is done.

Thus, the masses who revolted could not obtain the tools to understand the problems that affected them. They can only see less more than the mismanagement of the president of the republic or other public scandals.

**CLEAVAGE WITHIN THE PROLETARIAT**

We can draw an earlier parallel with the 2005’s revolt in the suburbs, or the 1998’s unemployed strike: the political left had moved away from those struggles of the most oppressed sectors. This diagram will be reproduced almost without variants with the movement of the yellow vests. Similarly, fractures between sectors of workers are emerging.

This real divide is the underlying reason for the attitude of the entire left, which often represents only sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and workers aristocracy or sectors of workers, who despite their diminishing incomes think that their situation could be worse outside the system.

Thus, today about 30% of workers work in the most organized sectors of the class with the most advanced collective rights (civil service status, better wages). The rest of the proletarians work in SMEs, are precarious, unemployed and have no or very few trade union organizations. The Yellow Vests movement allowed them to enter the fight.

The Yellow Vests thus enter the struggle against a whole bourgeois political front used to lead the country alternately, once to the right, once by the coalition of the Socialist-Communists but without changing their pro-capitalist policies.

In addition to this institutional game, there are critical sectors of the left, some claiming to be revolutionaries, Leninists and/or Trotskyists, who, whenever a serious social problem does not find expression in this political framework, return against the struggling masses, using the “primitive” level of their struggle as a pretext.

**BEFORE NOVEMBER 17**

Between 9 November and 17 November, the number of signatures against the increase in fuel and groups on social networks showed that there will be a very large demonstration.

Very small left-wing organizations, progressive sites, Mélenchon who wanted the
participation of France Insoumise with little success, placed themselves in favour of yellow vests by seeing that it was a process that could drift to the left, despite the pollution from the far right or the relative low level of consciousness of some elements among the Yellow Vests.

As the date of November 17 approached, the movement grew larger and larger, the more a ripple effect occurred that led the base of the fighting unions to support the movement by going over the directions that were putting all the brakes. Some tendencies within the NPA were, almost from the beginning, opposed to their direction and supported the movement with their weak forces.

The government has tried to explain its policy of increasing gasoline prices, or to delay it with a miracle drop in “oil prices would have gone down”. Once the movement has been triggered, it will seek to build leaders with whom to dialogue i.e. to liquidate the movement.

THE DIFFERENT POSITIONS OF THE LEFT-WING ORGANISATIONS

Confusion among the left and the unions reigned supreme. Lutte Ouvrière, a centrist organization that claims to be “Trotskyist”, wrote a few days before November 17: “Fuel prices: react on a class basis (LO-Worker Fight November 7) (…)”

“It is right that workers’ activists do not want to mobilize so that transport bosses can get the chestnuts out of the fire, or so that the extreme right can advertise themselves. But that is no reason to abandon the scope of the government’s political challenge. If workers do not make their voices heard with their demands and their own ways of acting, others will be honoured. And it is possible that if truck owners reduce tax power, it could even turn against workers.”

“In order not to let these forces hostile to the world of work act, we must offer workers the opportunity to mobilize on their own ground.”

This statement is the very essence of what is called leftist sectarianism. They are not concerned with the fight or the real state of consciousness of the working class and the lower intermediate working classes, nor with the real facts of class struggle.

They expect, or call for something pure, without any trace of opportunism. The real movement of the working class leaves them indifferent or hostile, dreaming of what can never happen: a workers’ movement free of any bourgeois contamination.

This useless leftism implies the disappearance of any organization that practices it. Instead of integrating into the movement to guide it, they point out its inevitable defects due to its spontaneous form. They reject anything that takes them away from their daily routine. “Let us work for a real class workers party... wait for a real workers movement to take place and for a real party totally distant from what is bourgeois” they say.

The only way forward is to get in touch with the real political consciousness of the working masses. A step forward, as Lenin said, with our banners, our programs, while keeping the right attitude and appropriate forms. Lenin, who knew these people well, wrote a commentary (in support of Ireland’s 1916 Easter Rising) for those who, at the base, are brave but terribly disoriented militants:

“Whoever expects a “pure” social revolution will never live long enough to see it. He is only a revolutionary in words who understands nothing about what a true revolution is.

The Russian revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles fought by all the dissatisfied classes, groups and elements of the population. Among them, there were masses with the most barbaric prejudices, fighting for the most
vague and fantastic objectives, there were small groups receiving Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. Objectively, the mass movement shook the tsarism and paved the way for democracy, and that is why the conscious workers were at its head.

Socialist revolution in Europe can only be the explosion of the mass struggle of the oppressed and disgruntled of all kinds. Elements of the petty bourgeoisie and backward workers will inevitably participate - without this participation, mass struggle is not possible, no revolution is possible - and, just as inevitably, they will bring to the movement their prejudices, reactionary fantasies, weaknesses and mistakes. But, objectively, they will attack capital, and the conscious vanguard of revolution, the advanced proletariat, which will express this objective truth of a disparate, discordant, variegated mass struggle, at first sight without unity, will be able to unite and direct it, conquer power, seize banks, expropriate trusts hated by all (although for different reasons!) and to carry out other dictatorial measures, the result of which will be the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of socialism, which will not “purge” itself from the outset, far from it, of petty-bourgeois slag.

THE CRISIS IN LEFT-WING ORGANIZATIONS

To complete the picture, it must be said that the confusion and demoralization produced by many years spent in parties that betrayed or misguided themselves, impose a period of research and mistakes on some activists. These defeats and betrayals have left a background of undisciplined left-wing sympathizers, not very militant, tired by an unsuccessful struggle against deformations on their own side, infected with organic liberalism.

As a result, there are almost no more activists. Others militate in groups organized under a narrow, barrack’s discipline that prevents the development of non-sectarian, open-minded militants capable of searching and finding in new conditions.

Many activists who have abandoned the PCF are under the illusion that it could revert to a more militant past. Many of it’s fractions fight endlessly and without finding the ability to unite.

The militants who remain at the PCF have stopped militating in a disciplined, conscious and continuous form. They only mobilize for elections or union battles.
The scattering and isolation of conflicts and struggles has contributed to the non-
unionization of the masses and the mis-trust of trade unions. There have been
important successful struggles such as Notre Dame des Landes, which has seen
forms of resistance that have spread with some success among the proletarian sec-
tors that cannot fight otherwise because trade unionism does not affect them. It is
important to note that class struggle, even at low intensity, continues.

Nevertheless, the crisis of left-wing activ-
ists is deep.

On the ideas side, the field is almost completely dominated by so-called intellec-
tuals who are on the ground of “democracy” and other illusions or who are ecstatic about kind of all social issues, but completely forgetting the traditional ideas of the workers movement; while the workers movement needs real intellectuals.

DEMONSTRATIONS, ROAD-
BLOCKS, ROUNDABOUTS....

On November 17 there were more than 2000 filtering checkpoints on roundabouts,
tolls and demonstrations. In some places, national flags have appeared. Some yellow vests sang the Marseillaise without being followed too much. The mass of the demonstrators was composed of many poor proletarians, pensioners. Some activists were present in their personal capacity and remained discreet about their membership.

The activity, the dynamics were led by poor workers, pensioners, who did not usually mobilize themselves. Participation was higher in small and medium-sized towns, in the countryside. According to blogs and reports, the movement was enthusiastic, without central direction, totally spontaneous, with the dominant slogan “Macron, resignation! “.

In total, more than 300,000 people demonstrated according to police calculations, up to 4 million according to the most optimistic calculations with a population turnout of nearly 80% of approval. The movement has spread throughout the country with a “we don’t give up anything” (On ne lâche rien!) attitude! and has had an impact on the economy, i.e. on employers’ incomes.

The press referred a lot to May 68 and even to the 1789 revolution because the

Sometimes, some racist explosions occurred from the very minority sectors influenced by RN and Marine Le Pen, which have been dumping their poison for decades.
heterogeneous and spontaneous form of the demonstration was inevitably reminiscent of a massive popular uprising. Others found similarities with the gradual awareness of the federates in the months prior to the Paris Commune.

From 17 November onwards, the whole of French political life was determined by the Yellow Vests movement.

This day took place peacefully if we consider that “peacefully” means the arrival of the masses blocking most of the roads, demonstrating and demanding the resignation of the President of the Republic.

The Yellow Vests set up roadblocks and blocking points. Some came for an hour, others stayed even at night. The police intervened just to avoid complete blockages but did not prevent the filter dams. A modus vivendi was established between the National Police and the YVs, with conversations, coffee offers, initially refused but then accepted, handshakes. People were still shouting “la police avec nous” (“the police with us”. Today this has changed in “suicidez-vous”= “commit suicide” because there is an increase in police suicides with the repression) not knowing that the police officers could turn into CRS with the baton in the air. All this was organized without central direction, only through grassroots discussion among themselves.

There was also a fairly strong solidarity from the truckers who honked their horns every time they passed near the blockage points, stopped to have the coffee they were offered, leaving the truck in the middle of the road blocking it on that occasion. Individuals also honked their horns or brought food or wood to be heated.

Some slogans insisted on the revolt of the French people but immigrants were also in the movement and were accepted without problem. In addition to the demands for the revaluation of wages and pensions, there was support for the restoration of the wealth tax (ISF). Sometimes, some racist explosions occurred from the very minority sectors influenced by RN and Marine Le Pen, which have been dumping their poison for decades.

In the discussion there were many illusions about the strength of movement and laws. For example, the articles of the constitutional law were being discussed to dismiss the president. Some were surprised that these means had very little chance of success. For them, the law should apply ipso facto. They were in the infancy of a spontaneous movement where the real issue was the decline in purchasing power. There were few traces of extreme right-wing ideologies, but rather illusions about the bourgeois law and constitution....

On the roundabouts, it was possible, with a lot of listening and success, to talk about “the concrete”. That is to say, an increase in salaries and pensions. To do this effectively, it would have taken hundreds of activists with a proper plan and orientation doing mass-political work.

It was not necessary to go against the prejudices of the most “apolitical and anti-union” Yellow Vests in order to orient the movement towards left-wing social demands while avoiding any attempt at recovery. That is, not to impose an orientation on a movement that still needed time to be enriched by the experience of struggle but orientated it. A work almost impossible under the conditions described above where everything seems to have combined to prevent it.

THE POLITICAL SHIFTS AFTER THE 17th AND THE REST OF THE MOVEMENT.

After the 17th, the NPA made a full U-turn, LO rectified the situation and after weighing the pros and cons and choosing
nothing, as is its habit with its centrist essence, ended up supporting the movement, while advancing its resources and activists sparingly because “they could not abandon their daily tasks”.

The other parties, made statements of circumstances more directed at their future voters as the European elections were on the horizon. The week was running, the government was K.O., Macron silent and in his party, which is not characterized by the independence or quality of its MPs, even if there were a few dissenting votes, quickly stifled.

The press, under orders of their owners all friends of Macron, insisted on the “violence” of the Yellow Vests, thus attracting those who do not wanted a real fight. There had been some deaths and injuries in the roadblocks. The Minister of the Interior, Castaner, used these incidents to deter the “peaceful” Yellow Vests. In the meantime, he was preparing some provocative plans.

Because “Act II” (as the Yellow Vests called it), had begun with a call to “go up to Paris” into the Champs Élysées and to the Palais de l’Élysée, the official residence of the Presidents of the Republic, where the unions never dared to go.

The Prefecture, under Castaner’s orders, declared that “we would not allow entry into the most beautiful avenue in the world”. The Yellow Vests, who do not have a sense of the hierarchies of a dialogue union, did not consider these injunctions and declared that, as citizens, they had the right to go everywhere.

In Paris, on the 24th, they walked to the Arc de Triomphe, occupied by the CRSs who were playing cat and mouse with the demonstrators by throwing tear gas canisters in all directions.

In the afternoon, the Yellow Vests noticed that the CRS platoons had moved back 500 meters, leaving the way completely clear for the demonstrators, whose numbers had increased. The Yellow Vests occupied the Champs Élysées. At 5pm sharp the police brought water-launching trucks, throwing an even denser cloud of tear gas to clear the Champs Élysées without encountering much opposition.

We cannot oppose an army of CRS, without leadership, coordination, or blunt elements, in short, with the sole will and bare hands. In 10 minutes, everything was over, except the provocation of Castaner, Minister of the Interior, through the raging media against the “violence” of the Yellow Vests!

THE STRUGGLE PUSHES EVERYTHING TO THE LEFT AND THE MOVEMENT BECOMES MORE RADICAL

The CGT began to be under pressure from its base. Several unions have supported the Yellow Vest movement. Similarly, the protest in left-wing parties has increased. The leaders did not call for a demonstration with the Yellow Vests even though it sent their activists in droves, more to observe the movement than to actually participate in it.

The blockages were maintained and actions were taken the week before “Act III”. But Castaner did not give up and “forbade the Champs Élysées to demonstrators”, that is to say to the Yellow Vests. For their part, the yellow vests responded by maintaining the march on the Champs Élysées.

The unleashed press makes a big fuss of such a response. “Forums”, “surveys”, “analyses”, “programs with yellow jackets” multiplied with the only question “Are you in favour of violence?”

Castaner has prepared another provocation. As the YVs were going to march, on
December 1st at any cost, this time it was necessary to prepare a real scene of looting and breakage.

The CGT in turn had the brilliant idea of calling for a demonstration on the same day, at the same time but at Paris’ opposite end of the Yellow Vests demonstration, fearing convergence. Lutte Ouvrière and the Communist Party called for a demonstration... with the C.G.T. This demonstration was a complete flop.

The CEGETISTS base did not want to know anything about divisional maneuvers when there was the fight and the Yellow Vests challenge at the behest of a provocative minister. We all had to go together to the Champs Elysées and take part in this struggle. But CGT management was committed to supporting the government and continues to do so. When the Yellow Vests arrived at the Place de l’Etoile, there were already masked people breaking and once the fight started, they destroyed businesses and cars.

This characteristic, the “violence” shown on television, will permeate the movement for many weeks at its expense, allowing police action, itself well assisted by extreme right-wing groups and by the infantilism of semi-anarchist or ultra-left groups.

These groups serve the government’s policy of repression by keeping the masses away from demonstrations. It will also serve to reduce popular support. This violent repression was the only possible policy and response of the regime.

These small groups, without any political significance, will argue among themselves, further contributing to drive away the Yellow Vests who wanted to demonstrate massively. These fights often polluted the later General Assemblies, which will not be able to deal with the movement’s future.

These semi-anarchists, who only see repression and to fight fascists and who do
not understand the political traps set by the government, can only play a role under the conscious leadership of the entire working class. Otherwise; they always play the game of the bourgeoisie and repression.

**FIRST CONCESSIONS OF POWER**

Following the blockades, the Prime Minister promised that gasoline taxes would “be frozen for six months”, a timid measure that made the Yellow Vests laugh. Macron was in Argentina where he “condemned the violence” of the demonstrators. The radicalization of the movement as well as the demands expressed by the GJs increasingly focused on purchasing power could not please the bosses and their political expression, the right, with Wauquiez, who abandoned the ship.

**REACTION OF THE PARTIES TO THE NEW SITUATION**

The RN, which aspires to take advantage of the movement, has declared itself opposed to increasing the minimum wage because it does not want to come into conflict with the bosses and its social base, composed of petty bourgeois and reactionary bosses.

The PCF is inaudible. Its activists are non-existent because of its orientation, which led to its own liquidation. The NPA has found a new life in this movement. Some of its fractions supported the YVs from the beginning. Unfortunately, as their management’s policy had reduced their forces, they were short of resources before the movement began or goes from the right to leftism.

LO, discreetly sent some few militants in the movement but latter they disappeared after a few weeks. They have made some stickers and continues for the most, their party’s routine. POI activists were present from the beginning but seem to participate as individuals, not advancing political orientation to the movement. No one seems to understand what a real political mass work is. They say “YV don’t want political recuperation”. They seem not to understand what should be discreet work in a still backward union.

**INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT**

With its battles on the Place de l’Etoile and the Champs Élysées on the third Act, the movement crossed borders and there were
requests everywhere to know what was going on. In every corner of the world, in some countries, there was a certain contagion. In Belgium there have been street fights as well as in Bulgaria and even in Iraq. The Egyptian dictator banned the sale of the Yellow Vests. In Brazil, Argentina and Chile, questions were raised. In Lyon, a delegation from the Italian COBAS union participated in the demonstrations.

THE PRESS AT THE ORDERS, INTELLECTUALS AND “EXPERTS”
The government, which tried all along to put an end to the revolt, launched a campaign through television and newspapers filled with “political analysis” and slanderous and hateful comments against the “violence” of the Yellow Vests, their supposed “homophobic or racist remarks”. Some opportunists who put themselves forward were chased away immediately by the YVs. In the end, in television, we heard only one bell ring, where “experts” claimed that “the fall of growth” or the ruin of trade were the fault of the Yellow Vests…

The Yellow Vests therefore developed a very clear awareness of the manipulation of the press by the government, a very salutary rejection of the capitalist press but little organizing an effective counter-propaganda. This will come through Facebook. Class consciousness often advances faster through the experience of struggle.

THE CGT AND LEFT-WING PARTIES EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT
The solid pillar of the government is not Castaner’s strategy of repression, but the CGT and other unions that retain workers. “Violent” demonstrations such as the determination of the Yellow Vests does not weaken carries-on the movement and attracts students and workers.

The question of claims as well as the junction of struggles are at the center of discussions between the right and left wings of the movement. The great difficulty is that at this point, before January 2019, in the conflict there are no meetings to discuss these issues.

APPEARS THE RIC
The fourth week saw the emergence in the press of a demand made by a number of Yellow Vests, the RIC (Citizens’ Initiative Referendum), which seemed to have emerged from France’s Insubordinate program. This demand is also very close to the RIP Referendum of Popular Initiative of the presidential program of M.L.Pen. This is a democratic demand that will effectively silence wage demands and pension increases for more than a month.

The RIC very quickly become popular among the Yellow Vests because it represents the political expression of those who have no voice and are not represented by unions or left-wing parties. The RIC, in its essence, is the voice of the voiceless, at least in the consciousness of the Yellow Vests. It is also a primitive form of contestation of the bourgeois representation system and thus of the capitalist system in a very confused, primary, embryonic form.

Political demands such as the RIC, appear at a time when questions of purchasing power had taken over. Macron will try to use it as a diversion.

The correct tactic, put forward by some Yellow Vests, was to give the RIC a perspective that reminds us of the Paris Commune with the revocability of elected officials, their control by the base, their remuneration at the level of a qualified employee, the periodic reporting to their electors, the legislative and administrative initiative
of the population. As YVs say “RIC in all matters”.

What has been lacking in this period is the lack of left-wing political frameworks in each place, able to explain and convince to unite the ideas and perspectives of the movement in order to get it on track and thus work to connect with working employees. But, perhaps, due to their twisted ideology, they would break the movement with some bureaucratic measures and policies.

THE REPRESSION IS UNLEASHED.

Thus, the December 8 demonstration will take place in the midst of a terrorist campaign of intimidation by the government. The repressive measures will be of a magnitude almost never seen before. The Ministry of the Interior mobilized 89,000 police officers for just over 130,000 demonstrators, they claimed. Military tanks, water cannons, helicopters, snipers’ shooters and a white-hot troop that even fears for its life! This was the climate of psychosis organized by the government and the press at theirs orders.

This repression has always been the response of all bourgeois governments pushed by the big bourgeoisie, which wants to restructure its domination in order to safeguard its profits and win its struggle against its competitors. It will also be the only real government response to the social movement of Yellow Vests like the ones that will come.

Despite this repressive wave, cracks appeared at the top of the state when Macron, returning from Argentina, abolished taxes on gasoline, thus putting the Prime Minister, who had only signed a moratorium, out of line. This repressive wave will last for months, causing very serious injuries to hundreds of Yellow Vests. Eyes off, hands torn off, dead people.

The masses entering the political arena are fighting hard and courageously. In the long term, it is the beginning of the end of a long decline in the fighting spirit of the working and poor classes in France. An encouragement to the struggle of the working class throughout the world. Police violence puts Interior Minister Castaner, who is the fuse behind which the bourgeoisie hides, and Macron who supports him, in the front line.
NEW TACTICS TO DEFUSE THE MOVEMENT

Macron, will try a whole series of manoeuvres to put an end to the movement which is preventing him from developing his agenda of counter-reforms. He will start by offering a total of 20 euros more for some smicards (Smic=minimum legal wage. Many people are under this smic). This clumsy attempt was stillborn.

The next step is to increase police repression in order to frighten the Yellow Vests and terrorize and deter people who would like to come to protest. But this only partially works, although it hinders their massive participation.

There was a terrorist attack, quickly put under the bushel because the police had let the terrorist ‘S file’ (terrorists file of the police) pass after having identified him. The provocation, which lasted a week, was pointed out everywhere. Castaner, Macron and his political family, who were waiting for an attack as a safety net against the movement, took advantage of the fundamentalists. Of course, the press makes a deafening campaign to drown, with this fundamentalist, the Yellow Vests. The amalgams are going well.

Then came a new event every week that the press reported with the hope, never realized, to finish off the movement. This ranges from the call to “respect Christmas holidays”, to accusations of “anti-Semitism” because the racist and Zionist Finkelraut was called a “Zionist shit” which he deserved fully or because important people were trapped by Macron’s propaganda journalists or because “the police are tired”, or because of the “consequences for the French economy” or, more finely, by the overvaluing by the press of the “YV’s electoral lists”, or of the supposed “leaders” quickly sent back to the ropes, or by a vision of the RIC intend-
ed to hide social demands. The response of the GJs each time was “We don’t yield anything! “ On ne lâche rien!

THE C.G.T. DO “AS IF”.

Making an overall movement of Yellow Vests, workers and students was the watchword of the most conscious elements of the Yellow Vests and would have dealt a terrible political blow to the regime.

It was not easy, the Yellow Vests, some of the poorest workers, skinned alive by the repeated betrayals of union leaders, did not want to participate in any “one-day union walks”. They were rightly wary of the trade union leaders’ acquaintances with power and capitalists.

This contradiction between the needs and political consciousness of the Yellow Vests makes us understand the form and course of the movement. Its strength explains the half-hearted, but increasingly important, rallying of both left-wing parties and local trade union federations.

THE FAR RIGHT SHOWS ITS TRUE FACE

On 13 December 2018, two days before the Yellow Vests demonstration and one day after the fundamentalist attack, the right and the far-right separately called for “no demonstrations”. Already Marine Le Pen and Wauquiez had opposed Macron’s false “increase in Smic” because “small businesses would not be able to suffer it and would be forced to close shop and lay off their staff”. Such arguments have revealed their true face.

Naturally, the Yellow Vests did not consider such calls. They do not intend to stop their movement even if God the Father asks them to. Such an opportunity to denounce the extreme right for what it is, the extreme party of capitalists, should have left the field clear to the left to show the
true nature of these politicians... if they
would have been there.

We began to see joint parades of trade
unions, students and yellow jackets, the
appearance of slogans and flags of left-
wing parties, demonstrations of interna-
tional solidarity.

The general trend at this stage of the
movement is objectively to the left, even
more so with the abandonment of Wau-
quiez and Marine Le Pen even if the latter
tries to hold on as best it can.

OSCILLATIONS OF MOVE-
MENT

But one thing is the objective tendency of
the movement and another is the subjec-
tive consciousness of the Yellow Vests.
Sometimes, consciousness may well mani-
fest itself late in relation to a movement's
objective claims.

And that is what the government is bet-
ting on. After the Yellow Vests push for-
ward with the recovery of the ISF, the
increase in Smic and the decrease in the
CSG (a tax) for retirees, the government
and its Prime Minister would like to try to
“smoke” (fool) people with false plans,
ilusions, “parliamentary commissions”,
“viability studies” and other deceptions.

This confusion has arisen because of the
low political level of the rebellious masses
and the influence of the bourgeois parties,
which have no political link but an ideologi-
cal influence with the movement such as
an electoral interpretation of the RIC.

This will cause oscillations of conscious-
ness and a sometimes yellow vests’ rather
erratic, heterogeneous, diverse attitudes
according to cities and localities.

This fight, like all real fights, is long, but
we count on the development of Yellow
Vests consciousness, which is done in
leaps and bounds and, in the end, almost
always in the right direction.

THE END OF THE ROUND-
ABOUTS

At the same time, the Minister of the Inter-
ior publicly expressed his willingness to
end all blocking points. Castaner used a
police and media campaign of terror.

The blocking points included the most
active elements of the proletariat among
the Yellow Vests. Little by little, these plac-
es of blockade, became places of discus-
sion and action where one could make
oneself known, put forward ideas and ex-
change, belong to a “family”, uniting the
links that is always a sure way to perpetu-
ate a movement for the future.

They were also locations of propaganda
by action that radiated far beyond the plac-
es where they were located. The govern-
ment saw the danger and choose the date near the end of the year to dismantle them. Yellow Vests cannot prevent disassembly because they are a handful in these places. Their mistrust of any direction or leaders, the lack of a solid and disciplined organization, prevent them from gathering and defending themselves. Roundabouts were eliminated almost everywhere thus removing a support base for the movement.

THE END OF YEAR PERIOD AND THE JANUARY RECOVERY

At the end of the year, the government, which had seen the number of demonstrators decrease from 120,000 to 27,000, thought that the movement was over. It was a great surprise when on the first Saturday in January, more than 100,000 demonstrators, with the same fighting spirit as before, demonstrated again.

The movement began to develop in a rather particular way. In some cities such as Bordeaux, Toulouse, there were many demonstrators, but in Paris and Lyon, they were reduced due to repression, or the divisions of demos induced by very young YVs, very active but totally unaware of what a social movement. Time is almost the only remedy for juvenile impatience in the conditions of an spontaneous and not politically advanced movement of the working class that is abandoned by worker’s organizations.

BEGINNING OF YELLOW VESTS ORGANIZATION

Since January, the Yellow Vests have started to organize themselves. First and almost from the beginning, countless Yellow Vests websites appeared that commented or published information or proposals. But it was quite difficult to find your way around because you couldn’t know who was behind each publication or message and whether the action announcements were serious or not. Needless to say, the Prefectures have had a field day to misinform and disorientate.

Calls for General Assemblies have appeared everywhere, some announced during demonstrations and on the Internet. Many former activists participate more or less actively, but often promote their leftism, as do groups that follow all the movements without working well anywhere. They call for “world revolution” and were seen as martiens.

Larger parties, some simply do not come to these General Meetings and watch the learning of the masses from the top of their knowledge and do not deign to participate. Fortunately, there are some exceptions. There are some NPA militants and POI activists who participate but without a consistent orientation being detected. They have taken the supposed apolitical nature of the Yellow Vests too seriously, they make interventions that are too neutral and forget or fail to do their political duty.

These General Meetings (called A.G.s in French “Assemblées Générales”) also needed time to adapt and learn, alas, sometimes too long. Time in politics is a fact that cannot be neglected or wasted.

THE FORMS OF STRUGGLE AND THE IMPASSES OF INEXPERIENCE

Inexperience but especially semi-anarchist ideas have given the characteristics of the movement. These ideas, consequences of the betrayals of the left, are widespread even among the Yellow Vests close to the ideas of the Insubordinate France.

The rejection of both leaders and representation, as well as a very limited understanding of direct democracy, causes slowness and discussion on everything and
What marked Act 21 of the Yellow Vests movement the most is probably not the demonstrations, but the great success of the second edition of the “Assembly of Assemblies of Yellow Vests” held in Saint-Nazaire on April 5th, 6th, and 7th. Indeed, the more than 200 delegations of nearly 700 people representing 10,000 Yellow Vests throughout the country tried to lay the groundwork for the structuration of the bottom of the movement, saying openly not to recognise any self-proclaimed leader.

prevents the necessary tactical flexibility and manoeuvring, which is an essential condition for a successful movement.

The lack of understanding of the nature of the press, the State, the repressive forces, the laws, class justice, is another obstacle, but it has been overcome in the space of two months by the best school, the class struggle.

Under the conditions of this movement which is slow, which can go from good claims to falling into traps that paralyses it, to get back on the right track again, shows a zigzagging, oscillating path. The only logic that explains this process is that of “fighting, failing; fighting again, failing again and so on until victory”. However, the Yellow Vests do not yet know this synthesis of all social movements.

The result of the clashes with few people is quite simple: the police disperse the demonstration, many people leave and the rest are gassed copiously without being able to respond because there is not the necessary critical number, neither the organization, nor the major state, in order to effectively oppose the police charges. All this is difficult to combat because the TV effect, the idea that anything that is not covered by the media leaves the population indifferent, is very widespread.

Lately, the government has hidden all the information on the Yellow Vests in its two main channels, as it had done during the movement of the unemployed. The illusory dreams have just fallen from above. The press is not free, it is at the service of power and capitalists. The movement should have equipped itself from the beginning with the means to reach out to the population and maintain and expand its support.
THE NATIONAL DEBATE
The Macron government, pushed by the Yellow Vests movement, decided to organize a “National Debate”… against them. He began by appointing President Chantal Jouano to chair it. Unfortunately, this person received 14,660 euros per month to hear the “complaints and lead the debates” of the yellow vests, which many, earn 1000 euros per month.

Faced with the outcry, Chantal Jouano gave up while continuing to affirm that she found the amount of her emoluments justified. This fact shows the functioning of all the senior officials who loot the state coffers.

The state’s manna, to which some left-wing parties aspire to become a new parasitic and exploitative layer, is also the source from which politicians who serve employers are paid.

It was Macron himself, therefore, who began with a long de facto election campaign under the guise of a “National Debate”. Members of his party tried to do the same, but many were confronted with the anger of the Yellow Vests.

THE MOVEMENT AND ITS PERSPECTIVES
From the third week of January, the Yellow Vests movement moved forward in its organization. Many meetings and General Assemblies have taken place. Recently they have been coordinating, but its resolutions only apply to those who are willing to follow them.

The most important was the Assembly of Commercy, which after a democratic debate by more than 70 delegations from all over the country, proposed to the other Assemblies a left-wing social-democratic program that is the most advanced at the moment. Various Local Assemblies have approved it, but as there are no official spokespersons, and as the press hides it, it is not widely distributed.

This situation of rudimentary organization with a program not recognized by all Yellow Vests, continues but efforts are being made to improve it.

The recent General Assembly of Saint Nazaire took another step forward, bringing together more than 200 delegations and declaring that to achieve a better society it will be necessary to overthrow capitalism.

The request to join the Yellow Vests movement with the organized trade union movement was one of the most left-wing and lucid demands of some sectors. These Yellow Vests saw the need to broaden the movement, but found themselves confronted with a rejection of some YVs who were among the most disgusted with the action of the trade union leaders within the movement. An opposition that reflects both their level of consciousness and the fact that they have been abandoned by the trade union movement.

THE A-POLITICAL AWARENESS OF YELLOW VESTS
At first sight, this awareness is marked by the rejection of “politics”, politicians as well as “unions”, their corrupt leaders, their pretense of “struggles”. This is caused by years of abandoning class struggle ideas.

What is remarkable is that this apoliticism is accompanied by political ideas, the RIC, of the measures to be taken to change this situation. This a-politicism is opposed to politicians and bureaucrats and prefigures the criticism of a potential “new class” which, starting from the apparatus of trade unions, political “left parties” and the State apparatus, enriches itself, becomes ankylosed and through their monopoly of “knowledge” and through the positions acquired in the bureaucratic ap-
paratus, become a new dominant layer which uses and abuses the privileges obtained by the over-exploitation of the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie.

In fact, this a-politicism has at least a double character: reactionary in the sense that it delays the organization and development of a political and revolutionary class consciousness, truly communist when it opposes future bureaucrats and profiteers and demands that democracy be as close as possible to citizens and immigrants, that representatives be paid at the level of an employee, controlled and revocable and that citizens can intervene in the preparation and promulgation and control of laws.

This a-politicism is therefore only a distorted consciousness taken from the ideological and political background of the bourgeoisie in its form, but which is healthy in its content and which already prepares the struggles of the socialist society.

On this question, the former Marxist-Leninists, or the best Trotskyists and anarchists, benefit from their memories and the theoretical contribution of the continuation of class struggle in a socialist society. And it opposes the “bourgeois experts” in the best tradition of criticising bureaucratic and/or state ‘socialism’. We understand that this is the corruption that power engenders. We know we must counterpose to this the absolute necessity of establishing Communes in the Paris style, as a sine qua non for socialism.

ADVANTAGES BECOME BARRIERS
The lack of organization at the beginning and the desire not to have spokespersons who would have rallied many workers at the beginning, became the major obstacle of the movement. Despite General Assemblies and expanded meetings, the movement does not yet have a national centre or demands recognized by all.

The craze also by forms of activism without perspective, of struggle without consciously having a goal and a plan to achieve it, of semi-anarchists currents that enter
political life or that confuse fighting with a combative social movement. Their blind trust in the bourgeois press and/or its laws, all in the service of the ruling class, deceives them and misleads the movement while serving the repressive policies of the government. In doing so, they keep many people away who could participate in the demonstrations. This can create a situation of stagnation, with the consequence of a loss of support that the bourgeois power has tried to show as a period of decline without return.

This blind activism goes beyond the interests of the movement and has driven some Yellow Vests away and confined the movement into a deadlock which, like all previous deadlocks, awaits its positive resolution.

And yet, week after week the movement persists with the same strength and determination until today (23/04/2019). Nevertheless, it is imperative that a social movement progresses organically, programmatically, in number and strength. The only possible perspective is to clearly say what we are, the 70% of those left behind, claiming better living and working conditions and calling the other 30% to a common fight.

The movement is now concentrated in the big cities, which still reflects its proletarianization. Thus, in recent weeks, it is in Marseille, Toulouse, Bordeaux that we have seen the maximum number of demonstrators. In both Lyon and Paris, there has been an increase in the number of demonstrators, but for the time being this has not reached the level of some previous demonstrations.

**CONCLUSION**

-In our opinion, the Yellow Vests movement is a first attempt of proletarian opposition against the capitalist offensive that will do everything possible to achieve its ends. The Bonapartist drift of the regime coincides with the same trends in other advanced capitalist countries hit by the crisis and fierce competition between capitalist powers.

- This situation takes place in a context of the beginning of the awakening of the international working class.

- The Yellow Vests movement has put forward the demands of proletarians who are not organized into parties or trade unions, of those who are living difficult ends of the month, who cannot make ends meet, who are in precariousness, exclusion, who depend on social assistance.

- The very deep roots of the movement plunge into the material situation of the large masses impoverished by capitalism.

- The disorganized, semi-anarchic nature of the early movement is the result of decades of betrayal by trade unions, traditional left-wing parties and the inability of the far-left to offer a political alternative to the masses.

- Thus, the movement can only have an erratic, oscillating trajectory, subject to all the manoeuvres and blows of reaction under all its variants, both political and ideological and repressive but which, by its own characteristics, tends towards the left.

- The persistence of the movement is the product of the depth and necessity of satisfying its demands as well as its class composition, composed mainly of poor proletarians.

- The beginning of a, “apolitical and anti-trade union” struggle can attract the masses who have remained at a very low level of political awareness, but in the long term it becomes a brake and an obstacle. However, the struggle is a first-rate political school and will set up the necessary organizational structures and advance their political consciousness.
The absence of a mass policy of left-wing and far-left parties, and/or the leftism of some small groups and the disorganizing activity of groups more interested in the fight than in politics are all obstacles that will always appear in this type of struggle. In our opinion, this will be one of the characteristics of future struggles because of the obstacles that political apparatuses and trade union bureaucracies imposes collaborating objectively with the bourgeoisie.

- The need to build a party willing to do serious work that starts from the real level of mass consciousness, to achieve, in a planned, constant and resolute way, advancing step by step with it, while letting it carry out its own experience, must clearly state the perspective of overthrowing capitalism and building a socialist society.

Under the conditions of a movement such as the Yellow Vests, this party must be able to help in understanding the issues, advance political demands specific to workers and propose appropriate forms of organization but learning also from the movement in the struggle.

This action must be accompanied by a more in-depth theoretical explanation of the whole movement. It must be propagated within the movement itself by addressing the most advanced elements, by organizing them, by giving them a broader political perspective. Left communist should know how to work in every possible situation.

The Yellow Vest movement not only showed another form of struggle, but acted as a powerful corrosive on the rust that invaded trade unions and left-wing parties, cleaning up and creating a salutary distinction between those who have definitively lost all contact with the social movement and the political ideas of the proletariat and those who seek a way out of bureaucratic, conservative, sectarian or passive impasses.

It is also an actual demonstration that the only possible perspective for the great masses is the struggle to end capitalism and build a society of universal socialist democracy. ▲

Yellow Fever: It is also an actual demonstration that the only possible perspective for the great masses is the struggle to end capitalism and build a society of universal socialist democracy