

**Communist Party of the  
Workers of France (PCOF)**

**For a  
Revolutionary  
Break  
with the System**

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## *Presentation*

This book is the Political Report adopted by the Ninth Congress of our party.

It covers the period from December 2015 to December 2019. It therefore does not take into account the developments in the mobilizations against the pension reform, which open a new stage in the social struggle of the past four years.

This "ordinary" congress (that is, held within the statutory deadlines) therefore took place in a context that was far from being ordinary; a context that the delegates had to face and that existed throughout the congress itself.

These years were undoubtedly characterized by an acceleration and a deepening of the class struggle in our country and internationally.

There have been great mobilizations against the El Khomri law against the Macron ordinances, in defense of the public services: rail transport, health care, education, and other sectors, and the powerful movement of yellow vests. There has been a succession in an unprecedented scale of strikes, demonstrations, occupations of squares and streets. Each time, they brought new experiences in increasingly radical forms of struggles, expressing the anger, the social and environmental demands and against neoliberalism.

At the international level, "neoliberal globalization" has entered a deep crisis. This "each against all" neoliberalism has been developing, under the blows of the US administration that has gone to war at the economic, commercial, political and military levels against all its rivals but also against its imperialist "allies".

To oppose this, obviously, it is not possible to rely on other imperialisms, notably on French imperialism, but it is necessary to the struggles of the workers, the peoples, the youth and the other sectors which denounce and fight everywhere against neoliberal policies, regardless of the government in office, foreign interference and imperialist domination.

The underlying goal guiding our analysis and the choice of questions, events, developments is to point out the new and main aspects of the process of decay of the imperialist capitalist system, and the abandonment by the working class and the people's camp of taboos such as not to resist orders and prohibitions, not to disobey, to condemn "all forms of violence", not to legitimize resistance

against the violence of the repressive forces of the State at the service of Capital. This shows the growing distancing by the masses from electoralism, and their refusal to be trapped within the framework of the institutions of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, which is subject to the diktat of the monopolies. It is the increasingly systematic questioning of the economic, political and institutional system that allows capitalism to survive on the backs of the workers and peoples.

This is why we are talking about the need to **break** with the imperialist capitalist system. A number of conditions must be met for such a break to take place as the work of the masses. But we think it is important to work on this now. In these pages, we show the necessity of such work by analysing how sharp the class struggle is, both nationally and internationally. At the end of this analysis, we present the axes of social and political struggle that must be waged to make it possible to work concretely to achieve this break.

There is a race between the oligarchy, its political forces, its instruments of domination, which are ever more repressive, more aggressive, and the workers and peoples, who are resisting and fighting to refuse to pay for the crisis of a system which only benefits a small minority.

We set forth this document for discussion by all those who identify themselves as waging the fight for the emancipation of workers and peoples.

March 15, 2020

Central Committee of the Communist Party  
of the Workers of France

## ***Introduction***

The Political Report of the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of PCOF covers the period from the end of 2015 to the end of 2019.

On the international situation, the Political Report of the 8th Congress, entitled "2011-2015: Our Struggle for a Revolutionary Break" stated:

*"Neoliberalism did not "solve" the crisis, but made it worse... The policy of the financial oligarchy to maximize profits is being denounced and fought everywhere... We are in a phase of sharpening of the inter-imperialist contradictions, of the struggle for the control of the wealth.... Middle East oil remains one of the issues at stake among the big imperialist powers...; Africa is another issue.... The European Union, economically dominated by German imperialism, is a player in this confrontation among imperialist powers and blocs. French imperialism, which is in difficulty regarding its allies and rivals, clings to its strong points, in particular its military power, the weight of certain monopolies, to defend its interests in particular in Africa "<sup>1</sup>.*

What is the situation five years later?

**The neoliberal policies remain the model followed by the immense majority of the governments around the world, while they are being increasingly challenged by the workers and peoples,** who, of course, reach different levels of organization from country to country. But one can say without exaggerating that "neoliberal globalization"<sup>2</sup> is increasingly perceived and denounced for being opposed to the interests of the vast majority of the people, and for having only reinforced the domination of the monopolies and enriched the oligarchy at levels never reached before.

In a growing number of countries, the state and its repressive apparatus are increasingly deployed on the front line to impose this model. Neoliberalism rhymes with police state, international tensions, destabilization and wars.

One of the major promoters of this destabilization policy is US imperialism, with Trump and his administration in power. This is why in the section dedicated to the analysis of the international situ-

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<sup>1</sup> Conclusion of the analysis of the international situation, *Political Report of the 8th Congress*, December 2015, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> See the definition in the appendix, p. 49.

ation so much importance is given to US imperialism

**The crisis of the world imperialist system is not being resolved; it is deepening.**

The rates of growth of the GDP, which are the favorite indicator of bourgeois economic analysts, are falling or are experiencing a major slowdown, including in the states with "driving" economies, such as China. There is increasing talk about a new financial crisis, that could be more devastating than the one of 2007-2008.

The growing inequality and concentration of wealth in the hands of a minority have increased. "In 2019, billionaires around the world, that is only 2,153 people, together had more wealth than 4.6 billion people"<sup>1</sup>. The rich always get richer. For example, the value of stocks on the New York Stock Exchange of very large companies of the "digital economy", whose headquarters are in the USA but which have the whole world as their market, amounts to \$1 trillion (\$1,000,000,000).

The categories referred to as "middle strata"<sup>2</sup>, also supposed to be the beneficiaries of "globalization", in Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa, have become poorer, and in many countries, in some cases they are demonstrating alongside the popular masses.

International bodies (United Nations Development Program, World Bank, etc.) agree on the following observation: very extreme poverty (income of less than US \$1 per day) has declined worldwide, but still affects 740 million people, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where it is increasing. But overall, poverty is increasing: 50% of the world's population lives on less than US \$5.50 a day, and 876 million adults are illiterate, 2/3 of whom are women.

Extreme poverty concerns in particular the millions of displaced people, most of them peasant families fleeing wars and conflicts, misery and hunger. They are crammed into cities that are growing at breakneck speed, lacking minimal infrastructure, except for the handful of privileged people. These people drain the coffers of the state and sell the wealth of "their" country, whether mineral, agri-

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<sup>1</sup> Figures from Oxfam in its Report on the State of the World's Poverty, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of "middle strata" is vague: it does not define a class position but rather an "average" level of income and standard of living between the poorest and the richest.



cultural, water or land, to the imperialist powers (USA, China, Russia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, etc.), to the so-called emerging capitalist powers that aspire to become major regional powers (Turkey, India, Saudi Arabia, Iran, South Africa, Brazil, etc.). Although they differ in terms of their economic and military development and their political weight, they are all part of the world imperialist capitalist system. These regional powers depend on the imperialists, particularly with regard to investment and the privileged economic relations they have with one or the other of the great imperialist powers, not to mention their military ties.

**The “rise in power of China”** is another question that we will deal with, in connection with the question of the confrontation between the USA and China, to try to better appreciate the global consequences of this confrontation in all aspects.

Right now, we can argue that there is an identity of opinion within the Western camp on the importance of preventing at all costs the “rapprochement” between Russia and China. But there are differences in ways to achieve this.

**Shortly after 2015, the EU entered a phase of difficulties** linked to various internal and external factors. The leaders of the troika (European Union, International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank) trampled on the Greek people, punishing them for daring to stand up to them<sup>1</sup>. This "victory" of the oligarchy, especially of the German oligarchy, raised, among other things, the question of the Euro and the possibility of abandoning it.

In the United Kingdom, which was not a member of the Eurozone, it was the very question of EU membership that gradually focused the political debates. The victory of the "yes" vote on the Brexit referendum opened a long period of uncertainty, which is still not over, both for the consequences for the United Kingdom and for the EU itself. Especially since the contradictions have not ceased to multiply.

The economically dominant power, namely German imperialism, has itself entered a period of large-scale confrontations with US imperialism, which has consequences for its ability to impose its interests on all the states of the EU. The latter is growing less "united", and the internal tensions among its states continue to sharpen,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Lessons to be learned from the struggle of the Greek people*, text adopted at the 8th Congress and published in April 2016.

fanned and exploited by the other imperialist powers.

**The neoliberal policies which are carried out today everywhere in the world, under every form of government, are accompanied by growing tensions among the different imperialist and capitalist states**, as shown by the increasing war budgets and sales of arms: \$1.78 trillion were spent on militarization in 2018<sup>1</sup>. As for conflicts and wars, they have increased in number and intensity, "measured" by the number of people killed, but also wounded or mutilated, and by the destruction of entire cities. The heaps of ruins of war are now usual, but these destructions mean considerable regression in the living conditions of the peoples. Another and more devious form of war is also spreading in the form of blockades that drag on, starving entire populations, in order to destabilize countries, foment unrest to overthrow regimes that do not submit to US imperialism. Today's present victims are Venezuela, Iran, North Korea and Syria, not to mention Cuba since 1962.

The use of this economic and political weapon constitutes a real war crime. It collectively punishes the peoples through sanctions against the countries, companies, or individuals accused of "circumventing the blockade" based on the so-called extraterritoriality of US justice<sup>2</sup>.

**Neoliberal policies lead to resistance and often massive mobilizations that "explode" when people feel that "enough is enough"**. The spark of the protests may be another increase in gasoline prices or fares for public transportation (as in Chile), which make life impossible, added to the decay of public services, if and where they exist. Or it may be the organized racket of private companies. Or the increase in the price of basic necessities, the increase in taxes or the excessive number of taxes (as in France with the Yellow Vests movement. Not only are the rich and the big companies gradually paying less taxes, but they grab an ever-increasing share

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<sup>1</sup> The figures from SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) highlight the 33.7% increase in spending between 2008 and 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The extraterritoriality of US justice consists in subjecting any business, person, institution or other entity to US laws when they have "links" with the US, such as using dollars for transactions, computer services based in the US, etc The embargoes that strike these countries are enshrined in US laws.

of the wealth, in the form of aid and subsidies. They are the only real "welfare recipients" of the capitalist-imperialist system.

This "too much" is also the corruption that has plagued right-wing governments as well as those which claim to be left-wing, but pursue neoliberal policies (as in several Latin American countries), or those which define themselves mainly by religion or an exacerbated nationalism and which thus want to perpetuate the divisions within populations in order to remain in power (as in Iraq, in Lebanon, etc.).

It is in terms of the rise of popular struggles that we will review a number of countries that have witnessed major movements in recent years, in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East.

### **Climate change and its consequences**

This question has become a global problem characterized by a marked acceleration of devastating climatic phenomena, with very hazardous human and economic consequences, which are the source of great conflicts, both within countries and at the global level. Debates continue to take place on how responsible are human activities in this climate change, which is a fact that no one can deny. But the solution is neither in the "free and undistorted market", nor in the ability of science to solve these problems, which is an almost metaphysical belief. It is clear for us that, the imperialist capitalist system is indeed responsible. This is the fundamental position that we are working to share as widely as possible. It is clear that this same system is developing economic strategies to try to adapt the production apparatus to this context.

In particular, one must seek answers to a series of questions: the scarcity of a certain number of natural resources; the different forms of pollution and environmental degradation; the consequences for agriculture, town planning, transportation and communications which have taken on a considerable scale and importance in the imperialist capitalist system.

The issue of "climate" is often raised by important sectors of the youth. It is linked to their own future. These massive movements, which put the responsibility on the "system", are the object of multiple maneuvers to prevent this system from being clearly named: the capitalist imperialist system. Among the challenges they have to meet, the progressive and revolutionary forces have to raise awareness about the need to integrate this

struggle into the general struggle to bring about the break with the capitalist imperialist system.

### **How French imperialism operates in this general context**

French imperialism is more and more mired in the war in the Sahel. It is confronted with the growing influence of China in Africa, as well as with the competition of its "allies", the US and Germany, and others (Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies, Brazil, etc.). It cannot "win" this war waged under the pretense of the "fight against terrorism". Neither has any other power won the "war against terrorism", including the much more militarily powerful US imperialism. But French imperialism is above all denounced by the peoples of this vast region, and louder and louder one can hear the slogan "French army, get out!"

Its "strong points" are its nuclear, civil and military sector, its production of practically all the categories and types of weapons, of which it is still one of the four or five main sellers in the world, its diversified agricultural production, which provides the raw material for a powerful and exporting agro-food industry, its chemical industry which is its first sector in terms of value, etc., its banking system which has connections in several countries, notably in Africa.

But all of these areas are in crisis.

Above all the social protest has taken acute forms in recent years. The movement of strikes and demonstrations in 2016 against the El Khomri law, the mobilization of railway workers against the railway reform (2018), the movement of the "yellow vests" (2018-2019) have developed in a general climate of mobilizations in the public as well as the private sector, and these struggles are continuing. It is not a simple succession of mobilizations in which one struggle "would drive out the other", but it is a basic tendency, a "state" of mobilization which affects many sectors of the working class and the working masses, which influences and stimulates the popular masses in an opposition movement which is growing, going beyond the institutional frameworks of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and increasingly denouncing the "system".

These are the questions in the part of this text dealing with the national situation.

## *The international situation*

In this part, we will deal with the new and main aspects of the international situation, as it has developed in the period from late 2015 to late 2019.

For almost twenty years, the "war on terror" has been presented as the main task of all states. It serves as a justification for all the wars waged in the Middle East and Africa by the imperialist coalitions that lead them. It has been accompanied by the development of police states, which are increasingly used to suppress social movements. US imperialism has played a major role in these wars, which show that it is the most dangerous imperialist power for the peoples of the whole world.

This context has not changed, but the tensions among the imperialist powers have increased with the implementation of a policy of destabilization waged by the US leaders in order to maintain the hegemony of the USA.

**One of the major developments in the international situation over the past four years has been the election of Trump as president of the world's largest imperialist power. What are the changes, the objectives of the policy he is carrying out and what are the consequences?**

In January 2017, Trump became the president of the greatest imperialist power in the world, with the aim of applying, as he ceaselessly announced during his electoral campaign, an aggressive policy of prioritizing, in all sectors, the sole interests of US monopolies, summarized in the slogan "America first". His policy, which can be described as **great power nationalism**, was to withdraw from many international treaties and agreements (on climate, Iranian nuclear power, proliferation of nuclear weapons, etc.), which, according to him, are all obstacles to the development of the US economy and its hegemony. In Europe, German imperialism is particularly targeted under the accusation that it has shamelessly "profited" from US military protection without paying its costs. Similar are his attacks against NATO, which he described as "completely obsolete", exerting a constant pressure on its members to increase their military budget and to buy supplies from US armament monopolies. But this is also a way of saying that there will be no automatic military commitment in the event that one of the member

states is the victim of an external attack; such commitment is provided for by the NATO charter.

In Latin America, the "enemies" are mentioned by name: the Venezuelan government, and, more generally, the so-called "progressives" governments of the South American continent, accused mainly of having opened their economies to Russian, Chinese and even European investments. US imperialism no longer intervenes as directly and openly as in the 1960s and '70s, but it has been behind all the coups and all the destabilization maneuvers that brought down regimes that did not submit to it, and which were replaced by reactionary, fascistic regimes. Cuba, where "private initiative", another name for capitalism, is being promoted, is once again under economic and political pressure from the US, which in no way wants to "normalize" its relations with that country.

In short, the phenomenon initiated by Obama to "reconquer" the Americas is accelerating under Trump, and the "return" of the Yankees means the return to the brutal methods and policies of domination, exploitation and plunder, with the help on regimes that are under the US boot.

In the Middle East, it is the Iranian regime which is named the main enemy, and is primarily confronted by the economic balance of power in the form of the blockade, and by the strengthening of the US military presence in the region.

Russia obviously remains a very important political and military adversary for the USA. Obama followed a logic of confrontation by mobilizing all the forces of its NATO allies as close as possible to the borders of Russia. Trump does not question any of these decisions, since no soldiers nor weapons were withdrawn from this theater of operation. But Trump avoids entering into a permanent confrontation with Putin, leaving him the task of "resolve" the war in Syria, while ensuring the US control of the oil wells and maintaining an important military presence in the region to counter Iran's influence and to reassure its Saudi and Israeli allies.

**It is China which is already considered the main economic, political and military threat to US hegemony.** It has supplanted the threat of Russia in the minds of the current leaders of US imperialism. They are also trying to prevent too close a *rapprochement* between Russia and China, helped in this attempt by most of the leaders of the Western camp, who are frightened by this prospect.

# 1. The meaning of Trump's election

There is undoubtedly a big difference in "style" compared to that of his predecessor, Obama<sup>1</sup>. Trump's style is particularly provocative and rude, his lack of culture is evident. His contempt for women, his racist positions and decisions in particular towards Latin American, Central American and Caribbean immigrants<sup>2</sup>, sparked very important demonstrations that mobilized in particular women, part of the youth and the democratic movement in general starting from his inauguration,. This opposition has spread far beyond the borders of the United States and is expressed every time he goes abroad.

But it would be wrong to reduce Trump and his politics to these aspects. These policies are in line with the interests of the US oligarchy, of which Trump himself belongs<sup>3</sup>. They are the continuation of Obama's policies in many areas, even if Trump is bent on undoing several decisions and achievements of his predecessor.

## 1.1 The legacy of the Obama years

During the financial crisis (2007-2008), Obama rescued the US banking system and the huge companies threatened with bankruptcy, including the three automobile leaders (GM, Ford and Chrysler) with hundreds of millions of dollars<sup>4</sup>. Without the "support" of China, which had a considerable quantity of dollars in US treasury bonds from its trade surpluses<sup>5</sup>, the world financial system, which is

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<sup>1</sup> His first term was from January 2009 to 2013; his second term was from 2013 to January 2017.

<sup>2</sup> He also attacked the peoples of Africa, treating them with a contempt tinged with racism.

<sup>3</sup> In the ranking of the 400 richest billionaires in the world by Forbes magazine, Trump appears in the 275th place, with an estimated fortune of \$3.1 billion. In ten years, the total fortune of these "400" super rich, has multiplied by 2.3, reaching \$3 trillion.

<sup>4</sup> The bailout plan for the automotive industry, "the biggest since World War II", amounted to \$ 700 billion.

<sup>5</sup> The world reserves kept in central banks are made up of US treasury bonds for 64% of their assets, while the GDP of the US represents only 20% of world GDP. *"The reserves are not made up of dollars or euros, but of debts in dollars and debts in euros. The US public debt alone consists of \$15 trillion. China's Central Bank manages more*

based particularly on the domination of the dollar, the main currency used in international transactions, could have collapsed. This would have dragged the capitalist economy into chaos with unpredictable consequences, from which China itself would have suffered greatly.

Obama had put forward "multilateralism" and "pragmatism" to get US imperialism out of its political isolation brought about by the Bush war years. Within NATO, it was Obama who promoted the idea of "burden sharing". It was Obama who pushed the other member states to aim for 2% of their GDP for war budgets. The main military concern was still Russia, notably following the annexation of the Crimea (2014). It was a period of strengthening the US military presence in Europe, with the deployment of missiles in several Eastern countries, the support to the pro-NATO and pro-EU regime of Ukraine, and the providing of guarantees to the regimes of Eastern countries (Poland, the Baltic States, Romania, etc.). Not to mention that it was he who increased the budget devoted to nuclear weapons and to the development of new weapons, such as drones. In no case can he pass for a "pacifist", although he received the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize.

Two decisions were of particular importance:

- -the refusal to engage the USA in a war to overthrow the Bashar al-Assad regime (2013), to the chagrin of Hollande who supported it fiercely;
- -the signing of an international agreement<sup>1</sup> with the Iranian re-

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*than \$1.2 trillion in debt, or almost a third of its foreign exchange reserves, which total \$3.8 trillion. (P. Artus, director of Natexis). The Euro has never succeeded in replacing the dollar in world markets.*

<sup>1</sup> Iran's nuclear agreement was signed by Iran, the EU, Germany, China, the US, France, the United Kingdom and Russia on July 14, 2015. It provided for the abandonment by Iran of its uranium enrichment program, which could be used to manufacture nuclear bombs. The counterpart was the lifting of the enormous economic sanctions which had struck the country, accompanied by a strengthening of controls over its nuclear program (Iran could continue its civil program). Negotiations on this issue had accelerated from 2013. As soon as the first sanctions were lifted, the economic situation quickly improved and investors jostled, attracted by the size of the Iranian market (82 million inhabitants) and the oil production and export potential. Its largest trading partner is Germany, followed by the United Arab Emirates and



gime (2015) concerning the latter's abandonment of its military nuclear program.

This did not prevent Obama from leading the international coalition against the Islamic State in 2014, which intervened both in Iraq and Syria.

But these decisions would make Obama seem weak in the eyes of U.S. ruling circles, in a context in which tensions among the major powers were sharpening, where international economic agreements, in which US imperialism must compete with its allies who are at the same time its rivals, present more disadvantages than advantages for the US monopolies. In a context where there are multiple sources of tension, both in the Middle East and in Asia, not to mention on the European continent where US imperialism wants to keep a "strategic independence" in determining its priorities and the choices to be made. These choices mean deciding in favor of certain interests against others.

To embody this policy, an individual was needed who was "safe" from the point of view of defending the interests of the dominant monopolies – notably those linked to petroleum, agribusiness, chemicals, banking, insurance, credit institutions, information technology, the automobile industry and armaments.

Trump pushed himself in the Republican Party, which was divided as was the Democratic Party. He was able to get the most right-wing sector, which for a while had been captured by the Tea Party, to return "to the fold". He gave the illusion that a "new" wind was blowing, that he would be a president who did not come from the inner circles and who would not owe his election to the latter. The Democratic Party presented a woman, Hillary Clinton, from the big bourgeoisie, sure that she would win the elections, although she was contested within her party by a left wing embodied by Bernie Sanders. This led Trump to use all his experience as a showman of "reality TV", without shrinking from any excess or provocation. We know that the presidential elections in the US are in the hands of the monopolies, which invest billions. They chose Trump, and he was the one who "won"<sup>1</sup>.

In a way he "thanked" them by reducing their corporate tax rate

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China. Large US companies, such as Boeing, were also in the running.

<sup>1</sup> Trump received fewer votes than H. Clinton, but he won because of the complex system of these elections.

to 21% (from 35%) and by adding \$90 billion to the arms budget.

By going back on the – already limited - regulations imposed by the Obama administration on the banking sector, Trump satisfied this sector, in which the next devastating "bubble" could be linked to the growing indebtedness of households, students, etc.. In an aging country, in which inequalities have continued to widen, in which real unemployment struck 8.1% of the economically active population<sup>1</sup>, the first decree signed by Trump eliminated Obamacare<sup>2</sup>, but he had to back off.

## **1.2 The first measures of the new administration and the resulting social protests**

This problematically elected president, accused of having been "helped" by the Russian propaganda services, has multiplied the destabilizing initiatives of the "international order", asserting each time the exclusive primacy of the interests of US imperialism. He has often been forced to reconsider his untimely declarations, he has sometimes been publicly contradicted by the highest military officials, he has provoked multiple protests of "indignation" from his "allies", but in the end, he has generally succeeded in dividing them, which is his primary objective.

But it was also under Trump that protests have been developing in the United States itself, among large sectors of the working and popular masses. The promises of job creation in industry, in particular in coal mining, metallurgy, automobile, etc. have not materialized, and it is always casual employment which is developing the most. Large strikes have been carried out, especially in 2018 among teachers, supported by students, against *"his decision to reduce taxes on the wealthy instead of investing in public education"*. These strikes have affected several states and resulted in advances, notably in wages, but also in terms of working conditions. They continued

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<sup>1</sup> Figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Obamacare is a law in particular establishing a non-compulsory health insurance system, which obliges the insurance companies to offer identical contracts, at the same cost, in all the States of the Union. This system has had the effect of reducing the percentage of people without any health insurance. Trump tried to eliminate it entirely, but he did not have a majority to vote for this. He ended up passing a law, in October 2017, which "bypasses" it.

in 2019 in several states. The strikes have also affected private sectors, such as that of housekeeping workers of the Marriott hotel chain, who went on strike in four states for wage increases, which they won. In 2018, 500,000 workers participated in strike movements, for the first time since the financial crisis, when companies had started dismissing workers, imposing wage cuts and more flexibility, reconsidering benefits, etc. This movement for wage increases continued in 2019, particularly with a 40-day strike in 34 GM plants. In addition to wage increases, GM workers have challenged the wage discrimination introduced in 2007, which particularly affected young people. They also won wage increases for temporary workers. The rise in corporate profits fueled the anger and mobilization of the workers who think: "*There is nothing to expect from the government or from the bosses, so we have to take care of ourselves*"<sup>1</sup>. This state of mind contrasts with the image of workers as the main supporters of Trump, who had made the defense of the workers in the automobile industry one of his campaign slogans.

His racist rhetoric against migrant workers, especially those from South America, which resulted in the wall separating the US from Mexico, has been widely denounced and combated.

The women's rights movement has been strengthened, notably the "Me Too" movement, which has been extended to issues of discrimination in the workplace, the struggle against racism, etc. It is no coincidence that the first activist to have denounced sexual harassment and launched the "Me Too" movement in 2007 was a black feminist activist, Tarana Burke. To this must be added the mounting protest against Trump's decision to withdraw from the international climate agreement, of which Obama was a staunch supporter. Trump started by denying climate change, but the succession of devastating climatic phenomena, in a country as vast as the USA, whose infrastructure is in dire straits<sup>2</sup>, led to a dispute also based on the situation developing throughout the world. It points to the special responsibility of the United States and its "way of life" in the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by *The New York Times* in an article on the rise of mobilizations in companies, hospitals, among teachers and airline ground workers, who have a limited right to strike.

<sup>2</sup> Trump's commitment to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure has not materialized. Railway accidents are increasing and the road network continues to deteriorate.

emission of greenhouse gases<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. The major trends in the international politics of US imperialism**

### **2.1. The strengths of US imperialism**

- The dollar is the world currency in terms of foreign trade reserves; trade in strategic areas, such as oil and various raw materials, etc. are carried out in dollars.
- US economic power, in the above mentioned areas, is technologically advanced in booming sectors, which currently have considerable investments, such as information technology, electronics (Intel, Sysco and Gafam<sup>2</sup>, health-care chemistry (Pfizer), aeronautics (Boeing) and space (NASA), and distribution (Wal-Mart).
- Its unparalleled world military power, which exists on all the continents, includes hundreds of bases. This military supremacy has been further reinforced. The US arms budget of \$649 billion in 2018 represented one third of the world's arms budget, which had also increased (\$1,780 billion). The NATO member states (including the USA) spent \$963 billion, of which \$64 billion was by France, \$50 billion by the United Kingdom and \$50 billion by Germany<sup>3</sup>. Turkey's military budget has increased by 24%.
- The struggle around US military supremacy was revived through the creation of a "Space Force" in 2019, whose role is to develop space "militarization", in order to limit or even prevent access to space by other powers, to deploy monitoring around the world, communications and listening and jamming systems. Its budget amounts to \$50 billion. In the same field

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<sup>1</sup> The US emits 14% of the world's CO<sub>2</sub>, behind China, which has been the leading polluter in terms of volume since 2005. But other data, which take into consideration the number of inhabitants, reflects the situation: the US emits twice as much CO<sub>2</sub> as China per person.

<sup>2</sup> Google (Alphabet), Apple, Facebook and Amazon, Microsoft. The total of their stock exchange capitalization exceeds that of the oil companies. Many of them are listed at more than \$1 trillion.

<sup>3</sup> The 2018 figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org).

China spends \$11 billion, Russia \$4 billion and France \$2 billion.

- The cutting-edge sectors – electronics, information technologies – are increasingly linked to the military-industrial sector, as suppliers and service providers.
- The "brain drain" at the global level for research, a veritable form of imperialist plunder, contributes to maintaining technological progress at a lower cost<sup>1</sup>.
- The apparatus of ideological conditioning is powerful. It includes the mainstream media, film industry, communications networks, their expansion via the Internet, etc. It disseminates US ideological "values", "fake news"<sup>2</sup> and rampant individualism. The US generates one third of the world's digital data flow.
- Oil independence was regained – although it is fragile – through the exploitation of shale gas and oil. Trump constantly trumpets that the USA has become the largest oil producer in the world, ahead of Saudi Arabia, Russia, etc. But the exploitation of oil and shale gas poses several problems<sup>3</sup>, and its profitability depends on the price of "conventional" oil. This does not prevent Trump from proposing to the Central European states to buy US oil in order to stop them from relying on Russian oil. In addition, the oil monarchies, in particular Saudi Arabia, are worried about this "energy independence", which is creating recurring tensions with the USA, its first and main ally.

## **2.2 Its weaknesses and difficulties**

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<sup>1</sup> It is in this area that the big bosses of Silicon Valley have stepped up to the plate, at a time when the Trump administration wanted to considerably tighten the conditions of entry to the US, in particular to people from the Middle East and "Muslims".

<sup>2</sup> The expression "fake news" spread internationally, contributing to the development of a general and dangerous relativism affecting all fields, notably challenging the very idea that there are scientifically demonstrable facts.

<sup>3</sup> Huge investments are needed and companies are already in debt to the tune of \$20 billion. They took advantage of the Fed's "cheap money" policy. At first the returns are high, but they drop rapidly, which means that they must constantly drill new wells. This is a very polluting technique (that uses large quantities of water which it pollutes) and the transport is done by tank cars, forming a real "pipeline on rails" and causing many accidents involving explosions and fires.

- A major economic crisis and deindustrialisation: The steel industry is kept afloat through the taxation of imports, especially those from China. The automobile sector did not sufficiently anticipate the shift to electric or hybrid vehicles. The US ship-building industry has ceased to exist. The policy of import taxation is provoking retaliatory measures; all aspects considered, several economists believe that this policy will soon be detrimental to the US economy, that industries which depend on these imports will be penalized, among other consequences.
- This aggressive policy, as well as the shifting of alliances it provokes, is causing tension and a certain isolation of US imperialism that is being exploited by its competitors. Other imperialist powers are scoring points in certain markets such as those of South America and Africa.
- The underestimation of the consequences of climate change, which has a very significant impact on the US economy.
- The "return" of US imperialism to Latin America is provoking a revival of the mobilization of the peoples, who are returning to the struggle against the instruments of this domination (IMF, etc.), especially the youth, who did not experience the great anti-imperialist struggles of the 1970s.
- Despite the economic, political, military and other kinds of measures deployed to bring down the Iranian and Venezuelan regimes, the latter are still in place. Trump's posturing against the North Korean government was met with firmness and skill by its leaders. As for the wars waged by US imperialism, in Afghanistan the Taliban returned to the front line and became partners in negotiations. In Iraq, Iran has extended its influence. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad is regaining control of the country, thanks to Russia, which has become the real master of the game. These wars appear to be a series of failures in relation to the planned objectives. In this regard, Trump has done no better than his predecessors. Most of these countries have been largely destroyed, often divided, not to mention the fact that they have suffered immense human and material losses, psychological damage, destruction and looting of their historic heritage. The fact is that today's greatest military power has been held in check, it has failed to overcome the resistance of the people, or to curb their social and national aspirations and their demands. It is too early to say that the powerful movements which devel-

oped at the end of 2019 in several of these countries, and which are facing the repression of the regimes in power, mark the start of a new wave of emancipatory movements in this region, which is strategic for the great powers.

- As we pointed out above, the class struggle has regained vigor after the Obama years, during which the key elements of the Democratic Party had been mobilized to channel and curtail the protests of the trade unions, social and other sectors. Trump and his policies have stimulated working class and popular opposition within the US itself and have even extended it to other sections of society, which are shocked by his rude, openly pro-rich, "unprincipled" policy. The Latino communities living in the USA have also mobilized against the racist measures adopted and against the police repression and harassment of which they are victims. Alongside democratic organizations, they have developed strong links of solidarity with the thousands of refugees and persons rejected at the border with Mexico. Communities of U.S. citizens living along the border have also mobilized to fight discrimination and violence against women, and against Trump's policies of provocation and war. The "baby Trump" balloon has been floated in rallies and demonstrations in London and Paris on several occasions, notably after the announcement of the withdrawal from the agreement on medium-range nuclear missiles<sup>1</sup>.

**Trump's policy targets the workers and people around the world, and it is aimed at defending the interests of US imperialism against its competitors. The most important competitor, the one who threatens his hegemony, is China.**

The contradiction with China is an inter-imperialist contradiction, which in particular opposes the dominant imperialist power to a rising imperialist power. There is nothing socialist about China, although fraudulently claims to be so, in the context of a general crisis of the system.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1987, the Treaty to Ban Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces – INF – had linked the US and the USSR, and later Russia. Trump announced withdrawal from the treaty in February 2019, followed by that of Russia. The arms race in tactical nuclear weapons – “mini nukes” – was officially relaunched.

### 3. The rise of China, its strengths and weaknesses

The development of capitalism in China is taking place within the framework of a political system which falsely calls itself socialist. We are not going to discuss this question here, which is fundamental to Marxism-Leninism, as are the definitions of socialism and imperialism.

No one can doubt the rapidity with which this development is taking place, which has provoked very important social upheavals due to a very intense and violent class struggle, both in the countryside and in the cities. Examples of this class struggle are the revolts of peasants driven from their lands for the building of gigantic infrastructure intended in particular for the production of energy, or the outbursts of anger by part of the youth, who want to go even faster in building a modern capitalist society, with the illusion of democracy that this conveys<sup>1</sup>, or the uprisings of certain peoples (Tibetans, Uighurs, etc.) in this immense state. They put forward demands for autonomy, or even independence, and denounce the repression of the central state. These revolts are often created and encouraged internationally by China's imperialist rivals and by reactionary currents.

The working class of China, the largest in the world, the peasant masses and the inhabitants of the countryside, the hundreds of millions of workers living in megacities and other sectors have paid dearly for the building of this imperialist power, which, in a few decades, rivals the biggest ones. This was done at the cost of increasing inequality, especially between the rural regions and the coastal ones, where the bulk of the economic activity is concentrated. This inequality has grown between a minority of wealthy people, who benefit from the "liberalization" of the economy, who hold

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<sup>1</sup> This is the current situation in Hong Kong, which is a Chinese city with a special status, one of the main financial and commercial locations in the world, used by China for its business. A large part of the population wants to live like people "in the West". At the end of 2019, a part of the youth confronted the police, which retaliated with violence. See the article published in October 2019 in the magazine *La Forge* under the title "The supporters of neoliberal capitalism against those who promoted it".



shares in private companies that have multiplied in the most profitable niches, and the vast majority of the population, whose standard of living remains weak, especially in the countryside. Many of them live with uncertainty about the future, as insufficiently profitable businesses are closed down at the least sign of difficulty, and the workers who left their regions to work in cities are dismissed.

China is a great imperialist power. It has all the corresponding attributes: giant monopolies in all economic fields<sup>1</sup>, able to compete with their rivals, supported by a state on which they can rely; a heavy industry which produces steel in large quantities (38% of world production), cement (50% of world production); a rapidly developing automotive industry, with significant investments in sectors such as electric and hybrid cars; a consumer goods industry, which is flooding the world market; masses of capital, drawn from trade surpluses, that China is investing in major infrastructure development projects, both in China and internationally.

Chinese monopolies have also established themselves in other countries, especially in Africa, which present two advantages for them: the low wages of a sufficiently skilled and abundant work force, and markets to sell their products. This is particularly the case for the 300 Chinese textile companies which have relocated their production to Ethiopia.

China is also expanding its influence and control over the entire region, especially in the China Sea. This is causing rising tensions with Japanese imperialism, an ally of US imperialism, and with other states in this region. This has become an issue and a hot spot of inter-imperialist rivalry<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> There is, for example, a Chinese equivalent to Gafam; these are the BATX: Baidu (equivalent to Google) which has a potential clientele of 650 million Internet users – it notably allows online payment, as well as storage of music and films; Alibaba (equivalent to Amazon), which has a capitalization of \$486 billion; Tencent (\$520 billion in capitalization), equivalent to Facebook, with a multitude of online services; Xiaomi, cell phones, televisions, household appliances, etc., visibly "inspired" by Apple (valued at \$46 billion, but not yet listed on the stock market). Figures are for 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The ten member states of ASEAN – Association of South East Asian Nations – have very strong economic ties with China, which is the region's main trading partner. They are also linked to the USA with which they organize military maneuvers. China has an important dis-

China has become the world's leading trading power, ahead of the United States. It has also developed its military capabilities in all areas and has started to set up a military base outside its borders<sup>1</sup>.

That said, the expression "workshop of the world" reflects the fact that still today a part of the immense quantities of commodities exported by China are assembled from parts which come from various countries, in particular from Southeast Asia, following a very advanced international division of labor, involving the low "cost of labor". This manufacturing method involves the transport of various commodities over thousands of kilometers before the final product is ready for sale.

The Chinese economy, which is continuing to grow at faster rates than other economies<sup>2</sup>, is very dependent on its exports, especially to the USA. The latter has a record trade deficit. In his rheto-

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pute with the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Brunei around the archipelagos of the Paracels and Spartlys for the control of fishery resources and oil deposits.

<sup>1</sup> The first Chinese military base was installed in Djibouti in 2017. The military officials make no secret of their intention to rely on several ports around the world in connection with the plans for the new Silk Roads. The objective is to be able to protect the ships of the Chinese fleet, but also to deploy military forces to protect its economic interests – the industrial and agricultural enterprises – and the Chinese workers employed there.

<sup>2</sup> It was in 1976 that the official doctrine was changed to the "socialist market economy". This was the birth of a private sector and the opening of the internal market. Beginning in the 1980s, exports became the engine of growth. The growth rates took on double digits. Industries were invited to settle in China, mainly on the coast in "special economic zones", with tax-advantages to produce in China, with Chinese labor. Currently, exports are produced in the following proportions: 39% by companies with 100% foreign capital, 41% by companies with 100% Chinese capital, and 20% by companies with "mixed" capital. Private companies generate around 50% of the GDP. Three quarters of exports are made by private or mixed companies. The foreign companies are attracted by two factors: one is the importance of the Chinese market, which still has a very high potential for growth; the other factor is the low cost of labor, although Vietnam, Cambodia and other countries have begun to compete with lower costs. The Chinese economy had double digit growth rates until the 2008 crisis, and it is currently still 7%.

ric Trump denounces the skewed competition which he uses to justify the taxation of Chinese imports.

This US policy affects the Chinese economy, but it also poses the risk of a series of retaliatory measures which will, step by step, undermine the entire world economy.

Evidently, the Chinese leaders have studied in depth the experiences of the western imperialist capitalist countries, and have drawn important lessons to foster the development of their economy.

One of the lessons is the importance of mobilizing part of the capital drawn from their exports to develop their country's infrastructure. This infrastructure cannot be transferred abroad<sup>1</sup>. It was developed mainly by Chinese companies that were, at that time, able to export their know-how by building infrastructure and providing means of transport, including by combining railroads, highways and ships. This is the essential aspect of the "New Silk Road" project.

### **3.1 The offensive towards the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean**

In the 2000s, the Chinese leaders started looking for prospects in different countries in Latin America and Africa, aiming at two objectives:

- To establish agreements for the import of raw materials – minerals, agricultural products and oil, essential for the Chinese economy;
- To offer, in return, according to the principle of “South-South, win-win cooperation”, loans for the construction of infrastructure by Chinese companies, the purchase of Chinese products at low prices corresponding to the standard of living.

These agreements were accompanied by the commitment by the Chinese authorities, not to interfere in the "internal affairs" of these states.

This last clause, by itself, was enough to attract a good number of leaders, especially the autocrats, but also the so-called “progressive” or simply nationalist governments, who saw in this proposal

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<sup>1</sup> One of the recurring problems in countries dominated by the Western imperialist powers consists of the "bottlenecks" in commodity transport. In Africa, the Bolloré company understood this well. It manages a large part of the economy by controlling the communication routes and especially the ports through which imports and exports pass.

an "alternative" to the policy of the great Western imperialist powers. Especially if Chinese diplomats had an "anti-imperialist" discourse that some had known in the past, when China had revolutionary positions towards imperialism.

In January 2015, the Chinese leaders met their Latin American and Caribbean counterparts at the China-Celac forum in Beijing<sup>1</sup>. Chinese leader Xi Jinping then proposed to invest \$ 250 billion and \$ 500 billion by 2025 for mining, "but also for railways, ports and roads." The first interested states were Venezuela, a supplier of petroleum; Ecuador, a supplier of petroleum and minerals<sup>2</sup>, Argentina, Brazil and others. The list of the agreements concluded subsequently includes military cooperation, a fact that did not escape Washington's attention.

### **3.2 China's relations with the African countries**

The relations between China and a number of African countries are long-standing, going back to the Bandung Conference (1955) in which China participated, held just before the independence of African countries.

The conference was marked by the spirit of independence and struggle against the imperialist powers, in which many African leaders at the time took part. All that is no longer the case today. Xi Jinping announced at the 7th China-Africa Forum in September 2018, an assistance of \$63 billion, "without conditions". All the African states have established exclusive diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, with the exception of Swaziland, which continues to recognize Taiwan as the representative of China.

The interest of the Chinese leaders in Africa is due to the fact that it is the "continent of the future", the continent with the highest

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<sup>1</sup> The CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) was created in 2011 at the initiative of H. Chavez and Lula.

<sup>2</sup> In an article published at the time on the Alterinfos site, it was stated that 83% of Chinese purchases in Latin America concern hydrocarbons and natural resources (oilseeds, soybeans, etc.), while 92% of imports from China concern manufactured products. Chinese banks are also being set up, and factories are starting to be built. There are also hundreds of cameras installed by the Chinese company Ceiec, for the "safety of citizens". In Argentina, nuclear power plants are being set up. To the catalog of economic agreements, a military component is added, notably with Venezuela (for small satellites).

population growth by all demographic estimates. It is also the continent that has the most significant mineral wealth, part of which is not exploited, with rare metals, rare earths, water resources, and the largest area of cultivable land in the world.

It is also a continent whose development is hampered by the ties of domination and plunder by the imperialist powers, in particular the former colonial powers of Europe. In other words, there is a huge investment potential for China. The Chinese leaders have signed numerous bilateral agreements with African regimes and some states are particularly financially dependent on China, such as Congo-Brazzaville, Djibouti and Zambia. As the tendency of many African governments is to diversify relations, the Chinese leaders are keen to differentiate themselves from the neocolonialist behavior of their competitors.

The question of terrorism worries the Chinese leaders, in particular in the countries where they have economic interests (Sudan for oil, Djibouti, and several other countries of sub-Saharan Africa), especially since they want to develop the "new silk road", which also concerns Africa. Chinese soldiers who participate in military operations in Africa do so as part of the UN operations (MINUSMA in Mali). The security of the economic interests is entrusted to private agencies of the Blackwater type. Macron has repeatedly asked that China finance the G5 Sahel: it has so far refused to do so, because this would amount to financing a military agency led by French imperialism, which first and foremost is defending its own interests, those of a dominant imperialist power in this area, with US aid.

Chinese military officials have entered into discussions with some African and Gulf states to consider joint military exercises. But this is still a plan.

This also illustrates the difficulties that Chinese imperialism faces in its policy as a great imperialist power.

### **A word on the question of the purchase of cultivable land in Africa**

China has almost 20% of the world's population but has only a limited area of cultivable land (10% of the world's cultivable land), threatened by rampant urban growth, affected by major pollution of various types linked to the use of toxic chemical fertilizers. Several scandals have erupted relating to widely consumed, contaminated or

imitation food products.

In addition, meat production (cattle, pigs, poultry), concentrated mainly in the coastal regions, has experienced major epidemics, with cases of transmission to humans.

In other words, the question of food sovereignty is raised.

China has bought land in Africa, Madagascar, Southeast Asia, Latin America, Australia, Russia, the USA<sup>1</sup>, and even in France (in Berry).

In several African countries, the expropriation of small peasants has provoked revolts. This form of imperialist plunder is practiced on a larger scale by other countries, whether they are imperialist states or capitalist countries, such as Saudi Arabia and others. China is doing the same thing. This has to be denounced but not on a chauvinist or racist basis, as certain critics have done. We denounce it as an aspect of China's imperialist policy.

### **3.3 The "New Silk Roads" towards Europe**

This is a plan costing several hundreds of billions of dollars. It is meant to create secure communications routes from China to Europe, from China to Africa, from China to Russia, Turkey, Iran, Asia and the Middle East. The plans multiply one after the other, with networks of railway tracks, ports, roads, nodal platforms which allow continuity between the different types of transportation. The first trains to leave China used to take on average three weeks to reach Rotterdam, Madrid, Hamburg or Lyon. In addition, there is the construction of a 3,000 km pipeline connecting the Siberian gas fields to China<sup>2</sup>.

The objective of these "roads" is to guarantee land transport to Europe, to circumvent a possible blockade of China by the US Navy. At the same time, China is developing a maritime fleet, civilian but also military; it is also buying several ports, including that of Piraeus, in Greece, the gateway to the EU<sup>3</sup>. Reunion and Mayotte,

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<sup>1</sup> By buying the giant US pork processing plant, Smithfield Foods, the Chinese company has taken control of part of the meat industry.

<sup>2</sup> The project Siberian Power of is led by Gazprom and Petrochina.

<sup>3</sup> This purchase was made during the Greek debt crisis and the strangulation of this country by the troika. See *Lessons learned from the struggle of the Greek people*, document of the 8th Congress of our Party, April 2016.

which are French imperialist territory, have applied to become one of the links in these maritime routes.

Since the Chinese leaders announced this vast plan, the reactions of the other imperialist powers have ranged from open hostility to a manifest interest in participating.

This analysis of the international situation highlights aspects of the politics of US imperialism and that of China, which, from the standpoint of inter-imperialist contradictions, have taken on particular importance in the past five years. But it is also necessary to take into account the policies of other imperialist powers and their evolution, in connection with the new power relations which are taking shape. These include the evolution of European integration, which is an attempt on the part of the dominant imperialist powers in Europe to form a "bloc", alongside of the USA, Russia and China.

#### **4. The crisis within the EU and in European Integration**

In 2015 and 2016, the EU and the euro zone were shaken by a crisis which caused political and economic leaders to modify certain neoliberal rules that were considered unchangeable, in particular as regards the purchase by the European Central Bank (ECB) of the debts of the States.

The Greek people were identified as the culprit for the "euro crisis" and were sacrificed, with a series of memoranda concocted by the Troika (EU, ECB and IMF). It ended with the capitulation of the Tsipras government, which agreed to implement the third memorandum. But this "victory" against a whole people, who were bruised, humiliated and bled dry, has also opened a debate on the contradiction between membership of the euro zone and the EU and also on the possibility of pursuing a policy of being freed, even to a limited extent, from the neoliberal dogmas. It is above all a political debate<sup>1</sup> that the reformist, social-democratic parties did not want to engage in, and that the reactionary, nationalist and xenophobic par-

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<sup>1</sup> "The relentlessness with which the oligarchy fought the movement in Greece can be explained above all by the political stakes it was carrying. It had to be demonstrated that it was not possible to stand up to the oligarchy and the austerity policy that it imposed on all peoples" – see page 4 of the document "The lessons of the struggle of the Greek people".

ties have largely committed to, making it their ideological, political and electoral trademark.

The "migrant crisis" has only deepened divisions within the EU, and Brexit has opened a new phase, one in which one of the member states will leave the union.

European integration faces several difficulties which weaken it and highlight the inability to "speak with one voice" and to "weigh in" on the international level. Among the causes of this situation, we would like to highlight the following:

- On the economic level, there are projects to merge monopolies in strategic fields, to form "European giants", as in armaments<sup>1</sup>. or in the manufacture of batteries for vehicles making increasing use of electricity. But these projects require significant European investments, to the detriment of other sectors (such as that of the Common Agricultural Policy), which increases inequalities within the EU itself between the dominant imperialist states and the others. In addition, these common projects are accelerating the restructuring in these sectors, resulting in job cuts that new technologies are not replacing.
- On the political level, the rejection of the EU, its policies, institutions and other aspects is spreading in all the member states, as can be seen in particular through the elections to the European Parliament, where abstention generally reached record levels, and where the "pro-EU" parties got low votes. The institutions of parliamentary democracy and the system of political representation based on parties and majorities which alternate in power in order to pursue similar policies are in crisis. The belief that elections can change policies by changing the team in power is crumbling. The parties that have been involved in these institutions for decades are paying the price.
- If populist and reactionary groups take advantage of this situation to make use of these institutions, an important part of the population is refusing to participate in the elections, not out of a "disinterest in politics", but because they are disenchanted with electoralism.
- The EU's commitments to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, promoted as

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<sup>1</sup> The creation of a German-French pole in the field of tanks and armored vehicles, or in the field of "future" combat aircrafts.



a priority by the new European Commission, are contradicted by the objectives of defending the interests of the monopolies, which are the main ones responsible for the environmental damage.

- The Brexit's victory and its confirmation, despite enormous pressure of all kinds to try to cancel it, weaken the political weight of the EU.

The dynamics of the expansion of the EU are affected by several factors and trends:

- The ever-increasing hold of the monopolies and the dominant imperialist states which use the political, economic and institutional mechanisms of the EU to defend their interests, through investment programs and "major European projects", particularly in infrastructure<sup>1</sup>, as well as the definition of rules which favor them.
- This is fueling the rise in demands for autonomy by more and more of the EU member states who oppose the domination of the big imperialist powers within the EU and seek to counter-balance it through rapprochements in certain areas with the other great powers, such as Russia, the USA and China.

It is therefore more of a neoliberal "à la carte" EU which is taking shape around a "core" made up of the great powers rather than of a "united" EU.

## 4.1 Brexit

The working class and the popular masses in Great Britain who took part in the referendum voted "Yes" in favor of the exit from the EU. Among the reasons for this was the desire to inflict a political defeat on the political and economic circles which touted the benefits of the EU while refusing to make any "social" concessions. The United Kingdom has always benefited from ignoring the European rules, particularly on social matters, such as the few "social and economic rights" of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. This charter has never been endorsed by British governments.

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<sup>1</sup> The Channel Tunnel was one of these major projects. Today, there are the Lyon-Turin rail link (TAV), the drilling of the 100 km tunnel to London, the wind farm in the North Sea, the project to set up a European pole for the manufacture of batteries for vehicles and the arms industry projects.

The workers of the United Kingdom, like those of the other member countries, did not benefit at all from the EU membership, quite the contrary. However, the British oligarchy has reaped the full benefits of "free competition", the cornerstone of the EU, by organizing permanent social dumping among its workers.

Once the Brexit was voted for, the workers essentially remained spectators of the negotiations that went on for more than three years among the various parties represented in the Parliament.

The withdrawal of the United Kingdom will have economic consequences for the EU and the United Kingdom that are still difficult to measure.

### **Put an end to the EU**

Macron and Merkel want the French and German military-industrial monopolies to be the prime movers of the militarization of the EU. The beginning of a movement is developing in different EU countries around the denunciation of NATO and the ambitions of European defense.

As for the common "migration" policy, which is resulting in the strengthening of "Fortress Europe", it is being criticized in several countries, and coordination is developing in certain border regions, such as in the Roya Valley between Italy and France.

## **5. One cannot rely on one imperialist to fight another**

For us who denounce the imperialist system and work for its overthrow, the method does not consist of choosing between the "worst and the less worse".

Of course, we assess the balance of power, the strengths and the weaknesses of one and the other; this is why we denounce US imperialism as a dominant power which wants to preserve its rank by pursuing a policy of destabilization and war, and which is at the head of a military alliance, NATO, which threatens all the peoples.

But we don't support its rivals and its competitors.

This question has arisen on several occasions (and will continue to arise), notably in the war in Syria, in which Russian imperialism is engaged to defend above all its interests and not those of the peoples of Syria or those of the other peoples of the region. This is why we denounce the war in Syria as a war waged by the imperialist powers for the re-distribution of this region. We denounce US impe-

rialism, which took the initiative in this war under the guise of waging a war against IS (Islamic State), and we denounce the international coalition which is committed to its side and, of course, French imperialism which is participating in this war. But we do not support Russia, which is also engaged in this war to defend its great power interests, in a region where it had lost influence.

The question also arises in the context of the fight against NATO, in which Russia is directly concerned, being one of the main targets of the imperialist military alliance led by US imperialism. This is because NATO is an imperialist and reactionary alliance, which threatens all the peoples, that we denounce it, that we are fighting with others for its dissolution and for France's exit from NATO. It is for the same reason that we are opposed to any kind of "European defense", because it can only be an imperialist military alliance which threatens the peoples in Europe, but also in Africa and elsewhere, which participates in the rise of inter-imperialist tensions and militarization.

Each concrete situation must be analyzed, but to do so it is necessary to have clear criteria in order to be able to take a position in the interest of the workers and the peoples.

The first criterion is that in conflicts and wars between imperialist powers, we cannot line up behind one against the other or others.

This is not in contradiction with denouncing and opposing any imperialist war, whatever may be the nature of the regime which rules the country being attacked.

In any case, we must never lose sight of the fact that we are, first of all, fighting against "our" imperialism.

The last five years have therefore been marked, in particular, by the developments of the policies of US imperialism, and by the rise in tensions between Washington and Beijing, particularly on the economic level in the context of the general crisis that is shaking the whole capitalist-imperialist system. As we said in 2015, the neoliberal policies applied everywhere have exacerbated the crisis, with all their consequences falling on the working class, the working masses and the peoples of the whole world. The governments that have conducted these policies, whether right-wing or social democratic, the institutions that promoted and implemented them (such as the EU) and the "free trade agreements", which aimed at opening up all the countries and the markets to the voracious monopolies and

the imperialist states, have been denounced, rejected and combated by the people.

This is why we have stressed the fact that the class struggle would inevitably develop in each country and at the global level. This underlying trend has been confirmed, obviously taking different forms and intensity from one country to another. But it has appeared everywhere through increasingly massive and violent demonstrations, including in countries ravaged by years of war, as in Iraq, Syria and other countries where social issues are bringing the people to demonstrate in the streets in front of tanks.

These demonstrations are denouncing the governments in office, but point more generally to the "system", which is a notion that is certainly vague but which also includes political, economic and social issues with a strong aspiration for the unity of the people, beyond the questions of religion or origin that are used to divide them.

We have also pointed to a certain number of situations of sharpening of the class struggle, of ferment of revolutionary struggle, and even of "weak links" in the imperialist chain that may break, provided that the communist parties gain political leadership<sup>1</sup>.

We have also pointed to the rise of reaction and the danger of war.

This has also been verified, through increasing by the bourgeoisie which is increasingly using the organs of repression to try to stifle the popular protests. Images of hordes of heavily armed police shooting at demonstrators are seen everywhere, both in "democratic" countries and in countries ruled by autocrats. Everywhere the bourgeoisie is developing reactionary nationalism to pit one people against another.

As for the danger of war, the continuation of militarization, the increasingly destructive and expensive arms race, the tensions

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of the weak link in the imperialist chain refers to a situation where the conditions necessary for a revolutionary break are met. Among these are the objective conditions and the subjective conditions, namely the need for the existence of a revolutionary leadership, of the Marxist-Leninist party, sufficiently established in the working class and the popular masses and determined to lead the fight "to the end" to overthrow the existing social order.

which increasingly oppose the imperialist states to each other and other factors are the concrete consequence of this trend.

## 6. The struggles of the peoples

### 6.1 In Europe

Important movements have developed, particularly in **France**, on social questions: the movement against the El Khomri laws, the movement of the railway workers against the rail reform inspired by the neoliberal EU and for the defense of their status; the movement of the yellow vests, which has been praised in several countries.

In **Germany**, the workers' and trade union movement is engaged in several mobilizations, notably on the question of wages and against the casualization of employment. School youth are mobilizing strongly on the climate issue, in the form of "strikes". The proliferation of racist attacks and the activism of openly fascist groups have also led to very strong popular mobilizations in several cities. The Organization for the Construction of a Communist Workers' Party of Germany is involved in these battles.

In **Belgium**, the mobilization against a reform of the pension system, which has many points in common with those of the other EU states, forced the government to retreat and delay its plan. The defense of public services is at the heart of major mobilizations, particularly in the health sector. Brussels, which "hosts" the NATO headquarters, is regularly the site of demonstrations against this organization of war. The anti-war movement is waging a long-term battle against the government's purchase of F-35 aircraft and has successfully broken the wall of silence around this issue.

In **Italy**, the workers' movement fought with force and determination against the various reforms that are trying to change the pension system, the collective agreements and the labor code carried out by the different governments, whether social-liberal, right-wing, populist or fascistic. These battles are being waged in an unhealthy political climate, dominated by increasing reaction from the right and the far right. The communist, Marxist-Leninist forces are working in the workers' movement to build the communist party, indispensable for the working class to gain its political, ideological and organizational independence<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This struggle is being waged by the Communist Platform of Italy.

In **Spain**, the political crisis surrounding the question of the independence of Catalonia and its repression by the Spanish state, occupies a large place in the political debate. The illusions of an "other way" embodied by *Podemos* have lost their influence. The fight for a break with the monarchy, which is linked to the oligarchy and imperialism, and for a popular and federative republic that defends the interests of the working class and the popular masses is more relevant than ever. This is the struggle that the Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist) is waging with other forces.

In **Greece**, the situation of the working class and the popular masses is still affected by the political and social setbacks inflicted by the EU and the Tsipras government. This has led to a right-wing government. Resistance and mobilizations exist, but the revolutionary forces, the Marxist-Leninists are still weak<sup>1</sup>.

In the **Nordic countries**, Denmark and Norway, the Marxist-Leninist parties and forces<sup>2</sup> are involved in the mobilizations against the neoliberal policies of the right-wing governments. They are carrying on the struggle against the EU, and against the strengthening of the military presence of NATO, which has resulted in a militarization of this whole vast region that is unprecedented since the end of the "cold war".

## 6.2 In Africa

The riches of the continent are coveted by the monopolies and imperialist powers that are waging reactionary wars to grab them.

The "war on terror" in the Sahel, waged by French imperialism, heading a military coalition that is encountering great difficulties, continues to destabilize this vast region, driving thousands of peasants from their lands. The presence of foreign troops, particularly French, is increasingly opposed by the populations, who realize that the actions of armed jihadist groups are increasing and that they are the main victims. This opposition has been particularly reinforced in **Mali**.

In **Burkina Faso**, the revolutionary organizations of the workers, peasants and youth are strengthening in the battles against the

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<sup>1</sup> These forces include the Movement for the Reorganization of the Communist Party of Greece (1917-1955).

<sup>2</sup> In Denmark, the Workers' Communist Party of Denmark, APK; in Norway, the Marxist-Leninist group "Revolution".

government, held with great force by French imperialism, which is militarily increasingly present in the country. Our fraternal party, the Revolutionary Communist Party of Volta (PCRv), and its mass organizations, at the forefront of the combat, are working hard to unite and organize the workers and all strata of the people to build the conditions for a revolutionary overthrow of the neocolonial regime. The revolutionary movement of the peoples of Burkina Faso needs the solidarity of the peoples of the region and of the proletariat and people of France, who have the same enemy.

In **Benin**, Talon's reactionary regime is increasingly challenged by the masses, who do not hesitate to brave the army and the repressive forces. The interference of French imperialism, in the name of the "fight against terrorism", are denounced by the democratic, anti-imperialist movement and by the Communist Party of Benin, which is working to build a patriotic and revolutionary front.

In the **Ivory Coast**, the Ouattara regime, put in place by the French army in 2011, is holding on to power. This regime is the faithful defender of the "French African" system. The Revolutionary Communist Party of the Ivory Coast (PCRci) is organizing the resistance against the neoliberal and pro-imperialist politics, and for freedom, democracy and sovereignty.

The **Sudanese people** succeeded in overthrowing an Islamist-conservative regime that relied on the army and enjoyed the support of Saudi Arabia. A series of price increases for basic necessities set in motion hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, women and men, who responded to the call of a group of social, trade union, associations and other forces determined to roll back the regime, but also ready to resist repression. This movement that began in December 2018, has continued to take root, despite the waves of repression by the army, which had overthrown Omar el-Bashir in order to maintain its power. The demands of the mobilized people and of representatives of the organizations that led the movement were to bring about the end of the military government. On June 3, 2019, the army launched a repression that killed a hundred people. On July 5, it was forced to accept a limited compromise and the army is still there, forced to share posts in the Sovereignty Council. But the lesson learned from this popular movement is that the people are able to overcome divisions and establish a balance of power, faced with leaders of a powerful army, which is participating in the Saudi war in Yemen, and which waged, with militias, a ferocious war in

Darfur (2008-2015).

In **Morocco**, a powerful popular movement (the Hirak) developed in the Rif, and quickly spread to the country's major cities. The Democratic Way has helped to develop support for this movement, both in Morocco and internationally. This marginalized, ostracized region rose up against the Moroccan regime, which was frightened by the scale of the protest and feared a resurgence of the protest movement of February 22, 2011. It was forced to make minimal concessions, but it quickly deployed the army to quell the demonstrations. It had the support of Macron, who visited when the crack-down fell on the movement.

**The Algerian people** rose up massively in February 2019 to oppose Bouteflika's fifth candidacy to the presidency. Very quickly, the protests took on a national character, which cut short the attempts of the regime to divide the people. All cities, large and small, have taken part in this movement. Its massive character, determined and united in its demands, prevented the regime from sending the police and the army against the demonstrators. A slogan was raised, "The system has to go!". This shows the depth of this political struggle to put an end to the seizure of the country's power and wealth by the clans. The popular sectors in particular brought forward the social aspect of this movement in this country where the youth constitute an important majority and are deprived of prospects. The women and the young people are demanding equality between men and women. All of them identify with the slogan of a "second independence", which expresses the anti-imperialist objective. One of the first achievements of this movement has been the rapid politicization of large sectors of the population.

The imperialist powers and the reactionary Arab regimes are deeply concerned about the effect that this movement can have on the peoples of the region and beyond. It is already leading to a mobilization of the Algerian community living in France.

Because of the historical ties between our two peoples, it is important to support this movement and to bring our solidarity to the forces fighting for democracy, independence and social progress.

In **Tunisia**, the deep economic crisis is plunging the broad masses into great difficulties. It is in this context that our fraternal party, the Party of the Workers of Tunisia (POT) and the revolutionary and progressive forces are continuing the fight to defend the gains of the revolutionary process of 2011.



### 6.3 In the Near and Middle East

In **Turkey**, in July 2016, Erdogan benefited from a "divine surprise" with the failed coup attempt attributed to Gülen, one of his former allies, who had become one of his determined opponents. Erdogan launched a vast operation, throughout the whole state apparatus, to drive out the "supporters of Gülen". He took the opportunity to place his men at the head of the army and widened the repression of the democratic movement and, more broadly, all the forces contesting the placing of an autocratic state in his hand. In January 2018, he participated in the negotiations of Astana, under the auspices of Russia, with Iran and representatives of the Syrian regime. On January 20, with the approval of Russia, he launched his army and the auxiliaries of the FSA<sup>1</sup> to attack Afrin, a bastion held by the Kurdish organizations in Syria. He won the presidential elections in June, but was faced with an opposition that regained hope due to the development of the strong social dissatisfaction among the workers and the masses, including those who voted for Erdogan on religious grounds. In April 2019, he lost the municipal elections, including in the city of Istanbul. He advanced a plan for a "security zone" in Syria, which aimed to prevent the Kurdish forces allied to the US and French forces deployed in Syria from controlling a continuous territory along the Turkish border. After receiving the approval of Trump, who announced the withdrawal of US forces from this area and the release of the Kurds from the YPG<sup>2</sup>, Erdogan launched a new military offensive in Syria, in October 2019, which forced the Kurds to retreat towards Iraq.

It is clear that, for Erdogan, the war against the Kurds serves to temporarily muzzle the opposition which has developed against his anti-working class policy and against the strengthening of the autocratic character of the regime. The democratic and revolutionary forces, including our fraternal party EMEP (Labour Party), have courageously opposed this policy, denouncing the regime's use of jihadist groups and the exacerbation of Turkish nationalism.

Erdogan is playing several games at the same time: with the USA and NATO, of which Turkey is a very important member, and with Russia, by getting closer to Putin to try to acquire the latest

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<sup>1</sup> FSA: Free Syrian Army.

<sup>2</sup> YPG: People's Protection Units.

generation of Russian anti-missile missiles. At the same time, he is developing the capacities for arms production by Turkish monopolies.

**Saudi Arabia** has been waging a war of destruction in Yemen since 2015, which has left tens of thousands of civilian victims. Reassured by the election of Trump, this reactionary monarchy immediately ordered US weapons in order to continue to enjoy the protection of the United States. But the international coalition it set up against Yemen is getting bogged down. Cracks have appeared in this coalition. After the murder of Khashoggi, an opposition journalist, by services linked to the future Saudi leader, MBS<sup>1</sup>, the pressures have increased against the Wahabi regime. The demand to stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia has started to spread in various arms-exporting countries, including Germany and France. In May 2019, in Le Havre and Marseille, dock workers refused to load weapons and ammunition onto Saudi ships, and in Spain and Italy, dock workers took the same position. Macron and Minister Le Drian prosecuted journalists who revealed that the weapons were being used against the people of Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has made Iran its main enemy. Saudi Arabia has the support of the United States, the Western powers and Israel. Russia has adopted a "balanced" attitude, selling arms to Saudi Arabia while maintaining political and economic relations with the Iranian regime. Saudi Arabia is one of the powers pushing for war.

The **Iranian regime** is in the crosshairs of the Western powers. It is standing up to them, despite the blockade and their incessant provocations, especially those of Israel. While the Iranian people are determined to resist imperialism, especially US imperialism, the workers and the popular strata of the cities are fighting against the neoliberal policy imposed by the Iranian theocratic regime. Powerful uprisings occur regularly, as took place in December 2017 and January 2018. These movements began with the social demands of the workers and of young people who cannot find work. Added to this was the denunciation of the corruption of the leaders and the demands for democratic freedoms. Rohani, elected in 2017, saw behind these movements the hand of conservatives (such as Ahmadinejad) and of the West. The repression was brutal. The leader of the Revolutionary Guards, Ali Jafari, demanded that the demonstra-

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<sup>1</sup> MBS: Initials of the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

tions stop and treated them as an attempt at sedition. Our fraternal party, the Iranian Party of Labor (Toufan), has called for the demonstrations to continue.

### **The war in Syria and Iraq**

The imperialist powers are waging this war in the name of a war against IS. They announced its defeat when Baghouz, the last Syrian city where fighters were hiding, fell under the bombs in March 2019. In these cities which have "fallen" under the bombs of the coalition, civilians have died, but these losses are never counted.

The Bashar regime controls about 2/3 of the country, which it recaptured from IS with the help of the Syrian army, Russian air support, troops of the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iranian-supported Shiite militias. The North East is under the control of the SDF<sup>1</sup>, the Kurdish and Arab armed forces, with six refugee camps in which about 100,000 people are crammed, mainly "displaced persons" from other regions of Syria. The total number of the displaced amounts to 6.5 million people, to which one must add 5 million people who left Syria for Turkey (2 million), Lebanon (more than a million), Jordan (630,000) and Iraq (240,000). The other refugees live in about thirty countries, including 184,000 in Germany, 130,000 in Egypt, 57,000 in Sweden and 5,000 in France. These are approximate figures that have changed since 2015.

The IS no longer exists as a state, but it would be foolish to think that it no longer has fighters, especially from the camps and among displaced populations.

The US "withdrawal" in 2019, which caused a strong controversy with its "Allies", must be put into perspective because US troops are still deployed in the oil zone of Deir-ez-Zor, where 50% of the country's oil is produced. The US troops and materials leaving Syria deployed to Iraq with the goal of "containing" Iranian influence and ensuring the continued exploitation of Iraqi oil by large US companies. Russia is strengthening its presence in Syria and, in general, in the whole region, of which it has become one of the "protectors" of sorts, trying to play the role of intermediary among the regional powers (Iran, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia), without forgetting the Syrian regime.

**Iraq** is ruled by a regime which calls itself Shiite; it is linked to

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<sup>1</sup> SDF: Syrian Democratic Forces

Iran, on which it depends economically, but the United States maintains a strong military presence there. It is extracting oil there and strengthening its military, maritime and air presence in the Gulf (Bahrain is the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet).

The social protest that developed in late 2019 in Iraq is a major change, although its consequences are still difficult to measure. Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of the big cities, especially of those populated mainly by Shiites. These movements express crying social demands (no drinking water, no public transport, no work, no school, no health system, etc.) and denounce widespread corruption. The demonstrators wave the Iraqi flag, symbol of their belonging to a people above belonging to a religion.

An identical phenomenon is developing in Lebanon.

This means that in a country ravaged by war and destroyed economically, the class struggle is gaining ground. What will be the outcome? This is hard to say, but who would have thought it would happen?

### **Palestine**

The situation of the Palestinian people is very difficult. The hunger strike of the political prisoners subjected to the Israeli yoke forced the various sectors of the Palestinian resistance to unite to support them. It is the children, the young boys and girls, who are standing up to the occupier, even if it means ending up in prison too.

The marches for the return, from March to May 2018 in Gaza, showed the determination of the Palestinians. The Israeli soldiers shot, killed and crippled them.

The political crisis in Israel is continuing. None of the political forces confronting each other have a "peace plan" other than that of continuing the colonization, preventing the formation of a Palestinian state. The demand which was put forward at the Oslo Accords in 1993 is obsolete because of the desire of the Israeli leaders to torpedo any possibility of realizing it. A step was taken with the adoption of a law on the Jewish character of the Israeli state, which reserves citizenship only to Jews. This was supplemented by Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to legitimize the continued colonization of Palestinian lands by Israel.

The work of solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people remains a necessity; the work of constant and concrete denunciation of the Zionist policy is part of this, as is the denunciation of

the complicity of governments with the Zionist State. This is our responsibility regarding the French government, at the forefront of this issue.

## 6.4 In Latin America

We have discussed the "return" of US imperialism to what it considers its backyard.

In the Political Report of our 8<sup>th</sup> Congress, we emphasized the failure of the so-called "progressive" governments. After defending anti-neoliberal positions at a certain time, they turned their backs on them and implemented policies consistent with the interests of the oligarchy and imperialism. Some lost the elections, while others were kicked out by force on charges of corruption, followed by dismissal, such as Lula and Dilma Rousseff in **Brazil**. As our comrades of the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR) say, Bolsonaro is a fascist but even though he won the elections, Brazil is not fascist. The workers and peoples have never stopped fighting for their rights, faced with the oligarchy and reaction.

In **Venezuela**, the right-wing leader, Guaido, believed that through street protests and international support, including that of Trump, it would be possible to force Maduro to resign or to drive him out by rallying the top military hierarchy to their side, whom he promised "no prosecution" of those who had supported Chavez or his successor. In spite of the criminal blockade imposed by the Western imperialist powers and despite all their attempts to destabilize the country, the broad masses of the people are resisting and refusing to put their fate in the hands of Venezuelan reaction, sold out to imperialism. The revolutionary forces and our fraternal party, the PCMLV<sup>1</sup>, are supporting the resistance of the workers and popular masses and are working to give it a revolutionary character, freed from the conciliatory and vacillating positions of the Maduro regime.

Several monopolies, such as the Brazilian Odebrecht corporation, appear in many cases as the ones that corrupted the leaders and their entourage. One can see such acts as a new form of subversion practiced on a large scale and in a systematic way. The right-wing leaders who have come to power are driven by a desire for revenge not only against those whom they have driven from power, but also

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<sup>1</sup> Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Venezuela.

against the people, the poor sectors of society, the indigenous peoples, the trade union activists, the women who are fighting against feminicides, against violence and for equality, the young revolutionaries, whom they attack in the hope of stifling their progressive aspirations by fear and repression.

The revolutionary struggle is on the order of the day throughout the continent. The mobilizations of the youth, the popular masses and the women have been surprising by their scale, their fighting spirit and their radicalism. This is the case in **Chile** and **Ecuador**.

In **Ecuador**, throughout the Correa years the revolutionary spirit was carried on by our fraternal party, the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador, by the organizations of struggle, including the United Workers' Front (FUT), the CONAIE<sup>1</sup>, the Popular Unity, the student unions, the organization Women for Change and other organizations. His government never stopped slandering, repressing, arresting and prosecuting the members of these organizations, going so far as to dissolve organizations of struggle like the UNE (National Union of Educators) in August 2016, which had been created in the 1940s and was internationally recognized, or by “illegalizing” the MPD (Democratic People's Movement), in 2014, which had deputies and dozens of elected officials.

They resisted, continued their struggles and accumulated forces. This is what enabled them to be at the forefront of the movement of October 2019, which stirred up the broad sectors of the workers, the working masses in the cities as well the countryside, the youth, the women and the indigenous peoples. The government that succeeded Correa wanted to impose a packet of IMF measures; it brought in the police and army and declared a state of emergency. The union of the trade unions and the popular movement, the youth and the indigenous peoples responded by more mobilization and more determination. As a consequence, the government had to withdraw the measures.

It was the organized forces that played the leadership role in this powerful popular uprising. This is important for the future.

## **6.5 Some salient features of the peoples' struggles**

Here we end this overview of the rise in the social struggles

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<sup>1</sup> CONAIE: The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador is the most important organization.

around the world that have developed in the past five years, which have accelerated and radicalized in the past two years.

There are commonalities and many differences, there are issues that are still uncertain and partial victories, among other developments.

We want to highlight different aspects:

- These movements generally have a mass character, and take the form of social explosions.
- They often take on a violent character, in connection with the immediately repressive response by the governments.
- They mobilize sectors which had not previously taken part in the movements, either because they were too "young" – there are many young people in the demonstrations – or because these sectors had not yet been struck directly by the consequences of the neoliberal policies, or because they thought they were for individual solutions.
- They are triggered by "one measure too many"; then, very quickly, they accuse the government and even the "system", and become politicized.

The working class is participating in it, but often it is, in a way, drowned in the middle of other popular strata. This is due to two facts: the character of these movements, which are in the form of popular fronts, and the fact that the **party** of the working class is still weakly developed. It does not have a voice powerful enough to make its demands and its class point of view heard. There are obviously much more advanced situations, in which the working class acts as a class, with its party. This is particularly the case in Burkina Faso and in Ecuador. This is how the social explosions end up characterizing and denouncing this "system", and contribute to the revolutionary rupture.

### ***In conclusion***

**Although the crisis of the capitalist-imperialist system carries within itself the threats of a direct military confrontation among imperialist powers, we have not yet reached this stage. Neither the dominant imperialism, US imperialism, nor its main rivals, notably the emerging imperialism, China, have an interest in this, or the means. But they are preparing for it.**

**US imperialism no longer has the means to impose its diktat on its allies, which are at the same time its rivals, as it did after**

the Second World War. Then the other imperialist powers, alone or in alliance, could not try to replace it. In this situation, regional powers (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, Israel, etc.) are trying to extend their influence, too, by playing on contradictions, by entering into open or tacit conjunctural alliances, including with the various imperialist powers. This development is resulting in instability and is causing regional conflicts which can lead to larger wars. The Middle East, the Mediterranean basin and Asia are their stage.

To try to drag people into such conflicts, the different regimes develop reactionary nationalisms.

Faced with this situation, it is essential to strengthen solidarity among the peoples, to support by all means the peoples who are fighting for their national and social emancipation, to help the Marxist-Leninist parties and organizations to develop.

For us, this means in particular to strengthen the struggle against French imperialism, to support the peoples who are fighting against its domination, to develop solidarity with the peoples who are under colonial and neocolonial domination.



## Annex

### About the term globalization

"Globalization" can be defined as a process of extending the capitalist system to the entire world. The world becomes a financial, productive and commercial place for the monopolies. It is the competition among them for the pursuit of maximum profit that pushes them towards the extension of the capitalist system beyond their borders and little by little towards the whole world.

"Globalization" has several aspects:

- the acceleration of the opening of the economies to foreign trade;
- the increase in direct investment abroad which goes hand in hand with the process of production designed on a world scale. The process of production, particularly of the monopolies (but not only of them), is spread among several countries;
- the connection of national financial markets, which will give rise to a global financial market;
- the weakening of the regulations of the national states.

Historically, "globalization" goes hand in hand with the evolution of the capitalist system towards its imperialist phase.

The first "globalization" took place between 1860-1914 (liberalization of world trade, reduction in the cost of transportation, the first wave of investment abroad which gave birth to the monopolies of that period). The 1917 revolution put an end to it.

The modern push is known as the "neoliberal globalization", already in preparation in the 1970s; it was launched politically in the 1980s by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

During the last two decades of the 20th century, trade intensified, monopolies were spread by direct investments abroad to all corners of the world. The various forms of "partnership" and the mobility of capital resulted in the financial integration.

This "globalization" was facilitated by:

- low transportation costs;
- lower costs of communication worldwide due to the transfer of data, including financial data in digital form;
- the disappearance of the Soviet bloc which opened up new economic spaces to be conquered.

The main beneficiaries are the monopolies.

## *The national situation*

In the presentation of the Political Report of the previous Congress, we said: *"The need for a revolutionary break with the system, in all areas and as a whole, is much more far-reaching today. This is why today, the line of a revolutionary popular front is expressed by the slogan: "Workers' and popular unity against the state of the bosses, the police state and its war policy".*

In the last four years, this slogan has been modified several times<sup>1</sup>. Today we put it forth as: *"We are fighting against this society of the rich, the bosses and the arms merchants, and for a revolutionary break!"* In the last two years, it was displayed on the banner of our booth at the "Fête de l'Humanité" [an annual event organized by the newspaper l'Humanité, formerly the newspaper of the French CP – translator's note].

We will now broadly characterize the period that covers the end of Hollande's five-year term and the beginning of Macron's five-year term. This has been a very intense period both for bourgeois politics and for the movements of struggle and resistance of the working class and the popular masses. It is a period when French imperialism is engaging even more in wars for the imperialist redivision of the world, against the peoples.

The common thread that guides us is that of the class struggle, and more precisely that which points to the need for a revolutionary break with the capitalist imperialist system. All this shows that this necessity is based on the sharpening of the class struggle; on the exhaustion of reformist solutions and of the parties that uphold them; on the increasingly reactionary nature of the policies and means of applying them by the leaders of the country.

While focusing on the workers and popular movements that have developed, we will also analyze the evolution of the political and social forces, institutions, social and political mechanisms, ideological instruments that try to channel or even divert the class struggle. This is why it is important to analyze what Macron represents from the point of view of the changes in the ways and means that the bourgeoisie uses to maintain its class rule; a rule which is

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<sup>1</sup> In April, our slogan was formulated as follows: "Strive for the workers' and popular unity against the state at the service of the employers, the police state and its war policy".

exercised through the **strengthening of the bourgeois state**.

From the end of 2015 to the end of 2019, large social movements developed, particularly, from March to July 2016, the one against the El Khomri law<sup>1</sup> under Hollande, and, in November, 2018, that of the yellow vests under Macron. Each had its own characteristics, but they had in common the fact that they lasted for several months, and that they adopted radical forms of struggle of a magnitude that surprised the government and the employers. These movements had wider effects that impacted sectors far beyond those immediately concerned.

In addition, there were struggles in a whole series of other areas.

The mobilization of the **railway workers** from April to June 2018 against the railway reform, the privatization of the French National Railway Company (SNCF), the widespread competition and the end of the permanence of the railway workers, with a cycle of strikes that the government and the management of the SNCF did not succeed in making unpopular.

The mobilization of the **retirees**, who demonstrated during a state of emergency after the Bataclan attacks [terrorist attacks that killed 130 people in Paris, claimed by the IS – *translator's note*] in November 2015, and who have continued to do so since.

The mobilization of all the **health care workers**, a sector of which Minister M. Touraine, was in charge throughout Hollande's term. In their first major mobilization, in November 2016, they denounced the "economic plan" of 10 billion euros. Since then, the mobilization has continued to spread and take root in different sectors, from maternity hospitals, to EPHAD<sup>2</sup> nursing homes, to emergency rooms. Health care has become one of the major concerns of capitalist society, and the deterioration of the public health services, one of the important aspects of the widening of inequalities. There are many reasons, among which are the aging and deterioration of the state of health of the population, affecting mainly the workers,

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<sup>1</sup> It is also called the "Labor Law". Its adoption by parliament required the recourse to Article 49.3 [allowing the government to force a bill through parliament without a vote – *translator's note*] by Prime Minister Valls: on May 10, on July 6 and on July 20, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> EHPAD – Residential Care Homes for Dependent Elderly People.

the young in precarious conditions and the poor<sup>1</sup>. The fact that the workers have a shorter life expectancy and a less healthy life than the more advantaged sectors is due to the exhaustion of the labor force subjected to a higher intensity of capitalist exploitation, to more frequent exposure to dangerous products and various forms of pollution.

The **high school and college students** took to the streets alongside workers in 2016 against the “Labor Law”, and then in 2018, against the “Vidal-Blanquer Law” which established the “Parcoursup” process [basing college admissions on “merit” rather than at random], and alongside the railway workers. The mobilization has continued, with, in addition, the movement against the police repression which systematically falls on young people, and the denunciation of the increase in registration fees for foreign students. At the end of 2019, the immolation by fire of a student in front of the Crous (Regional Center of University and School Matters) of Lyon led to a mobilization to denounce the growing impoverishment of the students.

The **teachers** stood alongside students and their parents in these different mobilizations. In November 2018<sup>2</sup>, the largest mobilization "against the Blanquer Reform" began. In the spring of 2019 this was reinforced by strikes of teachers who monitor the secondary education exams (“baccalaureate”) and correct the copies at the end

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<sup>1</sup> Demographic surveys and studies, National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE): The wealthier a person is, the higher is her/his life expectancy. The life expectancy at birth for a man from the wealthiest 5% of the population is 84.4 years, compared with 71.7 years among the poorest 5%, a 13-year difference. Among women, this gap is smaller: there is an 8-year difference between the wealthiest and the poorest. With a standard of living of 1,000 euros per month, an additional 100 euros are associated with an additional life expectancy of 0.9 years for men and 0.7 years for women, while the difference is no more than 0.3 year and 0.2 year respectively with a standard of living of 2000 euros per month.

<sup>2</sup> The first strike called by all the unions was launched in November 2018, in particular against the announcement of the abolition of some 3,000 positions in public (secondary) education, although the number of students will increase due to the demographic surge. The kindergarten teachers, who are a "protected" sector according to the ministry, also participated in the mobilizations.

of the academic year, and with numerous mobilizations and actions to gain the support of the parents.

The working class, the workers in both the private and public sectors, joined together in these mobilizations, in the struggles against the restructuring, the job cuts and the plant closures that are continuing.

## 1. The end of Hollande's five-year term

Hollande had carried out a policy of successive "shocks": the competitiveness shock, the "administrative simplification" shock, the transparency of political life shock. These shocks affected the workers in the private and public sectors, who responded with resistance movements. The beneficiaries of these shocks are the big shareholders, the big bosses, in short, the oligarchy. The profits of companies registered in the "CAC 40" (Continuous Assisted Quotation – a capitalization-weighted measure of the 40 most significant stocks – *translator's note*) bear witness to this: 75 billion [euros] in 2016, 94 billion in 2017 and 100 billion in 2018<sup>1</sup>.

**With Hollande, social democracy went very far in its submission to the interests of the oligarchy, and also in the repression of the workers' and popular movement.**

This is what will mark the end of his five-year term, with the repression of trade union and youth demonstrations. The great strikes and demonstrations against the El Khomri law was met with the establishment of a police state, which was increasingly perceived as a serious threat to democratic freedoms. This was presented as the "fight against terrorism" and against the attacks in France, but it is against the workers', union and popular movement that this police state was consolidated. Hollande has waged several wars<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the available data.

<sup>2</sup> Operation Sangaris, in the Central African Republic from December 5, 2013, to October 31, 2016; Operation Chammal, in Iraq and Syria (beginning on September 20, 2014, still in progress); Operation Serval (January 2013 until July 2014, in Mali); Operation Épervier (from February 13, 1986, to August 1, 2014, in Chad), the two replaced by Operation Barkhane (August 1, 2014) still underway in the Sahel. To this must be added the special operations in Libya and the decision to start a war in Syria, by putting pressure on Obama. Operation Sentinel (part of Vigipirate) mobilized 10,000 troops in France, still in pro-

and his minister Le Drian, who served as minister of defense from 2012 to 2017<sup>1</sup>, certainly has the record for arms sales<sup>2</sup> to his credit. These amounted to 6.2 billion in 2015, 7.1 billion in 2016, 6.7 billion in 2017 and 6.9 billion in 2018<sup>3</sup>.

The aggravation of the economic crisis on a world level, the difficulties of French imperialism in the very acute competition with its rivals, its difficulties in maintaining its domination, in particular in Africa, as well as the sharpening of the class struggle was important in the choice of Macron by the oligarchy. He was going to play the role of chief of state in the presidential elections of 2017. These elections played an essential role in the institutions of the Fifth Republic, characterized by a presidential system which continues to strengthen itself.

This choice was not imposed immediately. It was necessary to "prepare the ground" for a change of style and teams, in order to face the crisis, the social protest, and ensure the profits of the big companies.

Especially when French imperialism was confronted with many difficulties:

- The economic crisis, which is characterized by a high and permanent unemployment<sup>4</sup>, lower according to official figures; a

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<sup>1</sup> He was one of Hollande's ministers who joined Macron. His current post as "Minister for Europe and for Foreign Affairs" does not distract him from the politics of war.

<sup>2</sup> Arms sales abroad are under the control of the executive power which gives the "authorizations" to the private and public manufacturers. See the "Armaments Observatory" ([www.obsarm.org](http://www.obsarm.org)), which has been researching these exports for years. The latest document it drew up with other organizations "*shows the connections between the military strategy of the French State and the energy policies of the multinational Total in Yemen since the 1980s and more recently in East Africa (Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, etc.).*"

<sup>3</sup> Figures from SIPRI.

<sup>4</sup> Official figures of the "Pôle Emploi" (government employment agency): unemployed with no work: 3.45 million in 2017; 3.41 million in 2018 and 3.3 million in 2019. Unemployment rate as defined by the ILO (International Labor Organization) (figures from ISEE): 8.9% in the 4th quarter of 2017, 8.8% in the 4th quarter of 2018 and 8.1% in the 4th quarter of 2019.

growing trade deficit; the loss of competitiveness in several areas; a lower growth rate than that of other large EU countries.

- Big business was certainly satisfied with the El Khomri law which put an end to labor legislation by establishing the principle of "the same for all, everywhere", introducing a new framework and new types of relations between unions, workers and employers. Its main principle consists in making negotiations within the company (in particular over the duration of working time) the basis of any negotiation, to the detriment of certain sectors, the labor code and the law among other things. This is what is called the inversion of the hierarchy of norms and the end of the principle of favor.
- Big business welcomed the "reduction of costs", which were being increasingly lowered, but it wanted to make them "permanent".
- Hollande and the other candidates from the different parties that alternated in power were too exposed to be able to pursue a policy which attacks once and for all the social benefits concerning retirement, the mechanisms of social protection and the education system, which were "too expensive and ineffective" for the needs of the employers.
- In addition, the movement against the El Khomri law had revealed the high level of combativeness of the workers' and youth movement, which surprised and worried the oligarchy. The latter had thought that the internal crises of the trade union federations, in particular the weakening of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) due in particular to the consequences of the Lepaon affair, the individualization, the atomization and the precariousness of the workers had put an end to the trade union struggle.
- The difficulties of the war on terror waged on two fronts:
- That of the war in Iraq and Syria and its "extension" to France, in particular with the attacks of January 2015<sup>1</sup>, then those of November 2015<sup>2</sup>. Hollande's slogan "We are at war" dates from that time. Through these wars, French imperialism wants to par-

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<sup>1</sup> The attacks at the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper and at the Hyper Kasher supermarket in January 2015.

<sup>2</sup> The attacks of November 3, 2015 at the Bataclan theater in Paris 10th and 11th districts, and in Saint-Denis.

ticipate in the confrontation between US imperialism and its allies, including France, on the one hand, and the coalition led by Russian imperialism, allied with the government of Bashar al Assad and Iran on the other hand. Through its military involvement, French imperialism hopes to participate in the redivision of the spheres of influence in this region, but its "weight" is limited. In addition, this war is costly.

- In the war in Sahel, French imperialism is on the front line to defend its strategic interests. In the war in Mali<sup>1</sup>, which is not only dragging on, but is extending to the entire Sahel region; it is getting bogged down. Some commentators compare it to the "Vietnam quagmire".
- European integration is in a state of breakdown. French imperialism is struggling to involve German imperialism in its major "driving" projects, such as the Europe of defense [a proposed European defense force – *translator's note*]. The European Union is in a deep crisis of legitimacy, which is reflected in particular in the high levels of voter abstention.
- French imperialism is not immune to a crisis that can break out in the colonies, such as the one we saw in March 2017 in French Guyana.

## **1.1 Characteristics of the movement against the El Khomri law**

*In the supplement on the gains of the movement for the withdrawal of the El Khomri law<sup>2</sup>, we wrote:*

"From March to July 2016, a powerful movement brought hundreds of thousands of workers, trade unionists, young people, in the streets of the cities in our country.

"This anti-social law is an "excessive" law, one that attacks the very mechanisms that have regulated relations between employers and union organizations for decades. This is why activists and union structures reacted first. This also explains the difficulties in dealing with the broad working masses who are unaware of these questions (labor code, inversion of standards, preference principle, etc.) and in winning them to the strikes and demonstrations. That being said, they supported the fight,

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<sup>1</sup> The war launched by Hollande in Mali started in 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See the files of *La Forge* of October 2016.



despite the intense propaganda of the employers, the government and the mainstream media which tried, by all means, to make the movement unpopular.

“At the same time, this movement was marked by the strong determination of the demonstrators and the great violence of the police repression at every demonstration, in particular in Paris. But the police and gendarmes were also unleashed against the pickets, the blockades of roads and industrial areas. This repression has barely been publicized because these blockades were often aimed at paralyzing the production centers (refineries), transport and logistics.

“Such movements are “schools” of collective struggle. Men and women proved themselves to be activists and became hardened, especially the young. Union involvement and class-struggle unionism have won an audience and increased in membership. Unity in, through and for the struggle has been strengthened.

“The other great experience is that of class violence, that of the class enemy, the class of the owners of capital, the bosses and the state at their service.

“Faced with this violence, the mass of demonstrators made no mistake: the violence comes from the state, and, in such a situation, the question of organization, of marshals to protect the demonstrators becomes a necessity.

“The struggle is continuing today in different spheres: that of solidarity with the victims of repression, that of mobilization to prevent the employers from "making one's law in one's business" by using the possibilities opened up by the El Khomri law. This is what has already arisen with the Macron law<sup>1</sup>, which allows stores to be opened everywhere on Sundays and in the evening: even though it was approved, the mobilizations

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<sup>1</sup> We are referring to the law that Macron, then Minister of the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs in the second Valls government, made vote in August 2015 (the implementing decrees were published in September). It allowed the opening of stores on Sundays, in tourist areas, railway stations, etc. A union umbrella group, Clic-P, bringing together unions of commerce, led the battle against this law and its implementation. As early as December 2015, Apple, the BHV (Bazaar of the Hotel de Ville), etc. were on the offensive to impose work on Sundays in Paris stores.

have continued and setbacks have been imposed.

“It is very important to learn the lessons of this movement, and this is the subject of this supplement which reprints articles published in *La Forge*.

“An intense political and ideological struggle must be waged against all those who want to "turn the page" and who instill the idea that this movement was ultimately a failure, since the law has passed.

“What they want to hide is that this movement has begun to ask fundamental questions, concerning society, the class nature of the state, the need to bring the balance of power to a higher level by directly attacking the interests of the capitalist class, by blocking production, transport, etc.

“These first steps in the process of a break are all the more important since they were taken in and through the collective struggle involving thousands and thousands of activists, workers and young people. It is on these questions that we want to insist, because they foster revolutionary breaks with the capitalist system.”

***We add below an excerpt from the article of September 2016, “Retrait” (“Withdrawal”) which, in particular, deals again with the lessons to be drawn:***

“To those who say that the movement is a ‘failure’ because we did not get satisfaction, it must be explained that we could only have won a victory of this magnitude with different balance of power, a different level of confrontation with the authorities. It is important to show that this movement won on another level: that of asserting a trade unionism that rejects class collaboration, that knows that demands must be wrested by building a balance of power through strikes, blockades of production, including confrontations with the power of the state. This social movement has enabled the working class to gain maturity and consciousness. It has won the support of large sectors of the popular masses and the youth. These are precious gains for the fights to come if we build unity around this evaluation and if we know how to share it.”

***Through our retrospective look and the experience of the movements that have developed since, we would like to deepen certain aspects raised in these texts.***

**This movement first mobilized the union leaderships, then the "militant body" which constitutes the backbone of the trade union movement.**

The union leaderships, notably of the FO (Workers' Force), quickly understood that this reform would profoundly modify the rules of "social dialogue" on which they built their relations with the employers and the government. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why union unity has been able to assert itself as a necessity. But because of the role played by the CGT and its weight, the opposition to this reform took on a character of struggle to defend the rule of law in the service of the workers' and trade union movement.

**The CGT was emerging from the "Lepaon crisis".** Lepaon had been forced to resign in January 2015<sup>1</sup>. The new leadership has shown a change of course, launching calls to demonstrate together with other workers' unions and youth organizations,. The 51st Congress of the CGT, in April, was held in the midst of this movement of strikes and demonstrations. The employers and the government

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<sup>1</sup> T. Lepaon succeeded B. Thibaut at the 50th Congress of the CGT in 2013, after Hollande was elected president. Very quickly, at the head of the governing bodies of the CGT, he developed a line of "accompaniment" which "spoke to the left ear" of Hollande. He was far from a position of "support" to the Left Front, which the previous leadership had shown, or at least had allowed to develop. The militant base of the CGT was very unhappy with the absence of their union at the highest level from the field of struggle to oppose a policy which increasingly harshly attacked the workers' interests. Besides this, T. Lepaon had extravagant material claims (a top-of-the-line car, apartment renovations, etc.) which began to "be issued" by the leading circle. It was these questions, which were "leaked" to the media, that caused a major internal crisis, allowing reaction to attack trade unionism. While clearly denouncing the behavior of the general secretary of the CGT, our comrades defended the CGT as the union which enabled the class-struggle unionism to exist and develop. The crisis was resolved at the level of the leadership of the CGT, the National Confederation Committee (CNN), which dismissed Lepaon and named P. Martinez as general secretary on February 3, 2016. He was re-elected by the CCN, at the Congress at Marseille in 2016, then at the 52nd Congress at Dijon in May 2019. He announced that he would not stand for this post again. Lepaon was not expelled from the CGT and the line he promoted continued to be defended, particularly by certain federations. This line advocates "less conflictual" relations with the employers and the government.

went wild against the CGT leadership, calling Martinez a "terrorist". A virulent debate was launched in the heart of the Congress of the CGT by the government and reaction against the CGT leadership, about the "Stop the repression" poster which pointed to the police. Not only did this leadership, it was widely supported and continued the mobilization.

**This mobilization with the limitations and the difficulties outlined above was a mobilization of workers and employees.** It was the result of the tenacious work of activists who mobilized workers in companies, in industrial zones, in sectors that could "block" the economy. Their work was intense in the provincial towns, where the union structures (notably the local unions) became involved and gained new strength.

The weight of the working class could be seen in particular in the national demonstration of June 14, 2016, in Paris, where contingents of dock workers from Nantes and the countless banners of the workers identified by the companies everywhere showed the strength and the determination of the working class. It is no wonder that the repression against the activists and the combative workers was fierce, even long after the end of the movement.

The workers' and trade unions were the backbone of this movement, in which **part of the youth was involved**, especially from the vocational high schools. The issue of the systematic police repression of demonstrations has led more and more young people to participate, often at the head of contingents, in clashes with the police. But this repression was directed first of all against the workers' contingents.

This movement also inspired various initiatives, notably that of the occupation, in Paris, of the Place de la République (Plaza of the Republic), by the "**Nuit debout**" (Rise up at Night) movement, which began at the end of the demonstration of March 31<sup>1</sup>. The attempts to expand the movement of occupation of the plaza have been limited. It was mainly urban young people who tried to keep up the tempo of the occupation that lasted part of the night and on weekends. They were subjected to almost constant police harass-

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<sup>1</sup> This movement was inspired in particular by that of the occupation of plazas in Spain (Puerta del Sol) and in Greece. In Spain, this movement later gave rise to the movement of the "Indignados" (indignant ones), from which *Podemos* emerged.

ment. This forum of permanent discussions has undoubtedly contributed to the politicization and radicalization of the young people, boys and girls, who took part. It also enabled a kind of “continuity in mobilization” in between the major meetings and demonstrations. This experience stopped with the end of the protest movement. A few months later, it inspired the initiative launched by several personalities<sup>1</sup>, economists, sociologists, political activists, etc. of the "beef stew demonstration" to mock Macron on May 5, 2017.

Most of the political forces calling themselves left, except the Socialist Party (PS), supported the movement against the El Khomri law. The rebellious deputies of the PS mainly sought to "amend" this law, without succeeding. But very few political forces drew public lessons from the movement. Several have taken refuge behind the idea that it had been essentially a trade union movement and that it had failed since the law ended up being passed. Some have added attacks against those who, within the movement, have "misled" it by "resorting to violence". It is true that such a movement did not take part in the debates and negotiations around the presidential elections. This is why the vast majority of these forces quickly "turned the page."

### **The importance of drawing lessons from this movement**

The lessons which we drew, and which we presented in particular at our booth at the “*Fête de l'Humanité*” in September 2016, was the subject of a supplement to our newspaper. It was both a political and trade union assessment because this movement, by its magnitude, the weight of the working class, the level of unity that it made possible, its radicalism, the forms it took and the "responses" of the opposing camp, went far beyond the trade union framework.

We made this assessment not only for ourselves, but mainly in order to share it, analyze and highlight the elements that show the sharpness of the class struggle. We insist on the question of the **nature of the State at the service of the employers, of the state which represses social protest, and on the need for the workers movement to organize to defend itself against the violence of the State.**

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<sup>1</sup> In particular François Ruffin, a committed activist, author of a film which was very successful, "Merci patron" (Thanks, Boss). He ran for the legislature in 2017 and was elected on the ticket of *La France Insoumise* (France Unbowed).

Our party has invested its forces in this movement and has tried to formulate slogans which can be widely adopted and which raise the level of consciousness. These weeks of mobilization were also a “school” for ourselves. This movement reinforced our conviction that one must appeal to the most advanced elements, from the point of view of political consciousness, of the working class, the youth and the popular masses, to work to break with the capitalist imperialist system.

**This movement opened up a new period in which the social question will increasingly grow in importance, a period in which social democracy will have shown to the broad masses that it has passed on totally to the bourgeois and imperialist camp<sup>1</sup>. I is a period in which the class struggle has begun to go beyond the traditional framework – change through elections – and in which ideological barriers have begun to break down to make room for new ideas, such as that it is legitimate to resist state violence.**

## **1.2 The gap is total between Hollande and his government, on the one hand, and the workers' and popular movement, on the other.**

Hollande and his Prime Minister ended up voting for this reform, but that did not mean the end of the resistance of the workers and their organizations. In particular, the battle will continue in companies to prevent the implementation of the El Khomri law.

**From that moment on, Hollande and his government were considered enemies of the workers, the youth and the popular masses, who expect nothing from them other than dirty blows.**

The employers have united behind Hollande and the govern-

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<sup>1</sup> 1 In our 1981 dossier on the administration of the affairs of French imperialism by social democracy, we have already said that it had passed over totally into the camp of imperialism. This political message was not yet audible to the broad masses. This reality could be seen during the years in which it administered the interests of the French oligarchy, both at the national and international level. The El Khomri law and the manner in which it was imposed by force on the working and popular masses, in the context of an even deeper crisis in the system, showed the broad masses how far social democracy was preparing to go to defend the interests of the oligarchy.

ment, as did the right, which showed its own divisions during the “primaries” that it organized at the end of 2016. As for the far right, it had no place in this social movement.

The movement that had just brought millions of people to protest in the streets and that threatened, although in a limited way, to block the economy was a wake-up call for the oligarchy. It was visibly concerned that it was taking too long for the reforms to be passed and that this allowed the working class and people to organize and develop the resistance. It had already thought for a while<sup>1</sup> that it was necessary to find the means and the people to go faster to further to destroy the "social model". This model dates from the Second World War and it is already severely damaged, but it remains an obstacle to super-exploitation and to the organized control of the whole society, thus defending the people's interests. Meanwhile the oligarchy wants Hollande and his government to "keep on working".

The Socialist Party, the majority party in parliament, leaves divided and weakened, without a leader. It will not recover, even if its officials try to distance themselves as much as possible from Hollande and Valls, to try to perpetuate the idea that a "left socialism" remains possible and that a new version of "the union of the left" will, perhaps, do well in the future presidential and legislative elections.

The political forces of what is called the “social transformation left” had indeed supported the movement against the El Khomri law, but they were already busy with the preparation of the presidential elections of 2017 and were themselves divided following the failure of the Left Front; some of them were "abandoned" by the alliance with the PS.

Although, as we said, they supported the movement and their members actively participated in it, the debates to which the organizations invite them to unite around an "alternative policy" are running out of steam. This is because they have learned nothing from

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<sup>1</sup> H. Védrine, one of the intellectuals who advised various political decision-makers, revealed that a group of influential people have been meeting for two years with intellectuals, politicians, trade unionists and others, from the "left and right", in order to find the best possible candidate, able to stand up to the "conservative" tendencies. Védrine is one of the personalities who supported Macron's candidacy.

the past period, which has brought to light the intensity and the radicalization of the class confrontation<sup>1</sup>. In other words, there was discussion of an alternative program to social liberalism (which was widely debated throughout the period of the Left Front), without taking into account the violence of the oligarchy through the State against the movement, nor the degree of combativeness of the working class and the working masses, with all their limitations.

The union movement will in a way have to “digest” this long sequence of struggles. Here too, our comrades will try to “draw lessons” in the different organizations in which they are active. One of the lessons drawn by the CGT leadership is that “it will be necessary to spend more time with the workers and less in bodies with the employers”. Although the scale of the repression and the idea of “failure” create a mixed feeling among many activists, they do not forget the great moments of struggle and fraternity, and many have started to develop a “taste” for the struggle and regained confidence in the collective struggle. The slogan that summed up this state of mind and which was chanted by thousands of demonstrators is:

**“The youth are in difficulty, the women in dire conditions, the elderly in misery. We don’t want this society, we are fighting it”.**

In the massive mobilization against the Juppe reform on pensions the participation of the **women workers** was very strong. In the El Khomri movement, they were also very numerous, because in the small and medium-sized enterprises, where the labor code no longer applies and the union presence is weak, women workers are particularly destitute. In the sectors of commerce, stores and supermarkets, where women constitute the majority, employees mobilized against the Macron law (see above). The women participated, with their banners, in the 12 demonstrations against the El Khomri law. They are also very numerous in the health care and personal assistance sectors, the lowest paid categories of the public service and similar sectors, where low wages are the rule. On March 8, 2017, the feminist organizations, unions and associations together launched **the first mobilization on the theme of the strike that**

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<sup>1</sup> The same is true of the experience of what happened in Greece, although this was at the time when Syriza and Tsipras were standing up to the dictate of the Troika. See our text “Lessons from the struggle of the Greek people”, a document of the 8th Congress.



**started at 3:40 p.m.**<sup>1</sup> The women were part of an international movement organized in about 50 countries. This "unity" is a step forward, which is also part of the "unity" movement against the El Khomri law.

**It is in this context that the struggles will continue in the companies, neighborhoods and on the street.**

One must add to the struggles of workers against the anti-union repression, the job cuts and the threats of closing large companies (such as at General Electric, ex-Alstom, in the railway sector) and in public services, especially in the health care sector<sup>2</sup>, the mobilizations against police violence in the cities and the repression which targets the "ZAD"<sup>3</sup>, the mobilizations of the migrants, the democratic organizations which support them and others.

The consciousness of the danger of the government's war policy is also growing. The work of denunciation has been carried out by a number of forces<sup>4</sup>. The chaotic situation in Mali directly linked to the "war against terrorism and the military operation in the Sahel, described by the Malian workers, will also develop this consciousness, which is still limited but very much present.

In short, a heated climate has developed on different fronts.

The employers have clearly seen that a class-struggle union movement has gained strength. They have not yet implemented the measures allowed by the El Khomri law in order not to "set the

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<sup>1</sup> This time reference – 3:40 pm – corresponds to the beginning of the "unpaid" work period for women, compared to the wages for men.

<sup>2</sup> Minister Touraine passed the law establishing "activity pricing" which foresees savings of 10 billion with the elimination of 22,000 beds. The nurses' coordination called a strike on September 14 and, on November 8, all the health care workers were called out to strike. We can consider that this date marks the beginning of the movement in the health care sector.

<sup>3</sup> "Zone to be defended" (ZAD). The first operation to destroy the homes of opponents of the airport project took place in 2012, called "Operation Caesar" (!); it ended in failure. Other ZADs developed after this date, against "useless, expensive and polluting" projects.

<sup>4</sup> Among these forces are the collectives "Neither war nor state of war" and "No to NATO", in which our party participates, and organizations such as "Survie" (Survival), "La Semaine anticoloniale" (Anti-Colonial Week), among others that denounce the policy of French imperialism in different countries.

powder on fire", but they also reinforced the anti-union repression, with the help of the state. We have seen the trade unionists of Air France, prosecuted for "**the affair of the shirt**"<sup>1</sup>, those of **Good-year** in Amiens<sup>2</sup>, the dock worker unionists of Saint-Nazaire, prosecuted more than a year after the June 2016 demonstration, etc., and numerous activists who were prosecuted well after the events. Class justice has a long memory.

Police violence has also increased in the popular neighborhoods. **Adama Traoré's** death by asphyxiation during an arrest by the gendarmes (police) on July 19, 2016, happened in the context of the trivialization of police violence. This was not another "mistake". Adama's family and friends do not accept the official versions which crudely deny the responsibility of the gendarmes. Adama's case has become a symbol and the "Justice for Adama" committee is contributing by maintaining pressure until today, and by working for the regrouping of the various committees which were created around the victims of police violence. The list of victims keeps growing: in February, Théo was raped by police in Aulnay-sous-Bois, and he was left disabled for life. In most cases, specialized police units are involved, notably the BAC (Anti-Criminality Brigades). The perpetrators of this violence know that they enjoy almost systematic impunity. Each March, a demonstration takes place to denounce the violence and police impunity.

Another worrying phenomenon that is developing within the police itself are the demands to relax the rules of "legitimate self-defense" that police officers must comply with and to strengthen the legislative arsenal against those who are prosecuted for "violence against the forces of order".

The violence also affects migrants and those who help them. Laws follow one another to tighten the conditions for obtaining ref-

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<sup>1</sup> On October 5, 2015, the Human Resources Director of Air France, who had come to announce the elimination of 3,000 jobs, was attacked by the employees who demonstrated outside the meeting room. The images of his escape with his shirt torn off went viral. Several union officials and employees were prosecuted and sentenced in a series of trials. At each trial the unions called for mobilization. The "shirt" is becoming a symbol of the workers' anger.

<sup>2</sup> On October 19, several thousand people demonstrated in Amiens in support of the "8" CGT activists prosecuted for having kidnapped managers.

ugee status, and the police are used to make life miserable for the migrants. The offense of solidarity is being established in fact. The Calais "jungle" encampment was destroyed in October 2016, which only moved the question elsewhere. Migrants try by all means to get to England. After the Mediterranean, which has become a cemetery for thousands of migrants, it is the turn of the North Sea.

**The ZAD of Notre-Dame-des-Landes**, near Nantes, has become almost a military confrontation ground. After a few armored vehicles were used during the demonstrations against the El Khomri law, dozens will be deployed in the Nantes countryside, against the occupiers of the ZAD.

There was also **the strike of 120 undocumented workers which began on March 3, 2017, at the MIN (National Interest Market)<sup>1</sup> in Rungis**, led by local unions of the CGT (UL of Rungis, UD (Departmental Union) 94, several federations, the Confederation and others) and supported by many parties, including ours, elected officials and associations. Prepared for months, this strike is part of the climate of general struggle and points out the fact that undocumented workers are an integral part of the working class. It ended with a victory.

As Hollande and his outgoing government continued to manage the affairs of French imperialism, a social crisis erupted in **Guyana** in late March. In this French department, 40% of young people are unemployed; poor people who live in the slums of the big cities, in the villages deep inside the forest, undergo cuts in electricity and water, do not have sufficient means of transport, have difficult access to a hospital or school, among other services, while each rocket launch at the space center in Kourou costs millions of euros. There is no shortage of mining projects (notably that of a mega-mine for gold), but they are located in territories occupied by the Amerindians who oppose the destruction of their natural environment.

This crisis highlights the problem of colonialism, of the domination of the Guyanese people, the ravaging of their territories and the plunder of their resources. Hollande made promises to try to put an end to this. His political opponents, who were already campaigning for the presidential elections, did not attack him on this ground.

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<sup>1</sup> The MIN in Rungis is Europe's largest market for fresh produce. The strike took place at the entrance hall of the building of the Semmaris, the company which manages this market.

They actually agree that French imperialism, without Kourou, without its overseas "possessions", would no longer have enough weight on the chessboard of the great imperialist powers.

## 2. Launching Macron into orbit.

The presidential campaign started very early, practically after the end of the movement against the El Khomri law. It went through two periods; the first was marked by settlements of accounts with all political parties and trends, and the second was a speedy campaign that imposed Macron, after focusing on a duel with Marine Le Pen, which allowed Macron to win the elections.

After Sarkozy's "hyper presidency", Hollande's "normal presidential" five-year term ended in a position of "anyone but Holland" by his own friends and allies. The 2017 presidential elections had trouble attracting the interest of the great mass of potential voters. The elections, more than the previous ones, first looked like an internal battle of the chiefs-of-staff of the political parties that presented candidates. For the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic, the PS and the right organized "primaries" like those in the USA. These primaries participated in the "shoot 'em up" game that followed. The great mass of voters could watch a series of settling of accounts, of revelations about each other's corruptions, all of which was fed to the people by the mainstream media. The "shoot 'em up" game first eliminated Fillon, the candidate of the right, who had been a favorite by default for months. The setting aside of Hollande and the division of the PS among several tendencies reduced Hamon's candidacy to the role of a witness. The ecologists, very divided, placed themselves in reserve. The far right, under the influence of M. Le Pen, started to change its image to win the votes of the right, leaving to various "small" candidates the task of spreading reactionary, xenophobic, racist and Islamophobic themes.

J.-L. Mélenchon had founded **La France Insoumise** in February 2017. He had started the campaign very early, especially at the beginning, "against" a part of the political forces which had led the 2012 campaign within the Left Front. This undoubtedly succeeded in mobilizing thousands of people who found themselves in the dynamics of this movement which defined itself as above the political parties, above the right / left divide, above social classes and claimed to be for the people against the elite, considering that the only way for change is through elections.

For us, the political and ideological message to develop in this campaign was not to take the path of electoralism but to affirm the need for a revolutionary break with the system. The following were the elements that we took into account to define this orientation. They were published in our newspaper *La Forge* of April 2017.

**Our position on the first round of the presidential elections  
(April-May 2017)**

“In the different elections, our party has always given political guidance and a call to the voters. The point is, at every moment of the political struggle, to give the class point of view, without harboring illusions about this election nor about the possibility of a change in the system through elections.

“In 2012, we campaigned as part of the Left Front and called for a vote for its candidate....

**“The context of these elections is very different from that of 2012.**

“First and foremost, the class struggle has radicalized on both sides, that of the bourgeoisie, its parties and the instruments of power, and that of the working class, the youth and the popular masses. The opposition to the policies of Hollande and of the successive governments at the oligarchy’s service is now broader, and the need for a break, beyond the break with certain policies, that is, a break with the system, is now stronger.

“This is the line that we have been putting forward for months. The lessons we have learned from the great movement against the El Khomri law have reinforced this conviction.

“This is the priority that we set for ourselves and which led us to refuse to participate in discussions around a candidate and a program, much less to take part in the ridiculous farce of the different "primaries". We have given priority to the implementation of a revolutionary front policy, against the state at the service of the bosses, the police state and its war policy, by calling for the need for a revolutionary break with the system.

**“What will these elections solve for the bourgeoisie?**

“Within the framework of the institutions of the 5th Republic, the presidential elections are presented as the most important political moment, because they are supposed to give popular legitimacy to the winner. By the mechanism of a ballot in which only “validly expressed” votes are counted, the winner

is propelled to the rank of representative of “all the French people” and it is in “name of France” that he expresses, regardless of the number of votes that were actually cast for him, especially in the first round. Neither abstentions nor blank or invalid votes are taken into account.

“The very mechanism of these elections (the two rounds with a second round with only two candidates in the running) and the excessive personalization that they imply (“I, the president, will do this and that”), to which are added the money barrier (the cost of such a campaign) and the media supervision, ensure that the “free choice” of the voters is strongly guided.

“The electoral campaign was punctuated by media revelations about different villainous behavior and practices, about where public money is diverted for personal gain and about the sums involved, in an insult to all those who earn less than the “minimum wage authorized by law” (SMIC) to survive. The about-faces and the betrayal of commitments are characteristics of a political "recomposition" that only aims to perpetuate the system....

“Hollande “leaves” to his successor a state with increased means of control and repression of the workers' and popular movement, means imposed by force.

“This successor will have been shaped by a campaign in which the old ideas of neoliberalism have been reshaped and presented as the only alternative to M. Le Pen. Every effort is being made to put this "choice" at the center of the two rounds of the presidential election.

“Social and political opposition also affects the system of political representation, the institutions and, by extension, the parties which focus their action on the elections. One of the aspects of this opposition is the size of the abstention. For important sectors of society, this abstention is "considered" a rejection of the system.

**“We understand this desire to reject the framework of these elections and to give such an abstention a political, revolutionary content.** It is clear that none of the candidates and no program is carrying this message.

“But we also know that there are still many activists who want to express, through a vote for Mélenchon, LO (Workers' Struggle), NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party), etc. their rejection

of the PS and of neoliberalism. Many remain attached to the political positions that the Left Front had put forward in the 2012 campaign and aspire to the unity of the forces fighting these policies.

**“We are not going to divide ourselves on this question, because it will take all the energies and the forces available to fight the policy that whoever is elected will implement, both nationally and internationally.**

“For us, the concrete translation of the slogan: “We don't want this society, we fight against it” is the struggle for a revolutionary break, it is abstention in the first round presidential elections.”

The results of this first round (April 22, 2017) were the following:

Macron 24%	Le Pen 21.3%	Fillon 20%	J.-L. Mélenchon 19.6%	Hamon 6.3%
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The disappointment of the supporters of J.-L. Mélenchon and of him himself was profound, because until the last day, they saw him coming in second place. But that was to ignore the nature of this type of elections and to delude oneself about their "democratic" character.

To this should be added the fact that, in the name of a campaign aimed at the "broad masses", to gain votes, the tone of the campaign took a nationalist turn, that of an increasingly marked glorification of the Republic. The forest of tricolor flags at the last great meeting in the “Place de la République”, with the clear intention of pushing aside the red flag, was an expression of it.

The second round therefore put face to face the representative of the oligarchy, Macron, and that of the far right, M. Le Pen, who was a repugnant candidate. We refused to comply with the call to vote for the declared candidate of the oligarchy<sup>1</sup>, supporter of neoliberal Europe, who presented a vast program of counter-reforms that he committed to "carry through to the end", without bowing to the popular resistance.

He was elected with 25.4% abstentions, blank and null ballots.

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<sup>1</sup> We called for abstention; on May 1st, we demonstrated under the slogan "Neither Le Pen, nor Macron, Resistance. Against reaction and war, for a revolutionary break”.

If one goes back to the first round, it is not exaggerated to say that he is, after all, a "poorly elected" president.

The political forces on the left, who called for a vote for Macron to "build a dam" against M. Le Pen "deceived" their own voters, because not only M. Le Pen could not have won these elections, but they helped the victory of the candidate of the oligarchy. The extent of the abstention and the high number of blank and null votes, especially among the workers and the popular circles, are a disavowal of those parties who called for a vote for Macron while saying "they would be on the street the next day, to oppose his policy".

Of course Marine Le Pen's results are worrying in terms of the number of votes and the audience for her reactionary theses. The extreme right has established itself in the political landscape on a durable basis, which opens the door to it in the local elections, it gives it regional elected representatives, and without the current electoral system and with more proportional representation, she could have members in parliament.

The far right is an important card for the oligarchy, which uses and supports it so that it continues to spread reactionary ideas, in particular racism, exacerbated nationalism and support for state repressive institutions as well as the mechanisms of imperialist domination. The far right also uses in part the rejection of the EU and the euro, giving it a protesting and nationalist character.

But Macron is the trump card for the oligarchy. Le Pen was used to deflect the votes towards him.

**The legislative elections** that followed were an opportunity for Macron to continue the offensive to destroy the right and the PS, as well as to select the officials who could get Macron's stamp of approval. The spectacle of the people who joined the LRM ("The Republic Forward", Macron's party – *translator's note*) and rushed to be nominated will worsen the crisis affecting these two parties, which have dominated political life for more than thirty years.

Macron relied on E. Philippe<sup>1</sup>, whom he would later make Prime Minister, and on Bayrou and his party, the MoDem (Democratic Movement). The first sent a strong signal to the right, and the second played an important role in bringing a part of the electorate of the "moderate" right, which sees itself in Juppé, back towards Macron.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Philippe was presented as a close friend of Juppé.



The right regrouped in the LRM cannot find a place in it. Some of them, like Wauquiez, are leaning more and more towards the extreme right. This widens the divisions. He had to resign in June 2019 from his post of secretary general.

The PS was deserted by the currents on its left which are trying to survive after the disasters of the presidential and legislative elections. The PS hopes to stay alive in the territorial areas (regions, departments, big cities).

Some heads of the EELV (Ecological Europe/The Greens) have also joined Macron, such as B. Pompili and De Rugy. The latter's history shows that this supporter of the "new world of Macron" is above all an opportunist and a careerist<sup>1</sup>.

Macron has created a pyramidal political movement and elected officials who owe him everything. His meteoric rise, the means that were put at his disposal, the media coverage he received, show that he has considerable support at the highest level. Everything was done to make him appear as a "new man" (although he already held high positions within the state apparatus), above political parties, so as not to have to account to them, but only to the "voters" who elected him. The parliamentary debates which highlight the divisions within the majority and which fuel the protests in the street, the repeated recourse to Article 49.3, etc., were a waste of time. It was necessary to put an end to them by having a parliamentary group at his orders, the decisions would be taken at the government level, translated into orders given to the members of parliament who would vote without even knowing their content. The orientations of the texts of the reforms would be contained in the "program of the president", which was constantly referred to, although this has not been the basis of their election. Given the number of reforms which followed one another at a frantic pace, given the quantity of texts that were issued by the councils of ministers, it was clear that this had been prepared in advance, and that the vast majority of texts on social issues were those which had been written years ago by the

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<sup>1</sup> A friend of Valls, he was elected several times on an environmental ticket; he rallied to Macron, held the post of President of the National Assembly, then that of Minister of Ecology in 2018 following the sensational resignation of Hulot, until his own resignation (2019), following revelations about his lifestyle. He resumed his seat as a member of parliament.

employers and that had to be passed due to the obsession with going fast and to the end. On several occasions, union negotiators said they had found out bills were “copied and pasted” from texts issued by the Movement of the Enterprises of France (MEDEF). After that the latter could leave.

A government spokesperson said at the time of launching the cycle of decrees, *"No one has the right to block France when one does not agree with such or such a measure, especially when it is at the heart of the presidential project"*.

This threat was clearly aimed at the union movement.

The leaders of the large federations were having a hard time identifying Macron’s method, which spoke of "collaboration", but never of negotiation.

This will be clearly shown in the decrees.

## **2.1 The decrees**

The content fits in 160 pages (!) which take up the same principle as the El Khomri law, pushing it even further and extending it to all aspects of the labor contract. The second part concerns the establishment of the CSEs (Social and Economic Councils) to replace the IRP (staff representative bodies). The third makes dismissals easier, in particular with the end of collective bargaining and the limitation of allowances by the industrial courts. They also introduce Contracts of Indeterminate Duration (CDI) in construction sites, to facilitate dismissals for inability, with fewer obligations for companies in cases of economic dismissal. The employers get the opportunity to hold referendums to pass agreements with minority unions, etc.

This puts deeply into question the entire union culture based on the labor code, on recognition of union organizations as representatives of the employee and partners in the framework of joint management (whether in the settling of “conflicts” through labor courts, the administration of social protection, unemployment insurance or vocational training. The argument used to justify this is that the state finances social protection (which is included in the state budget) and that social security contributions are not enough to ensure the sustainability of the system. In fact successive governments have continuously reduced or eliminated social security contributions, particularly those of the employers.

Added to this are the consequences of the establishment of CSEs which, as the name suggests, deal mainly with the economic

issues of the company, its "good functioning", and are accompanied by a very important reduction in the number of elected personnel, about one third of all those elected in all the companies. This has serious consequences, especially in terms of the contingent of activists to lead the Local Unions. The abolition of the Committees on Health, Safety and Working Conditions (CHSCT) is very serious because it removes means of control and action over all aspects concerning the working conditions and occupational risks run by the employees. It is no coincidence that this issue was raised in the aftermath of the fire at the Lubrizol chemical plant in September 2019.

## **2.2 The mobilisation against the decrees**

The mobilization was not easy. First, because the "union-by-union method of negotiation" with "leaks" intended to sow both maximum confusion and division, resulted in the crumbling of the union "front". The leader of the FO union federation, Mailly, who had accepted unity against El Khomri, clearly nurtured hopes in Macron, to the point of playing the game of agreement<sup>1</sup>.

As we said, the CGT had been the driving force of the mobilization against the El Khomri law, and the trade union front had lasted until June 2016. But, with the election of Macron, the political situation had greatly changed: the general weakening of the left parties, the devastated political field, an executive which blocked the counter-reforms and which went beyond the old forms of social dialogue, among other things; all this has consequences for the trade union organizations, but also for the mass of activists. For the CGT, there were also measures of criminalization which targeted both the union leadership and activists in the companies<sup>2</sup>. In addition, beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Mailly even claimed that he had "saved the hierarchy of norms" until the contents of the decrees were made public. He refused to allow the FO to take part in the September demonstrations organized by the CGT, Solidaires and others, one of whose themes was the denunciation of the decrees. This was one of the reasons that led a majority of FO leaders to criticize him and support Pavageau's candidacy in April 2018. The latter approached the CGT, but he was forced to resign, in October 2018. Behind the reasons put forward was the opposition of part of the leadership of this union to engage in opposition to the government.

<sup>2</sup> The CGT is not homogeneous and several currents coexist at dif-

decrees, there was, blow after blow, the announcement of the five-euro decrease in the Benefit for Housing (APL), the first step towards a overall decrease in the social housing policy; the announcement of the increase in the Generalized Social Contribution (CGS), the elimination of 120,000 civil servant jobs, the freezing of pensions (cut by the increase in the CSG), the elimination of subsidized jobs, an overhaul of the ISF (Solidarity Tax on Wealth) which would save 4 billion for the most wealthy (!) and the continuation of the CICE (Tax credit for employment and competitiveness) mechanism<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time, the announcement of cuts in payroll taxes on employees was presented as an increase in purchasing power.

The draft budget quantified the expected savings: 20 billion divided into 10 billion from the state budget, 7 billion from the Social Security budget and 3 billion from the budget of the local authorities. This was a “shock therapy” that affected all popular strata, from several directions at the same time: workers and other employees, faced with employers who in a few months got most of their demands, giving them the power to dismiss workers as well as to weaken and reduce the union’s means to resist. The families of the popular masses would find it increasingly difficult to access social housing, health care and school. The retirees, who were presented as wealthy, would be taxed again, supposedly to help the youngest, while in fact it was the wealthy who were the big beneficiaries of the abolition of the ISF wealth tax, of the tax reduction for corporations, which are themselves increasingly exempt from social contributions.

### **2.3 A social protest that is spreading**

This is why the mobilization against the decrees, which was launched on June 27, would be part of a general climate of mobilizations which spread as the announcements of the counter-reforms<sup>2</sup>

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ferent levels of its leadership. Some disagree strongly with the line considered "leftist" by the leadership, arguing that it brings no gain for the CGT and isolates it, especially towards the government and employers.

<sup>1</sup> The competitiveness tax credit, introduced by Hollande, represented 10 billion in 2014, then 17.5 (2015), 18.5 (2016), 19 (2017) and 23 billion in 2018, the year when it had to be transformed into lower expenses. Figures from the Ministry of Finance.

<sup>2</sup> The mobilization against the decrees could not be the **only** mobi-

that would follow one another at a rapid rate.

**One of the characteristics of these mobilizations is that they were launched by collectives which associated unions and groups around precise and concrete demands.**

One of the first collectives created dealt with the question of Personalized Housing Help (APL)<sup>1</sup>. It raised the question which is becoming increasingly important for a very large number of people living in both large and medium-sized cities, namely housing.

The practice of collectives would develop on many questions. The "reflex" of gathering large groups around demands and of fighting to get them would become "contagious". This practice of creating "fronts" would also win over the trade union movement, as we can see in particular on the issue of fighting against inequalities between men and women, violence against women, etc. This involved the unions, often first the "mixed commissions" or "women's commissions" and associations fighting for the rights of working women, women employees in general and women of the popular strata. The success of the March the 8<sup>th</sup> mobilization and the "3:40 p.m. strike", initiated in March 2017, has been confirmed year after year.

These mobilizations included those of the workers of **GM&S**, at la Souterraine [in central France], a subcontracting company of Renault and the PSA Group (auto parts company), its only customers, which had decided to close it. After a battle that had already lasted nine months, the workers occupied the factory and launched a call for solidarity on May 16, which was answered by thousands of union activists from all over France.

The government also attacked democratic freedoms. It decided

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lization that would bring together the greatest number of people. It would have been illusory to think that this question could crystallize into a mobilization of "All against Macron" without unity among the trade unions and even less without a political alternative.

<sup>1</sup> "Long live the APL!". This collective brought together associations active on the issue of social housing (DAL (Right to Housing), CNL (National Housing Federation), tenant associations, HLM (Low Income Housing) organizations, committed architects, etc.), unions that organized the HLM staff, organizations of women from the popular strata, notably "Femmes Egalité" (Women's Equality), student unions, etc., of different national and local forms. In our country 15 million people are poorly housed.

to end to the “state of emergency”, after having prolonged it many times over successive three-month periods, and to replace it by including in the law a whole range of police and judicial measures abolishing liberties for more than one year. The organizations denounced this by chanting **"No to the permanent state of emergency"**.

The protests against the decrees continued, and after each one new sectors of workers joined the movement. On October 10, all the trade union organizations in the public sector called for a joint demonstration denouncing the plan to cut 120,000 jobs of state and territorial officials, to freeze wages, already very low, and to **abolish “supported jobs”**. This was a decision that brutally threw thousands of precarious people into misery and dealt a huge blow to everyone in the associative community, especially in neighborhoods and small towns<sup>1</sup>. It is not surprising that many people, victims of this policy against the poor, found themselves a few months later on the traffic circles wearing yellow vests.

In November, the government responded to a new demonstration against the decrees by announcing a new pile of reforms concerning the unemployment insurance and vocational training and apprenticeship, with a dual objective: to reduce unemployment benefits and to orient training to meet business requirements, as well as to deprive union organizations of their prerogatives in terms of co-management of organizations and sources of funding. Here again, the government just had to apply plans already drafted by the employers. As Macron said about vocational education, it is up to "the vocational sectors to define the educational model, with the national education system" under the authority of the Ministry of Labor.

In national education, it was the ideologue Blanquer who would carry out the reforms at full speed, mixing demagoguery ("we must return to the school of yesteryear in which one learned to read and

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<sup>1</sup> This concerns 140,000 jobs lost in 2017, and 20,000 in 2018, the year of their total elimination. This decision was adopted "with immediate effect" and led to one billion euros in savings to the state. Several schools could not start the school year due to a lack of staff in different sectors such as the canteen, the leisure center and the maintenance staff. Many school aid associations had to close down. The “Pôle emploi” was also affected, as it employed 2,000 people with these contracts. The same is true for sports clubs. The whole sector of "social and solidarity economy" was affected. It was a real social disaster.

count") and attacks against all educational experiences for children in difficulty, especially those from poor backgrounds. He announced a maximum of 12 children at the CP (Preparatory Course) and CE1 (Elementary Course 1) levels in the ZEP (Zones of Priority Education) +, but without additional means. He particularly attacked the high schools and the transition to universities with the aim of eliminate the baccalaureate (exam at the end of secondary school) supposedly in order to establish "the same everywhere and for all", but in fact to restrict considerably access to the university under the pretext of fighting academic failure. He also wanted establishments to be managed by directors with expanded powers, including over teachers, whom he wanted to bring into line and make them "work more".

### **Discontent continues to grow and deepen.**

Macron keeps repeating that he will stay the course, even if he is unpopular. Nevertheless, some breaches have been opened in certain sectors where employers and government would accept exceptions to the decrees<sup>1</sup>. But Macron did not give in to retirees, who are demonstrating more and more, and to civil servants. He is ruling the country like a boss heading the board of directors of a large company.

The situation of the workers and the popular strata has worsened considerably. Going on strike is expensive, for wages that will not increase, despite many strikes over this issue, some of which have been successful. But this is not the general situation. The National Assembly will vote on the decrees on November 28. In the companies, workers are fighting to prevent their application.

Macron is also dealing with the world's great problems by carrying on wars in Africa and the Middle East. In November, he granted himself the luxury of making a tour of the countries of "French Africa" to call on the youth to "take matters into their own hands", meaning literally "to go into business". But when he boasted in front of young students in Burkina Faso and saluted their revolutionary spirit, he was put in his place.

He repeated, more arrogantly than ever, the thesis that in society wealth "trickles down" from top to bottom, and he praised those

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the transport sector, in which the employers wanted to reverse the gains won in terms of wages, rest, overtime, etc.

who, as in rock climbing, are the "first to the top".

**Here is part of the summary we made about the 2017 situation ("La Forge" issue #581 of January 2018):**

**"With Macron, the counter-reforms are changing scale**

"Macron is the direct representative of the oligarchy. With him, the oligarchy is directly "at the helm". He is there to continue to apply to the end the counter-reforms begun over the years by successive governments in office before him. The counter-reforms aim at eliminating the social protection systems such as health care and security, unemployment insurance, etc., and the mechanisms that had opened access to higher education to the popular strata, and 'democratized' the school... in order to give 'the same opportunities to everyone'.... The aim is to replace these with a system of education and selection in the hands of employers. The budget which was just approved, and that of the Social Security, reinforce a series of fiscal measures clearly intended to enrich the wealthy and the shareholders (elimination of the wealth tax, reduction of the corporate tax, reduction of the flat rate levy on capital income, etc.) and to make the employees pay (increase in the CSG), to further tax retirees and beneficiaries of the APL, etc. The reform of local taxation, initiated through the reduction of the tax housing, or the lowering of the APL, show Macron's 'method': it consists in announcing an increase in household's purchasing power (by abolishing the housing tax), while making this tax payable by the local collectivities and declaring that the landlord will "compensate" for this loss by the reduction of rents, etc.

**"But Macron's first major counter-reform was to get rid of the right to a job:** to make it the same for everyone, applicable everywhere, to replace it by a "negotiated" law, settled company by company, and eventually sector by sector, with employers eager to go fast and far and with divided unions that are constantly accused of representing only 'their own interests' and not that of the employees.

"Class-struggle unionism is the target of the attacks by the employers and the government. This type of unionism is alive, notably in the CGT, and it has regained strength with the great movement against the El Khomri law (in 2016), starting with the mobilization against Macron's decrees in 2017. This class-



struggle unionism is being criminalized and called "old fashioned".

“This avalanche of reforms is leading to a deeply unequal society, a capitalist society which exacerbates individualism and a spirit of competition of each against all, in order to establish, within the companies, a close collaboration between Capital and Labor by integrating the unions and elected representatives in so-called ‘social and economic committees’. This is the ‘new’ form of corporatist state, the ‘New World’ that is being shaped.

“On all questions, such as the state of emergency which became perpetual and enshrined in the constitution, the hunt of migrants, the wars and militarization, or others, Macron is applying the policies previously adopted in a more pragmatic manner. He says ‘I speak with everyone, without exception’, but he rubs shoulders with the most reactionary leaders such as Trump, Putin, Netanyahu, the emir of Saudi Arabia, Erdogan, and others. But the concrete result of his activities is to proclaim everywhere that ‘France is back on the international scene’. What for? To continue selling weapons, to drum up more governments for the wars in Africa, to push Europe to develop its defense, to modernize its nuclear weapons and the submarines that carry them in their hulls.

“To the peoples of the colonies who are revolting and demanding aid, who had the “privilege” of his visits, he says that he is not Santa Claus. To the people of the neocolonies of Africa and the youth of these countries, who are suffering the consequences of the wars and the policy of plunder and domination by French monopolies, he asks them to turn the page on colonization and to take care of themselves. Their reply was: ‘No to you, no to the CFA franc, no to the French troops, no to Bollaré, no to Bouygues and Company’. This is the position of the young people, the trade unions, the democratic associations, the revolutionary parties who are struggling to get rid of the neocolonial shackles imposed by the French imperialism.”

**From January to March 2018, new fronts of resistance opened up or took on a new magnitude.**

First was the historic strike by the **staff of EHPADs** (establishments for the accommodation of dependent elderly people). On

the same day, workers of dozens of establishments mobilized to fight for the same demands. Their families and even the elderly people supported them. From then on, the EHPAD staff increasingly participated in the mobilizations of their health care colleagues. The retirees were by their side. They also mobilized in great numbers against the pension reform.

The strike of the **Carrefour** monopoly workers started with the announcement of the Bompard plan, drafted by the CEO of the monopoly, Macron's earliest support, in order to increase the company's profits by cutting 5,000 jobs, restructuring the group, closing stores or "franchising" them. Only representatives of monopolies sit on the Carrefour board of directors<sup>1</sup>. The unions took a while to agree to mobilize the workers of all groups on the same day. In this sector the wages are low, in particular of the women workers, many are poor, and the anti-union repression is brutal. On March 31, 2018 25,000 people participated in the strike, which was a great success.

In February of the same year, **a strike of 161 undocumented workers** from six companies in the Paris region was organized. This movement was coordinated at the level of the Departmental Unions, with the support of the CGT and other federations. The General Confederation of Labour of Burkina Faso and other trade unions in Africa sent messages of support, relaying a call for international solidarity in support to the strike. This was the first movement of its kind in the Macron era. At the end of March, the victory was almost complete. It should be emphasized that this movement took place in the midst of an escalation against immigration, in which the Interior Minister, Collomb, wanted to pass yet another law tightening the rules on immigration and on the right to asylum.

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<sup>1</sup> It is constituted, like the boards of directors of all large businesses, by the directors of the company themselves and the leaders of other companies, banks and institutions. In the order of number shares are the Moulin family, which heads the Galeries Lafayette, a big boss of a Brazilian trade company, the Bernard Arnault group, a big fortune in France, at the head of LVMH, of JP Morgan Bank and Bank of America. Also sitting on the board are the boss of Media Figaro, the president of Ariospace, and S. Courbit, a TV producer and boss of luxury hotels and online games. In particular, T. Breton, former CEO of France Telecom (among others), the CEO of Atos, and today European Commissioner proposed by Macron, sits on the commission chaired by Von den Leyen.

This strike demanded the effective regularization of the status of undocumented workers involved in struggles, taking into account the real balance of power and the context<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.4 The railway workers' struggle

All the organizations of the French National Railway Company (SNCF) met on March 15, 2018, the day after the presentation of the "railway reform" bill. The government wanted to pass this law by decree. The unions called for a strike and a demonstration to be held on March 22. The long-anticipated demonstration was called by the inter-union of civil service workers.

This reform aimed at definitively ending the status of the SNCF as a public enterprise and eliminating the status of railway workers, at accelerating the general opening to competition for all its sectors, passenger transport, high-speed trains (TGVs) and others, and at generalizing the criteria for managing the private sector. Macron believed he could coax the railway workers by saying: "Let go of your status, and the state will take over all the debt." This company employs 150,000 railway workers, all categories combined. It places a high value on the workers' status and it passes on the legitimate commitment from generation to generation to protect it. This is the opposite of a life with irregular hours, low wages, etc. The SNCF workers know that the debt was not contracted by them, that it has enriched the banks, the big public works companies, always the same people who share profits in the construction sites. For years these people have repeated that the company had to evolve in order to comply with "European railway standards".

On **March 22**, in Paris, two contingents, that of railway workers from all regions, and that of the public sector employees, met at the Bastille.

This mobilization took a particular form. It was a cycle of strikes of two days out of five, announced in advance. This allowed the railway workers to better survive financially, while disorganizing the train schedules to put pressure on the heads of management and the government. The passengers immediately took note of the

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<sup>1</sup> This strike, like all those that we supported at the union and political level, shows how important and just are strikes against this company which exploits undocumented workers and uses temporary employment agencies.

schedule of strike days to organize themselves accordingly. But the strike also forced activists to work hard to collect individual statements of intention to strike, 48 hours before the strike began, a mechanism imposed by Sarkozy. Meanwhile student demonstrated against **Parcoursup**, particularly at the schools of Toulouse<sup>1</sup> and blocked a number of department. On March 23, fascists violently attacked the students of the Montpellier school. The dean and a teacher were directly involved in the organization of this attack. The students joined the mobilization of the railway workers' union, particularly starting from **April 3**.

The strike remained very popular. People supported the defense of the public transport service, all the more because the closures of lines and ticket offices have a strong impact on passengers, especially those in regions where long trips are necessary to go to work, but also to the hospital, school, university and other places.

On **April 19**, a new inter-professional demonstration brought together railway workers and students, but also **Air France** workers, who were on strike for wages. These strikers would later inflict a humiliating slap in the face of the CEO, Janailac, who organized a referendum on May 4 to limit wage increases to 7% over three years<sup>2</sup>, putting his position on the line. The majority voted "no", and he had to resign. The Carrefour employees were also present, as well as many hospital workers. The workers of these different categories developed links among them, especially since many couples are made up of railway workers and health care workers or teachers<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In Toulouse, it was the plan to merge two faculties and two engineering schools that mobilized the students. This movement quickly spread around the question of a law on student guidance and success (ORE – Student Orientation and Success – law), which introduced Parcoursup.

<sup>2</sup> He was responding to the demand of the unions for an immediate catch-up of 5.1% in 2018.

<sup>3</sup> During one of his trips, Macron spoke at a hospital where some of the staff were on strike but present, because they had to come in. Once again he lectured the workers by explaining that at the SNCF, as elsewhere, "we have to repay the debt". A nurse replied in substance: "But it is the banks which have profited so much from the debt, it is they who should pay!" Macron's response was: "You are talking nonsense!".

The railway workers distributed leaflets to passengers. They organized public gatherings in front of the railway stations. A solidarity movement developed, in particular with the participation of artists, who, in a few weeks, raised a million euros.

On March 22, the day before the demonstration, 11 organizations and political parties drew up a joint declaration in support of the railway workers' movement. It was the first time since the presidential and legislative elections that such an initiative had been taken. Our party participated in it<sup>1</sup>. The party La France insoumise was, in a way, forced to join it, but being a collective it had a lot of difficulty in functioning.

During the various demonstrations, clashes took place between the police and groups of demonstrators. The **May 1st** demonstration in Paris was split up by the charges of the police, which prevented the CGT from following the planned route. **This was a new step in the criminalization of trade union process.** At that time, it was not yet known that a certain Benalla, a close adviser to Macron, together with other individuals acting like police officers without any specific status, in the midst of police officers, had attacked several demonstrators. It is only in July that the Benalla affair was revealed by *Le Monde*.

On May 14, a consultation organized within the SNCF by the unions, open to all, including those who were not participating in the strike, gave voted 95% in agreement with the demands.

The adoption by the Assembly and the Senate, on June 13 and 14, of the law on the railway reform was the pretext for the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) to leave the movement after having put forward a few "improvements". But this vote left many questions unanswered, because they were not yet written up into decrees. The only thing that was "won" was the end of hiring workers with a status on January 1, 2020. The government claims to have finished it, but many questions remain unanswered: the collective agreement for the SNCF staff, the conditions for the transfer of SNCF staff to the private entities that would take control of the lines, in terms of salaries, of possibilities of "returning" to the

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<sup>1</sup> This group of 11 would last throughout the railway strike. The CGT Federation of railway workers welcomed this initiative and later proposed to the "Eleven" to participate in the railway vigilance committee, in which our party continues to participate.

SNCF and other questions. In addition, the government and the SNCF leadership were committed to making investments (200 million) and taking over the debt (35 billion). In any case, without this, no private company will apply to buy a line.

The strike was not suspended until July, after a last inter-professional mobilization on June 25. Mobilizations were still held concerning the negotiations on the collective agreement and company agreements. The strikers' spirit was summarized in their slogan: **"We neither gave up nor were we defeated"**. They voted in the November elections mainly for the unions that had inspired them during the strike [In France workers of a company can join or vote for the union that they prefer – *translator's note*]: CGT – 34%; UNSA (National Union of Autonomous Trade Unions) – 23.9% and Sud Rail – 17.28%.

In October, the CGT federation of railway workers proposed the creation of a "railway vigilance" collective, open to passenger associations, elected officials from local authorities (who notably manage the TER – Regional Express Transport) and political parties. The mobilizations of passengers against the closing of lines, stations, counters, etc. were growing. Today, one of the most widely supported demands is the defense of the public railway transportation system.

This is due to three important elements: First, the need for millions of passengers to use public transport at an affordable price with a maximum level of safety and regularity is vital. The objective of fulfilling this need is incompatible with the objective of making profits, an imperative for private companies.

Second, the need to ensure equal access for all in transportation. The State remains the majority shareholder of the SNCF. The objective of making profits must be banned in favor of the sole objective of fulfilling social need.

Third, the need to protect the environment. The fact that trains pollute less than trucks and cars must be taken into account.

## 2.5 The “Beef Stew” and “People's Tide” demonstrations

The mobilization of railway workers and students, the general climate of social unrest, and the systematic repression of social protest carried out by this arrogant government, which is clearly serving the interests of the rich and the bosses, led to a high level of anger focussed on Macron.

The **"Beef Stew Demonstration"** was an event called in particular by F. Ruffin and supported by the “France insoumise” (FI) party, was supposed to be "open to everyone", festive, non-violent, etc. The political parties were asked to be inconspicuous, which did not prevent the FI leadership from taking the lead. This created tensions and frustrations among the participants of the event.

The **"People's Tide" demonstrations of May 26, 2018** was called by Attac (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Citizens' Action) and by the Copernicus Foundation, with a different approach. These movements invited all of the political, associative and union forces to organize together a large popular demonstration in many cities, including Paris. Four aspects explain the success of this initiative:

- The platform quickly achieved unity around the demands, which were to denounce Macron's national and international policies, to support the struggles, and to put forward a series of political and social demands. These demands were widely circulated.
- The approach allowed each organization to participate without any organization imposing its views and leadership. It was particularly a response to the FI's desire for hegemony.
- The effort to win the support of the CGT, at its highest level (at the level of the confederation), since it is the main trade union organization and is recognized as such<sup>1</sup>.
- The fact that many associations participated in the process, especially at the local levels.

"Everyone participated" and this was the proof that the aspiration to be together was very strong, because the broad and unitary nature of the process was respected.

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<sup>1</sup> This took some time, because the secretariat wanted to obtain the authorization from the structures.

Although a few organizations wanted the organizing committee to become a permanent structure, this voluntarist attitude did not correspond to the real situation. The conditions did not exist for all the participants to follow this path.

## 2.6 The Benalla affair

This “affair”, which broke out in July 2018, raised several questions. What did it reveal about the practices within Macron's entourage? Why was it *Le Monde* which revealed and continued to cover it? What were the consequences?

First of all, the people involved had played a role in the repression of the May 1, 2018, demonstrations, with the aim of preventing the CGT and other organizations from demonstrating. These actions had not only been organized by thugs, because the people involved acted while being “covered”.

Benalla had clearly benefited from a great deal of latitude to establish a "protection" service for the presidency, bypassing the existing mechanisms, which rely on specialized services of the police and gendarmerie. This affair started a "war" among these various services, which spread during the hearings of the Senate investigation committee. The Paris police headquarters was "abandoned" by Collomb, the interior minister (equivalent to the Secretary of Homeland Security – *translator's note*), who declared that he knew nothing about the case<sup>1</sup>. The top hierarchy of gendarmerie, which is part of the army, acted as the guarantor of the republican order.

Macron was directly implicated in the case. *Le Monde* played a decisive role from start to finish in the outbreak, the coverage and the comments on this case. It also played a key role in the promotion of Macron. This shows that its motivations were not just "journalistic".

The reforms were "adopted" by setting aside and weakening the “intermediate bodies”. The hegemonic group of “The Republic

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<sup>1</sup> The police prefecture has often been referred to as a "state within a state" and has been accused of having privileged links with right-wing authorities, who thus benefit from "live" information. This was not acceptable to Macron. Following the attack that took place on the premises of the prefecture in October 2019, a question came up in the comments: "We must put an end to ‘the autonomy of the police prefecture’”.



Forward” (LRM) within the parliament systematically reduced the role of the legislature by making it simply record decisions. This certainly allowed the reforms to be “adopted” but at the cost of radicalizing the social protest. In addition, the blows inflicted by the government on the local communities through budget cuts provoked a strong opposition by the elected officials, who did not miss an opportunity to denounce this at the annual congress of the mayors of France, or at the assemblies of regional officials.

Macron’s method also weakened the unions which, like the CFDT, were ready to promote and go along with the reforms with open class collaboration. As one activist declared who had participated on October 3 with 10,000 members, celebrating the fact that the CFDT was the union in first place in the private sector: “*What is the point of being in first place in the private sector if we are not listened to?*”

For some time, influential columnists from *Le Monde* had been warning about the dangers of the isolation in which the executive was placing itself by always being on the front line. This not only radicalized the social protest, but also increasingly raised the protest the political level with the accusation that Macron is “the president of the rich and the bosses”.

The Benalla affair was the occasion to send Macron a warning by asking him to change his way of governing.

The parliamentary right, particularly in the Senate, took this opportunity to step up and, in front of continuously filming cameras, give direct lessons in “republican democracy” to the executive, while carefully avoiding criticism of the repression against the social movement, as long as it remained within the “republican” framework. We witnessed a convergence in the republican spirit on the part of all the forces represented in the Assembly, with the exception of the LRM group, which was visibly divided and shaken.

Macron took the “lesson” into account, though not without difficulty. In front of deputies who were in the group that he had gathered at the Maison de la Chimie (House of Chemistry) convention center in Paris, on July 28, he said arrogantly: “Let them come and get me”<sup>1</sup>. He nevertheless decided to put aside, at least temporarily,

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<sup>1</sup> This bravado was certainly heard by many of those who later would wear the yellow vest and demonstrate on the Champs-Élysées chanting “Macron, Resign!”, and who would try to “seek him out”,

the constitutional reform in preparation, one of the objectives of which was the reduction in the number of senators, which the senatorial right, with Larcher at the head, opposed<sup>1</sup>.

His Prime Minister, Philippe, was calming down the concerns of the employers who, although they were not against a change of style, had begun to worry about a possible change of course. He renewed to de Bézieux, the new leader of the Medef, the commitment to convert the 20 billion of the CICE into a "permanent reduction in social costs".

In any event, this affair will stick to Macron's skin and will fuel all kinds of hypotheses, notably within the far-right who believe in conspiracy theories.

At the end of August another drama emerged: the Minister of Ecology, **N. Hulot**, announced his resignation on the radio. He declared that he no longer believed in "the policy of small steps" in the fight against climate change and pesticides, and went so far as to blame the capitalist system. This resignation highlights Macron's inaction in the field of ecology. But the policy continued: the day after Hulot's resignation, a report by experts on the nuclear policy up to 2035 was given to Philippe, recommending the speedy construction of six Pressurised Water Reactors (EPRs)! This need will regularly come back to the table, without ever being dismissed by the government.

After the Benalla affair, Hulot's resignation was seen by the masses as an additional disavowal of Macron.

The results of the selection introduced by Parcoursup show that the criticisms and fears formulated by the organizations of student and teachers were well-founded: many young baccalaureate graduates remain in difficult conditions and without university education. As many activist teachers say: "*the disaster announced has taken place*".

The adoption by the Senate of Elan's law<sup>2</sup> on housing further

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even in the offices of ministers.

<sup>1</sup> Larcher would later negotiate adjustments to this law which still remains on the shelves.

<sup>2</sup> This law introduces a "temporary lease" of 1 to 10 months and is supposed to meet the needs of young people, but which makes the leases more shaky. It also forces the HLM (low rent housing associations) to assess the situation of the tenants and the occupancy rate of apartments every three years. Parents and grandparents who temporarily house their children are clearly threatened with having to leave their

aggravated the situation of the poorly housed, in particular with the addition of increased criminalization measures against families forced to squat in apartments, while 2.8 million apartments remain unoccupied. The DAL [Right to Housing] committees organized a rally in early September.

Strikes had taken place in "uberized" sectors, such as that of the "independent" delivery workers of Deliveroo. In the "low-cost" transportation sector, an international strike was mobilized by the Ryanair employees in September.

In several companies, strikes are developing for wage increases. While employees are no longer able to cope, the shareholders' dividends are skyrocketing. According to an international firm of experts<sup>1</sup>, "France is by far the largest payer of dividends in Europe": \$50.9 billion in dividends in the second quarter of 2018, an increase of 23.6 % (quoted by *La Tribune* on August 21, 2018).

## **2.7 The climate of war and militarization**

**The mobilizations of September 21, 2018, "International Day for Peace", took place in an increasingly persistent war climate.**

Some 13,000 soldiers<sup>2</sup> are participating in foreign operations (OPEX). Of these, 4,500 are in the Sahel region, with an increasingly large number in the northern part of Burkina Faso, 1,000 are engaged in Operation Chammal (Iraq and Syria) and 300 soldiers are deployed in Lithuania. Leclerc and Mirage tanks are in Estonia (in both cases, as part of France's commitment towards NATO).

**The question of militarization**, which includes the weight of military spending, the importance of arms sales and military

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home. The obligation to make new buildings accessible to the disabled has been reduced from 100% to 20% of homes. It also plans to eliminate the evaluation reports made by the French Building Architects (a group charged with protecting buildings of historic significance – *translator's note*), which could oppose building projects, and replace them with a mere opinion report.

<sup>1</sup> According to the Janus Henderson firm.

<sup>2</sup> The 2020 figures posted on the Senate website differentiate the "multinational" external operations (nearly 10,000), the ones carried out in a "bilateral" framework (as in Chad), the "presence forces" (permanent bases, particularly in Africa) and the "sovereignty" forces (in the colonies). Site link: <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r08-r08-178/r08-1782.html>

alliances, is beginning to be raised more broadly in the social and political debate. As we mentioned, Hollande has been one of the most "hawkish" presidents in the past 40 years. Macron maintained all his military commitments and his role as the "head of the armed forces"<sup>1</sup>. The Ministry of War's budget is among those which continually grow. The 2019-2025 military programming law, the first in Macron's presidency, brought the budget to 295 billion euros, with increases that varied from 34.2 to 50 billion per year from now to 2025. The nuclear strike force and the modernization of nuclear-powered submarines with missile launching capacities is a priority: 42 billion will be dedicated to submarines. The slogan "Money for school and health care, not for weapons or war" is widely understood and has begun to be chanted in mobilizations.

The military engagement in the Sahel is becoming ever more important, and French imperialism is trying to gain the support of its EU allies, especially that of Germany. As we have pointed out, Mali is turning into a quagmire and the situation continues to worsen in northern Burkina Faso. The French military presence does not at all mean the stabilization and the securing of the region, quite the contrary.

The G5 Sahel<sup>2</sup> is a fiasco, and the European allies, as well as the United Nations, are very reluctant to finance it.

**Macron is pushing for the militarization of the EU, in collaboration with the German leaders.** Strategic alliances are being formed among the arms monopolies: in aeronautics, around Dassault and Airbus, for the construction of a fighter plane of the "future" and for armored vehicles around KNDS<sup>3</sup>, and for drones and other military equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> On July 17, 2017, the army Chief of Staff, P. de Villiers, was publicly "lectured" by Macron because he had criticized the lack of resources available to the armed forces. This resulted in the general's resignation and caused tension among the upper military echelons, who did not like the method.

<sup>2</sup> The G5 Sahel includes armed forces from Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. France is not a member, but it is its main promoter.

<sup>3</sup> KNDS is an alliance between the French monopoly Nexter and the German consortium Krauss Maffei Wegmann and Rheininstall, which is to take the lead.

The arms sales to Saudi Arabia came under the spotlight after the assassination of opponent Khashoggi at the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul, Turkey, on October 26, 2018. Very quickly the accusations pointed at the Crown Prince of the kingdom, Mohammed bin Salman (known by his initials as "MBS"), who involved his country in the war in Yemen. The French authorities began by denying the use of French weapons against the people of Yemen and prosecuted journalists who had documented this issue. They refuse to suspend these deliveries to one of its biggest customers<sup>1</sup>. They are pressuring the German government not to oppose the sales of arms co-produced by Franco-German companies. A number of organizations, including our party, have put forward the demand for an end to arms sales to Saudi Arabia. This would be an important step in the mobilization against the policy of war and militarization which is becoming increasingly important politically and economically. In addition, this is the sector where secrecy and large-scale corruption prevail.

The mobilization against the **Universal National Service (SNU)**<sup>2</sup> is part of the ideological work to be carried out against

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<sup>1</sup> The largest buyers are Egypt, India, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>2</sup> The idea of universal military service was part of Macron's program, who wanted to reintroduce compulsory military service. However, the top military hierarchy was opposed because such a system would be too cumbersome, too expensive and unsuitable for important recruitment needs. Many of the young recruits quickly leave the army, while the influx of volunteers after the attacks did not change the situation. The plan is to emerge in the form of a universal national service, which would become compulsory for all young people, boys and girls, from the age of 16. It will have a more limited duration (at least twice 15 days), it will not only be supervised by the military, but it will take up a few symbolic aspects (raising the flag, wearing uniform, periods of training in gendarmeries, etc. for those who want it). It has two objectives: to allow the army and the police to recruit young "motivated" people, and, more generally, to inculcate the "values of the republic and the nation" and to encourage young people to commit themselves to defend and apply them. A collective "No to the SNU" has been set up, in which our party, as well as the UJR and many organizations and associations, participates.

the use of notions such as "defense of the nation", the "war on terror", etc. to justify military interventions.

## **2.8 Sexist and sexual violence against women**

Such forms of violence exist in all countries of the world. The fight against them has existed for many years.

The date of November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women has been marked by many demonstrations throughout the world since 1999<sup>1</sup>, but it was in October 2017, after making public the investigations accusing H. Weinstein of sexual assault, that this date became an important occasion. The call for free speech under the hashtag #MeToo, a means of informing public opinion in existence since 2007, has been mobilizing against the sexist and sexual violence against women.

In France, the first major demonstration, held **on November 24, 2018**, brought together more than 80,000 demonstrators throughout the country at the call of «Nous toutes» ("All of us women"). In 2019, the demonstrations grew, with 150,000 women and men in 70 cities denouncing violence against women and demanding the necessary means to combat it. The state, the police and the justice system were denounced for their inaction.

These mobilizations are the result of the work developed by feminist associations which have been denouncing violence for years. It is also that of the unions, in particular the CGT, Solidaires and the FSU (United Trade Union Federation), which, since 2017, has been informing, raising awareness and mobilizing workers against sexist and sexual violence at the workplace but also at home and in the streets.

## **2.9 A new Philippe government to maintain the neoliberal course**

**G. Collomb**, who was heckled during the Benalla affair, decided on October 3, 2018, to leave his post and to return to Lyon, to try

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<sup>1</sup> The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women has been supported by the UN since 1999. The date refers to the history of the Mirabal Sisters in the Dominican Republic, Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa, who fought the dictatorship of President Trujillo, and were imprisoned, beaten, raped and murdered on November 25, 1960.

to win the municipal elections of 2020! This departure of a heavy-weight from the government caught Macron and Philippe short and forced them to review the composition of the administration. The reason stated was to improve efficiency, but this would take some time, and the new composition would be announced on October 16.

Castaner replaced Collomb. He is the "faithful among the faithful", ready to give cover up for the police in all circumstances, as would be seen during the repression of the yellow vest demonstrations. Nuñez, a former member of the General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI), was appointed as his aide: he is a man from police circles who would notably be in charge of the affair of the "Paris police headquarters".

Ministers who were facing social protest were confirmed to government posts: Blanquer in the national education department, and Buzyn in the health department. G. Attal would be responsible for setting up the Universal National Service (SNU), under the authority of Blanquer.

Among the newly promoted women were former lobbyists E. Wargon, who worked at Danone<sup>1</sup> and defended the industrial use of palm oil, was appointed Secretary of State at the side of De Rugy, in the ecology department! The concept of "conflict of interest" is redundant given the "pro-business" character of the government.

The deputies and the officials of France Insoumise have actively taken up the role of the parliamentary opposition, in particular at the time of the Benalla affair, and have multiplied their attacks on Macron. The police searches of the premises of La France insoumise, carried out the day after the announcement of the composition of the second Philippe government (October 16, 2018), that were part of the legal proceedings on the embezzlement of public money, were in fact intended to intimidate forces that oppose the government's policy.

Macron wants to show that he will not be shaken by the succes-

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<sup>1</sup> Danone, one of the agro-food monopolies, has been a very influential monopoly for a long time. Its CEO openly supported Mitterrand in 1981. The CEO of Danone was among Macron's most active supporters during the yellow vest movement, when the big bosses "pulled out the check book". He was among the bosses who took part in the "Paris Peace Forum" (December of 2011) and that on ecology and the "inclusive" economy, at the time of the G7 in Biarritz.

sion of difficulties, and that he is determined to explain the meaning of his policy by going to meet the "people", the elected officials of the small towns and the regions particularly affected by unemployment, closings of businesses, etc. Hence the idea of "**the roaming memorial**" [Macron's visits to commemorate the centennial of WWI and to explain the government policy and reforms – *translator's note*], from November 4 to 11, in the North and East regions, that had been the theaters of the great slaughter of the 1914-1918 inter-imperialist war. This show revolves around the buzz words "direct contact" and "speaking the truth". Macron wanted to show that he was not afraid of confrontation, and the media were there to disseminate these images everywhere. During these contacts the angry cries multiplied: that of the inhabitants of these rural and peripheral urban areas, of the workers of Small and Medium Enterprises who earn only the minimum wage and who never have wage increases, of the poor women workers, etc. This anger had been accumulating for a long time among people who could no longer bear Macron's constant class contempt that he is unable to get rid of. This anger would explode with the yellow vest movement.

On November 11, in Paris, transformed into a militarized city, Macron gathered the leaders of the countries that had taken part in WWI. Trump, invited together with Putin and other leaders, wanted to mark his "difference". On this occasion, Macron also held the first meeting of the "Paris Peace Forum", at La Villette, which was open to NGOs and international institutions in order to "discuss initiatives to be taken for peace" and related matters.

A collective of organizations<sup>1</sup> called for a demonstration at the Place de la République in Paris, on November 11, against the war-makers, on the theme "Trump is war!"

### 3. The yellow vest movement

On November 17, 2018, a large-scale social movement began that mobilized tens of thousands of people, who put on a yellow vest, occupied road junctions in the countryside for weeks and demonstrated every Saturday in medium-sized and large cities in the countryside and in Paris. This movement, which evolved over the

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<sup>1</sup> The initiative brought together French organizations, including the collective "neither war nor state of war", as well as associations of U.S. citizens living in Paris.



months, continues today, despite the intense repression which falls on every attempt to demonstrate on Saturdays.

Today, yellow vest activists are participating in union demonstrations and actions, in climate mobilizations "for the climate" and, above all, against the judicial and police repression. Although the Saturday demonstrations are much less numerous, and are almost absent from the traffic circles which had been the "trademark" of their movement, they remain attached to their symbol, the vests that allow invisible people to finally become visible, and many have understood that "one cannot get anything on one's own".

This movement has aroused great sympathy, in France as in other European countries; it also raised questions about its nature, its objectives and its perspectives. It shook up the political forces and the trade union organizations, and it frightened the government. The yellow vest movement denounced Macron, quickly directing much of its anger against him, his function and his style.

### **3.1 The phenomenal start of an unprecedented movement**

The movement started with the rejection of a new tax increase levied by the state on fuels, and spread very rapidly through social networks, in rural and suburban areas. It benefited from a strong media coverage, in particular by the continuous news channels, and spread through social networks, around a certain number of "figures" of this movement, in particular single women with children, forced to drive kilometers to go to work, earning very low wages, or truck drivers, often employees or small bosses.

**This movement marks the entry of new sectors of the popular masses in rural and suburban areas into the social struggle.** These are workers who work mainly in small and very small companies that are mostly not unionized, retired women with very small pensions, poor workers, artisans, liberal professions, small bosses, etc. All of them suffer the consequences of neoliberal policies that have been carried out for years by right-wing and social-democratic governments, applying the policies that Macron has aggravated and increased. In spite of its heterogeneity, its confusion and the work of reaction within it, it is a popular movement. The working class had to take it into account, starting from the just popular demands that it pursued.

### **3.2 Work for the organized working class to take in hand the just demands put forward by this movement**

In order to do that, it was necessary to fight and overcome the reluctance within the trade union movement, which had been "shaken" by the radical forms of struggle adopted by the yellow vests. We are not talking about the reformists at the head of the unions, whose main concern is not to lose their status as negotiators with the government and the employers. We are talking about the numerous unionists who have been fighting for years and felt totally rejected by a movement that did not want them while they were subjected to the tirades by the big media on "the end of trade unionism".

This movement, given its heterogeneous social composition and the traditions of lack of struggle and organization of the vast majority of the men and women who wore this vest<sup>1</sup>, a symbol of distress, was aimed essentially at Macron as the head of state. It never blamed the employers much less the capitalist system. As the bosses themselves pointed out, "there has never been a demonstration outside the headquarters of the employers." In the first months of mobilization, the dominant trend of the movement was to reject the parties and unions, which it described as "sold out". It was widely encouraged by the extreme right, which was very present on the social networks, and whose activists wore the yellow vest. For a while, this trend was a major obstacle for the union movement. Although violence sometimes flared at certain traffic circles, the whole situation was part of the general climate developed by "Macronism", the employers, the media and other sectors to discredit the trade union movement. It accompanied the counter-reforms which facilitated the exploitation of the workers and considerably reduced the means of struggle of the unions<sup>2</sup>.

Faced with the radical forms of action of the yellow vests, which every Saturday transformed some cities into zones of violent

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<sup>1</sup> The wearing of a fluorescent yellow vest had been made compulsory for all motorists in the event of a breakdown on the road. It became a symbol of "distress" which "united" people regardless of social standing.

<sup>2</sup> We are referring here to the El Khomri law and the Macron decrees.

confrontations and of increased police repression, Macron was forced to back down on the increase in fuel taxes which was at the base of the protest, by postponing it to an indefinite date. He also had to suspend tax increases that affected the great mass of the retirees. These announcements were undeniable setbacks for the government, although the amounts announced (11 billion) very often represented reductions in levies that did not affect the profits of the monopolies<sup>1</sup>. Macron believed that this would be enough to stop the movement, but this did not happen.

After granting these concessions, Macron and the government declared that it was no longer necessary to demonstrate and dramatically stepped up the repression against the participants at the Saturday demonstrations. There were hundreds of seriously injured people and thousands arrested. A new law was passed, which introduced significant restrictions on demonstrations. The police continued to use weapons of war, such as the grenade launcher known as the LBD, while many organizations demanded its prohibition. The prosecution against the police never led to results.

**This criminalization of social protest has extended far beyond the movement of the yellow vests.** We saw in Paris, on May 1, 2019, when the police charged groups of yellow vests as well as participants in the union demonstration, although everyone was allowed to demonstrate on the same day and on the same route.

In one year, the yellow vests movement has evolved, and the social strata, the sectors of society that it brought out into the street, have experienced a collective struggle, a fraternity of spirit among the people left behind in society and the violence of the state used by its organs of repression. Some of these sectors have a less hostile opinion of the workers' and trade union movement. The latter had been "shaken up" by the radicalism of the yellow vests movement. As many trade unionists said, "*it has wiped away certain taboos from our heads such as respect for legality. It showed that the violence of the demonstrators had legitimacy faced with a state that is increasingly becoming a police state*"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The symbolic promise to reintroduce the wealth tax (ISF) was eliminated by Macron as soon as he was elected. But this was not enough. It was a powerful indicator of Macron's policy: "Serve the wealthy, the bosses and the arms merchants."

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from the article we wrote for "Unity and Struggle", cen-

It is an understatement to say that this movement, which "celebrated" its first anniversary in November 2019, came to collide with the policies of Macron and his government. It also had consequences for the workers' and popular movement, for the trade union and political movement.

If the movement itself has evolved, in any case it marks the entry into the class struggle of popular strata that until now had been distant from it.

During these months of mobilization, punctuated by the "acts" of the Saturday demonstrations, the political situation had evolved in several areas, both as a result of this movement and other elements, national and international.

This is what we are going to discuss now.

### 3.3 The colonial question re-emerges in the context of social protest in the metropolis

While the "no to independence" won during the referendum of November 5, organized in the framework of the Matignon agreements of June 1988 established with the colonial state, the **Kanak people** [the country's colonial name is New Caledonia but the independence movements call it Kanaky – *translator's note*] voted overwhelmingly for independence. Contrary to all media forecasts, the Kanak people did not abstain, and the young people in particular mobilized massively, with small Kanak flags in their hands, to say "yes" to independence. Macron had not foreseen this result, thinking that the "no" would crush the "yes". The question of the independence of Kanaky remains unanswered.

The colonial question also arose in **Réunion**, during the violent and massive movements in November, echoing the movement of yellow vests. The army was immediately mobilized and a curfew was instituted. The people of Martinique, Guyana and Guadeloupe

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tral organ of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations. The conference also made a statement of support for the workers and popular movement in France, translated into Spanish and English, which is on our site: <http://www.pcof.net/declaration-du-comite-de-coordination-de-la-conference-internationale-des-partis-et-organisations-marxistes-leninistes-solidarite-avec-la-lutte-des-travailleurs-et-des-masses-populaires-en-france-d/> (in English at <http://cipoml.net/en/?p=146>)

also followed the yellow vests movement with sympathy and although they recognized themselves in the immense anger which it expressed, they could hardly identify with the tricolor flags [of France] brandished by the demonstrators. This movement and the brutal reaction of the government could only comfort the independence and progressive circles in their conviction that the future of their people could not be based on dependence on the imperialist metropolis. In **Martinique**, a deep movement has started against the poisoning of the entire population for years by the pesticide **chlor-decone**, used massively in the banana monoculture. The responsibility falls clearly on the Békés, the descendants of the colonists, who manage the vast majority of the large plantations; on the colonial state, which authorized the use of this poison when its toxicity had already been recognized elsewhere; on the monopolies that produced the poison and continue to sell it and on those who are commercializing the bananas. The peoples of the Antilles have the right to the truth, to self-reliance to reparations and to compensation.

### **3.4-The popular neighborhoods are increasingly in a state of abandonment**

On December 6, 2018, in Mantes-la-Jolie, the police forced high school students to kneel and put their hands on their heads. This act of humiliation was filmed by one of the police involved and the video-clip circulated on social networks. It became a blatant symbol of police repression against young high school students in popular cities.

These facts led young people from popular neighborhoods to develop a spirit of solidarity with the yellow vests victims of the repression against the Saturday demonstrations. Some of the organizations active in popular neighborhoods participated in the protests against the violence and impunity of the police that developed later (see below).

### **3.5 The big bosses are worried about the contagious effect**

Macron, in his television announcements on December 10 before 12.3 million viewers, responded to the demands of the movement, but this did not calm down the protest. The big bosses came out to help Macron: they were going to take out the check book to

give raises. What they feared most was not the yellow vests movement itself but rather its "contagious" effect on the workers and unionists demanding better wages, one of the movement's common demands<sup>1</sup>. In order to pre-empt a possible movement around wages, they proposed bonuses of different amounts and very complicated to calculate. Increases were granted but not by far in all companies.

### **3.6. The repression is intensifying and "becoming normal"**

Macron organized the "great debate", whose objective was to separate the core of the movement from the mass of people who listened to it with sympathy but did not participate in it. When the "great debate" began on January 15, Macron started touring the towns in the countryside, giving pedagogical sessions that lasted for hours.

Macron and the government declared there were no longer reasons to demonstrate, which meant that those who continued to participate in them were potential thugs and would be treated as such.

Castaner and the Minister of Justice organized a systematic repression against demonstrators while they developed a bill to oppose the right to demonstrate.

This bill, added to the hundreds of injured and maimed each week and the thousands arrested followed by hundreds of convictions, was denounced by an increasing number of organizations. One demand became pressing: a bill to ban the LBD projectile launchers<sup>2</sup>. The bill did not become law despite the national and international condemnation of them. Starting in January, collectives<sup>3</sup> worked throughout the country to make the case and mobilize

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<sup>1</sup> The common demands that we highlighted in December 2018: an increase in the minimum wage to € 1,800, pensions and social minima; transportation provided by the employers; 5.5% VAT for basic necessities; reinstatement of the wealth tax.

<sup>2</sup> In many countries the LBDs are considered weapons of war. Along with anti-encirclement grenades, these weapons have maimed many people.

<sup>3</sup> The Human Rights League (LDH) launched a collective open to associations and unions, but "closed" to political organizations. The parliamentary group of France insoumise launched a collective open to political parties and set the objective of creating a lasting structure. The two collectives each called out its own base to demonstrate on April 13

people at rallies and demonstrations until after the vote on the “anti-rioter” law. On January 29, 2019, two demonstrations converged, one in support of migrants and the other against the "anti-rioter" law. This outrageous law passed in mid-March, but the mobilizations continued until April.

### **3.7 The trade union movement reoccupies the streets, without closing itself to the yellow vests**

The trade union struggle movement, particularly its sector within the CGT, took some time to find a way to get closer to the yellow vests movement without abandoning its own objectives, by putting forth demands on which they could agree. This did not happen by itself and violent tensions sometimes arose due to the most reactionary circles which acted within the yellow vests movement.

On December 14, the CGT explicitly "opened" its demonstration to participation by the yellow vests who were in agreement. Concrete solidarity initiatives multiplied towards injured workers of the "yellow vests", at the initiative of collectives in which local CGT structures were involved<sup>1</sup>.

On March 8, the unions and women's organizations, which had been organizing the “3:40 p.m. strike” since 2017, opened the demonstration to the pink vests (pre-school teachers) who were fighting alongside the unions and the “yellow vests” women who wished to participate.

The yellow vests also participate in mobilizations around local workers' struggles against the closure of companies: they are very often former workers who have worked in subcontracting companies and in Small and Medium Enterprises.

On March 18, 2019, the **emergency workers** at the Saint-Antoine Hospital in Paris went on strike: this was the starting point of a movement that would quickly gain momentum.

On March 19, powerful inter-union demonstrations brought together workers from the public and private sectors on the issue of

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"for the repeal of the anti-rioter law".

<sup>1</sup> This is particularly the case in Bordeaux, with the "Assist-Vc" collective created to come to the aid of a young worker who had lost his hand due to an LBD, and to extend its solidarity actions to all the victims of police repression during demonstrations. Fund-raising initiatives were taken in other region, such as Val-d'Oise.

salary and pension increases, of defense of public services for those of the popular strata, with a strong participation of teachers and high school students, particularly from vocational high schools. The **Blanquer reform** is becoming the common target for teachers and parents, high school and other students.

In *La Forge* in March 2019, an article explains how the different reforms are closely connected "to form a system":

"Since the coming of Macron to power, we have witnessed an acceleration of educational reforms consisting of a deep dismantling. It is the continuation of a large-scale demolition project carried out since 2000. The great strikes of 2003 in the education sector were already a response to this tidal wave. As early as 2000, projects at the international level were clear in the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries. Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, summed them up in a few phrases: *'to improve skills and access to education by focusing on the needs of the markets'*, *'to equip young people for today's job market'* and *'to respond to the consequences of the economic crisis'* (2010).

All the reforms carried out in recent years have been aimed at the promotion of a liberalized school system. It is in this context that today it is necessary to link all the reforms of the national education system, from kindergarten to higher education:

- "Individualization of studies and development of a sense of responsibility by students and their families. This is how classes from CP and CE1 to 12 are organized. A chance is given to the students from popular social classes. If they don't make use/take advantage of it it is their own fault!
- "Management through evaluation and competition: this is how Blanquer establishes evaluations, one at the start and the other at the middle of CP. These evaluations have been opposed for many weeks by protests of teaching teams and unions. Some teams decided not to subject the students to these evaluations.
- "Establishment of a minimum base of skills, namely the minimum necessary to access the job market.
- "Standardization of content and the forbidding of teachers to use their own pedagogical work; the use of computerized material. When are "virtual" classes going to start? This is how the



ministry establishes "good methods", those which would be based on scientific principles, and this against the knowledge of teachers and research in pedagogy, etc.

- "Putting teachers under surveillance, calling into question the content of their teaching and also their freedom of expression (see article 1 of the law on the school based of trust (very badly named) which aims to muzzle any word of criticism of the institution.

"The "pro-high school" and the "high school" reforms occupy a special place in this adaptation of education to the economic system.... With the reform of the high schools, which accompanies the selection at the university by the Parcoursup system, it strengthens elitism and competition between academic institutions.... In general, the choice of "specialties" proves to be a source of anxiety and stress, especially when one does not know what is expected for admission to this or that university program! One must be well aware and knowledgeable about the workings of the national education system and about its orientation in order to make the right choices, etc. Knowing this one can quickly understand that the students from popular backgrounds or high schools in rural areas, where the specialties sought do not exist, will not have the same possibilities of access!"

On April 25, at an endless press conference, Macron gave a monologue for several hours, pretending to "draw lessons from the great debate". Its date was postponed many times to prevent the yellow vests from showing up and turning the conference into a protest rally.

Macron pretended to make a self-criticism on his way of wanting to "reform France", but in fact he confirmed the continuation of the neoliberal course in accordance with the Pact Law. The companies "Paris Airports" and "La Française des jeux" (operator of France's national lottery) were privatized. More facilities would be made to create small businesses with less administrative constraints, etc. The "unemployment" law was well under way, as was the pension reform, among others changes. Nothing concrete was said about the particularities of the reforms, and there was much talk about "consultations" with the social partners and other matters.

### **3.8 The 52nd congress of the CGT**

This congress was held from May 13 to 17. The issues to be

discussed, on the new forms of work, did not arouse much interest.

On April 27, a certain number of groups of the CGT, Departmental Unions and federations that were critical of the line of the Confederation organized a demonstration in Paris. Its content and objectives continued to evolve. A few days before May 1, which promised to be tense due to the climate of repression, and a few weeks before the congress, this initiative had a limited response.

As the congress would show, the activists wanted the CGT to adopt positions of struggle. Many of them wanted the CGT to be inspired by the fighting spirit of the yellow vests. People also wanted discussion on how to solve the difficulties in recruiting new members. Most of the activists wanted the discussions to be limited to members of the CGT and that differences of opinions would not be shown to the public, which would immediately fuel a campaign of marginalization and criminalization by the government and the employers. During the congress many criticisms came from the floor. What emerged was the willingness of the congress delegates to fight against the government and the employers. This congress could not overcome the internal divisions which continued to be expressed. But at least, the activists showed that what most of them wanted was a CGT of struggle.

This is what happened on May 1. The yellow vests demonstrated in front of the union contingent. Both contingents immediately became the target of the police repression which "came into contact". The red vests and the yellow vests were gassed. The head of the CGT contingent was particularly targeted<sup>1</sup>. But unlike what happened in 2017, the May Day demonstration in Paris went almost to the end of the established route, despite the repression<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The secretary general was "ex-filtrated" (removed to a safe place) from the demonstration by the union's marshals, under a volley of tear gas canisters.

<sup>2</sup> Castaner invented an attack by the yellow vests and the demonstrators against the staff of La Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital. This crude lie was quickly exposed but this was not acknowledged by astener. The slogan "Castaner, resign" began to spread.

### 3.9 “We won’t give up any of our demands!”

Several companies were threatened with closure; Ascovall, Ford Blanquefort and GE Belfort, were the subject of "special attention" from the Minister of Economy, B. Le Maire. Each time, promises of intervention were made; "red lines" were drawn for the managers of these companies. Each time, the latter did as they saw fit. At Belfort, the workers and unions went on strike, they prevented the CSE (Social and Economic Council) meeting from being held, they organized demonstrations in which thousands of residents of the city and the valley and elected officials of all kinds participated. As at Ford Blanquefort, the only really viable solution would have been the company’s expropriation without compensation by the government.

This idea had been put forward in the case of the ArcelorMittal steelworks in Florange. It came back for discussion, but with one difference: there was little illusion that this could happen with this government and with Macron, who is totally bought by the employers. A growing number of workers and employees think that a new balance of power will have to be created, that will demand the use of class violence in response to police violence.

## 4. From May 2019 to November 2019, the emergence of new battlegrounds

These months were marked by the continuation and broadening of the mobilizations in hospitals and in the health care sector in general, and those of teachers and parents of students against the Blanquer reform. **These struggles did not negate each other, they were waged together and often strengthened each other.**

**In the health care sector**, the “breaking points” were multiplying in the different centers, from emergency clinics to hospitals in small towns, in villages and in neighborhoods “without a doctor”. The situation was growing increasingly critical. "Buzyn doesn't listen" said the staff members, who are exhausted but continue to fight, and to seek the support from the patients. They are also angry because private hospital groups are taking over the EHPADs and the public hospitals "for sale", and hiring doctors who leave the public sector. The union flyers are beginning to denounce these vultures by name. This battle is more clearly part of the general struggle against the neoliberal policies and those who are the only ones

to benefit from them, who have no qualms about destroying the entire public health-care system.

**In the education sector**, the situation in high schools was becoming unmanageable. The Blanquer reform was disorganizing high schools that were still able to function, and the ministry continued to say that everything was improving. Meanwhile, from kindergarten to elementary schools, from secondary schools to colleges, the number of suicides of directors and teachers who "gave up" was constantly increasing. Also the "tutoring schools", academic institutions that prepare students for the prestigious universities, are multiplying. The democratization of the university, one of the gains of the May 1968 movement, is no longer an objective pursued by the ministry. The impoverishment of students from popular backgrounds worsened all the more quickly and inexorably as the "odd jobs" which made it possible for a student to survive became "real" jobs for workers in dire conditions, as housing has become inaccessible and as there was no money for the regional school center (Crous). The number of scholarship recipients increased (they represented 38% of the students in 2017), but they are increasingly poor. This is what a young student from Lyon expressed, on November 8, 2019, through the terrible gesture of setting himself on fire. This caused a revival of the national mobilization among students.

*New fronts of struggle have opened up around the causes and consequences of global climate change and industrial pollution and the risks they pose to the workers and population in general and, in the last period, of the reform of the retirement system.*

**The struggle against the "all nuclear" power generation mode** is mobilizing people for many reasons:

- the project to ban nuclear power generation is no longer on the agenda;
- the plan for six new pressurised water nuclear reactors (EPRs) was presented as essential both to guarantee the supply of electricity and to reduce the production of greenhouse gases;
- the powerful nuclear lobby is trying to earn the label of "ecological electricity".

But the warnings concerning poor construction of plants, the rise in the cost of building the Flamanville reactor, the risks due to the wear and tear of the power plants, are growing, and the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste is still being avoided. The struggle

for a “nuclear exit” must answer the ideological offensive by explaining the real and proven risks and why large companies are constantly demanding more electrical power although new technologies are being developed. As with climate change it is important to target the monopolies and the system.

**Workers, employees and local residents together in the struggle against "dangerous plants and production"**

The fire at the Lubrizol chemical plant, which was classified as “high level Seveso (named after a major accident at a chemical plant in northern Italy on July 10, 1976 – *translator’s note*)”, shows that it is not a question of fatalities or “unforeseeable accidents” but rather that in the race for profits companies do not apply safety standards for the workers and the people who live near chemical complexes, which in this case included dozens of companies. In this sector, as in the nuclear sector, the use of subcontracting companies further aggravates the situation, permanently endangering the thousands of workers whom they employ. In these sectors, the unions are increasingly taking these issues into account and are fighting to impose real and effective security measures, to re-establish Committees for Health, Safety and Working Conditions (CHSCT) and the extension of their prerogatives. The blackmail by companies who say that they are providing jobs while lowering safety standards is less and less accepted. Links are being formed between unions and local residents' associations.

**The people are mobilizing against the "big useless, expensive and polluting projects"** in ever-expanding sectors such as the transformation of railway stations into huge private commercial areas<sup>1</sup>, the transformation of agricultural areas into theme parks<sup>2</sup>, into areas of intensive farming, or into “wave parks for surfing”, etc. The opposition of the populations and of collectives made up of motivated activists is succeeding in reducing them, but the monopolies such as Vinci, Eiffage, Bouygues and others operating in public works projects, transport, mass recreation and other areas are al-

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<sup>1</sup> This is the flagship project of the renovation by a private consortium, in the hands of the Mulliez family, the owner, among others, of Auchan.

<sup>2</sup> The Triangle project of Gonesse, launched by Auchan and a Chinese investor, was rejected following a strong mobilization of the inhabitants of the area.

ways one plan ahead.

**The situation of farmers** is worsening due to the joint effect of several phenomena, among which are the following:

- the consequences of climate change, which brutally modify production, methods of production and the quantities produced;
- the increased competition resulting from so-called "free trade" agreements with other areas of agricultural production;
- the constant pressure of the monopolies of large distribution which play on all these competitions to impose the lowest prices on the producers;
- the consumer pressure for quality products;
- the awareness among the farmers themselves of health risks linked to the use of chemicals.

All these elements interact, causing untenable situations. Accused as a whole of producing junk food, of poisoning the soil and the inhabitants, and called upon to immediately modify their methods of production, a large number of peasants are in disarray, the more so since their number is continuing to decrease and the number of suicides is increasing. Even the "organic" sector is more and more trusted by the big distribution groups. Although the majority of farmers and breeders are still far from questioning the capitalist-imperialist system, and everything is done to prevent them from doing so, they would increasingly like to get out of the mode of productivity at all costs and to produce healthy food at affordable prices, outside of the monopolized channels of distribution. This aspiration is notably being carried out by the Peasant Confederation.

#### **4.1 The climate issue**

**This issue has become more important with the mobilizations on this theme, mainly but not only by the young people.**

In *La Forge* issue of September 2019 (no. 609), we analyzed the challenges on this issue.

"A major political and ideological but also economic battle is being waged on these issues for two main reasons.

"The first reason is that the capitalist imperialist system, which dominates the entire planet, must take into account the consequences of climate change, whether in agriculture, which is immediately affected, or in energy production and the way it

is used, in transport, construction, advanced technology and other sectors.

“Climate change also has important affects on work methods, on production itself, on consumption patterns and other sectors, and by threatening coastal zones where increasingly large parts of the population are concentrated. The capitalist imperialist system must adapt to these conditions and anticipate the future. One of its solutions is “green capitalism”, which opens up new prospects, and condemns entire economic sectors by the very laws of capitalism. Capitalism today, far from reducing competition, only exacerbates it by fostering further monopoly concentration; it intensifies the race for immediate maximum profit and destroys the productive forces. Capitalism, having reached the imperialist stage, accentuates the competition for the seizure of certain riches, of certain minerals (such as those which are essential for electric car batteries and other uses). The first major consequence of the present situation is Macron’s ecological "conversion". This is not only a change in "attitude" or a discourse intended to neutralize criticisms on his lack of commitment; it is the result of the evolution of the oligarchy and the monopolies, which have initiated changes in the production apparatus and in industry, agriculture, trade, etc. They are making strategic choices in terms of research, investments, etc. They already have a great deal and they want to have much more. This evolution will have consequences on all of society, on the working and living conditions of the working class and the people.

“The second reason is that large sectors, social strata and entire populations are directly affected by the consequences of climate change. While they still expect concrete responses from the government in the short term, important sectors of society are becoming aware of the need for a fundamental change in the economic and social system, as well as in the current international relations.

“The capitalists do not want people to become aware that the main cause of the aggravation of the climate change is the capitalist-imperialist system itself. They ideologically and politically attack this awareness, which is the subjective factor of the struggles.

“The slogan: "what needs to be changed is not the climate,

but the system" is the starting point of this struggle. It is linked to the understanding that has been developing in the recent years: the current capitalist system is in deep crisis, and it has been considerably aggravated by the dogmas of neoliberalism, promoting "free and unhampered" competition, generalized competition, systematic promotion of private initiative, regulation by the market, etc. However, this slogan does not name what this "system" is...

### **"Target the responsibility of the monopolies and the State at their service"**

"We think that the ecological struggle must be taken up as a part of the general struggle to overthrow the capitalist system, and that the first battle is to explain and focus on the responsibility of the monopolies, the State, the national and international policies of French imperialism.

"It is important to make it clear:

- "that the destruction of the environment is linked to imperialist plunder, particularly of the riches of the subsoil in Africa,
- "that the monopolies require and organize this destruction with the active help of the state, the army, the mechanisms of domination, etc.,
- "that the goal is to maximize profit, whatever the consequences may be.

"In denouncing the large-scale polluting monopolies, we must never wage this fight "against" the workers whom they exploit, the workers of subcontracting companies who do not have the same protections and who are often the most exposed. We must pose the problem in the same way in the chemical, nuclear and other major industries: we must develop unity among the workers and the surrounding populations..."

## **4.2 The battle against the reform of the pension system**

The pension system is one of the last pillars of the social protection system, based on the principles of sharing and of intergenerational support, although this is no longer totally true because of the importance of the mutual associations and supplementary pensions.

The government's first goal is to reduce to the minimum the share of social wealth spent on pension benefits. Capital wants to



implement a pension system based "on points" in which the value of the benefits does not depend on the contributions paid but on a level decided by the government based on its evaluation of the "general economic situation".

The government wants the pension system to become "universal" by abolishing special systems.

This reform is part of the general policy aimed at lowering the so-called "labor costs", which means the part of the socially produced wealth that is devoted to the remuneration and maintenance of the labor force. The companies pay less social security contribution to the state, money that finances the pension system. Only a "minimum base" of pensions would be paid by the state from the social security budget under its supervision. The rest of the pension would be paid by the individual through complementary cooperatives, insurance, investments, etc.

Inequalities will widen and the pensions of the great majority will be lowered. The most profitable part of the pensions will be given to private insurance companies and other financial organizations.

But the workers whose pensions are under a special system do not want to lose them. This is what we saw at the first mobilization of the workers of the RAPT (the state-owned Autonomous Parisian Transportation Administration) who, on September 13, blocked the Paris region for one day in a strike that was massively supported.

The railway workers are also preparing for a strike, and the vast majority of workers, women and men, young and not so young, feel threatened by this reform.

This struggle, which is underway, promises to be of great magnitude. It is built on the previous social struggles, it emerges as the accumulation of the social anger and this time, it is aimed at building a balance of power through the strike.

## ***The main political orientation is to break with the capitalist-imperialist system***

The analysis of the development of the national and international situation since our last Congress highlights the depth of the crisis of the world imperialist system and especially that of French imperialism. We wish to emphasize four main aspects:

- **The radicalism of the class struggle in France**, is due to the social anger of the working class and the popular masses, and is extending to a growing number of social strata. It is expressed by stronger and stronger concrete demands, and the ability to develop a global vision of the situation leading to the denunciation of the “system”. It is seen above all in street demonstrations organized outside the framework of bourgeois institutions, in particular elections, political representation and parliamentary democracy, in forms of struggle that break with prohibitions and taboos, such as the one that forbids the use of violence.
- **From the side of the oligarchy, the large-scale strengthening of the police state**, mass repression, criminalization of social protest, surveillance and control of "dangerous classes" are developing. The policy adopted consists of creating divisions in all areas, of developing individualism, and promoting the most reactionary ideas around.
- **The increasingly massive and systematic opposition to the military presence of French imperialism in Africa** and its political, economic and cultural mechanisms of domination by the peoples who are subjected to it.
- **The difficulties encountered by French monopolies in the international competition**, including in the sectors where they had won advantageous positions, such as in nuclear power, the food industry, in other sectors, and even the military-industrial complex. These difficulties are aggravated by the crisis which affected the whole European Union, which is the privileged framework of the development of the French monopolies since the beginning of the process of European integration.

These characteristics are not temporary, and are not separated one from the other. This means that we are entering a period of tension and confrontation, of rapid change, both on the side of the

bourgeoisie and on that of the proletariat, the popular masses and the peoples. In the general context of the crisis of the capitalist imperialist system, the difficulties peculiar to French imperialism push it to increase the super-exploitation of the working class and the working masses, the oppression of the popular masses and to reinforce the imperialist plunder and domination over the peoples, in order to guarantee the profits of the monopolies.

**The race for maximum profits is clearly the engine and goal of the capitalist imperialist system.** The state's function is to guarantee the profits of the monopolies, in France and abroad, in the colonies and neo-colonies. It is the monopolies which control the CAC 40; they drain public investments, benefit from the tax advantages and accumulate profits<sup>1</sup>.

In 2011, we described the monopolies or the large groups as follows<sup>2</sup>:

*"The monopolies and the companies which depend on them directly or indirectly, and the subcontracting companies which themselves tend to become monopolies, control more than 70% of production, 100% of finance, the entire energy sector, and almost all transport, communications, the trade in products of mass consumption and practically the entire transformation of agriculture production into consumer goods. They monopolize all the arms sales of the states, pushing the militarization of the economy even further.*

*"They organize and orient production, trade and research to guarantee their profits and not to satisfy the needs of the popular masses. They seize most of the wealth produced and mobilize the human and material resources of society. They bear the main responsibility for the environmental damage and hope to make major profits from getting rid of the pollution as well. The heightened competition among them, nationally and internationally, is responsible for wars for the control of raw materials and markets. The race for maximum profit is the main*

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<sup>1</sup> The eight richest French companies are: Total (103.3 bn), BNP (61 bn), Sanofi (51.3 bn), AXA (44 bn), LVMH (39.4 bn), L'Oréal (31, 1 bn), Société Générale (27.2 bn), EDF (26.9 bn). Figures are the accumulated profit during the past ten years. *Source:* Café de la Bourse, June 2019.

<sup>2</sup> *For a Revolutionary Popular Front Now*, January 2011.

*factor in the huge waste caused by the so-called consumer society. This is why we say that we must fight against the diktat of the monopolies."*

What has changed since then? There has been a deeper concentration of monopoly, a succession of reforms allowing the monopolies to increase the exploitation of the labor force (El Khomri law, Macron's decrees, etc.), a series of privatizations allowing private groups to get their hands on strategic sectors, the elimination of regulations and controls of the activities of these same monopolies, which lead to "accidents" of the Lubrizol type, the considerable transfers of wealth, taken from social budgets, to banks, companies in strategic sectors, etc. With the reform of the pension system announced at the end of 2019, a new short- and long-term drain on pension money<sup>1</sup> which being is organized.

All these transfers, described as savings essential to reduce the state deficit, all these tax breaks are carried out on the backs of the workers, the unemployed, the retirees, the users of services that are increasingly less "public", in health care, education, transport, housing, social protection, and other sectors. For dozens of years, the employers aimed at getting rid of the "social state"<sup>2</sup> through counter reforms; in other words, to reduce as much as possible the share of social wealth that Capital has to dedicate to maintain and renew the labor force by spending on education, health care, social protection, social housing, public transport, vocational training, culture, and others sectors.

These counter-reforms have been carried out by socialist governments, right-wing governments and today by the Macron and Philippe government, which claims to be "at the same time" of the right and left. Social democracy has capitulated to the diktat of monopolies by totally rallying behind the neoliberal policy, by managing the interests of French imperialism and even resorting to armed

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<sup>1</sup> *In 2017, there were 17.2 million retirees. The total sum of pensions paid (including the minimum retirement pension) was € 317.1 billion, or 13.8% of GDP.*

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, Kessler, vice-president of the Movement of the Enterprises of France (MEDEF) (1998-2002), expressed this old demand of the employers. Since World War II, the French employers have constantly opposed the system of distribution of social wealth set up at that time, when the balance of power was favorable to Labor against Capital.

intervention, and the repression of the workers' and popular movements, especially the movement against the El Khomri law. Thus, social democracy has been rejected by large sectors of the working class and popular masses. This rejection is not limited to elections: it affects the institutional system itself, which allows the alternation or "cohabitation" in office of the majorities of the right and left, which gives constantly more power to the executive, which is under the control and rule of "agreements" and international bodies (EU, NATO, IMF, etc.).

Social democracy has supported European integration as a "third way" between "savage" capitalism and socialism, or much more towards communism, which it hates. It has promoted "United Europe" as the guarantor of peace, especially in Europe. This is why the crisis in European integration is particularly affected.

In recent years, social protests have shown the above-mentioned characteristics. This is expressed by the "rejection" first of the politicians "all of them rotten" then of Macron, who is widely perceived as the president of the rich, the wealthy and by the general accusation of the "system", but without a clear definition of its nature. One of the major tasks of our Party in the political and ideological struggle is therefore to raise the level of consciousness about the nature of the capitalist-imperialist system.

## **Transform social anger into consciousness of the need to break with the capitalist imperialist system**

The depth of the crisis and the brutality with which the oligarchy wants to make the workers, the popular masses and the peoples pay for it demands that every struggle, even a partial one, even one limited to a concrete demand (such as for example the creation of new jobs in hospitals or schools, against the closing of a railroad line, or simply for the opening of a counter, etc.) is important in order to build this important balance of power,.

It is not a question of "proving" to Capital, the oligarchy and the state at their service that these demands are justified and that they would be gain by answering the workers' demands, as the reformist forces do with their "alternative propositions" that leave the workers stuck within the capitalist-imperialist system. This road is a dead end. For almost 40 years, the reformist dogma has led to social

setbacks, which has led reformists to declare that the workers' and popular movement has "gained nothing" with their struggles. On the contrary, in the constant struggles waged by the workers', trade union and popular movements to counter the blows inflicted by Capital through the reformist governments serving the interests of the monopolies, important sectors have become more and more detached from reformism and from the parties and organizations that support it.

These struggles are developing the consciousness of the need to challenge the entire social, economic and political system.

## **Targeting the monopolies and the state at their service**

For two years, the main political orientation of our work has been summarized in the slogan:

"Fight this society for the rich, the bosses and the arms merchants! For a revolutionary break!"

We have seen the strengthening of the police state and the criminalization of social protest, the development of policy of war, the militarization of the economy and of society in general, the military interventions, particularly in Africa, the growing weight of the monopolies which live on the back of society, plunder it, suffocate it, in order to guarantee their profits and fatten the big shareholders. This highlights the role of the State. It has been reduced more and more to its so-called "royal" functions [the three functions of the state according to Adam Smith – *translator's note*], that is the functions of repression – army, police and justice – in order to guarantee the domination of monopolies.

It is against the state of the monopolies and the monopolies themselves that we must focus the fight.

This is why the working class and the working masses need their tools: the Party and the mass organizations. Among these, the union is an essential organization.

**We defend class-struggle trade unionism**, which is today the target of attacks from the employers and the government. We call for the development of this type of unionism, which gives priority to the interests of industrial and other workers, which refuses to tie their hands to the institutions of class collaboration aimed at improving the competitiveness of the enterprise. It is a unionism that

fights all forms of division among the workers, those with or without papers, for the unity between the different categories of workers, in particular between those who work at the same workplace but are exploited by subcontractors or temporary agencies; a unionism which seeks to organize the so-called "independent" sectors, in particular of young people, which is in reality a relationship of subordination under those the orders; a unionism which integrates the struggle for equality between women and men at the workplace and in society, which fights against the different types of discrimination of which women are victims; a unionism which develops solidarity with those who struggle, in France or elsewhere, with particular attention to the workers in the French colonies and those in the African neo-colonies; a unionism which seeks to form bonds of struggle and solidarity with the workers of Europe who are subjected to the same neoliberal policies.

It is the role of the working class party to raise consciousness of the need for a revolutionary break and to gain the political leadership of this fight.

What is the working class party for? The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* answers this question in particular. The party's objectives have not been called into question by the most modern technological developments based on computers, electronics and digitalization. These technologies give the illusion that commodities are made without any process of production and without human labor. A proof to the contrary is the huge infrastructure necessary for their operation, the enormous quantity of energy that they consume and the battalions of workers and technicians needed for their operation. In all the economic fields, maintenance has taken on a considerable scale, due in particular to the complexity of the instruments of production, which are very vulnerable. These questions need to be deepened, to show both the quantitative and qualitative development of the working class and its essential role in the creation of value, the basis of capitalist profit. This is one of the tasks to which our Party will take on, by mobilizing its theoretical weapon, Marxism Leninism, its activists, particularly the worker activists, all its friends and those around it who can contribute to this work.

## **Win people to the Party**

Our line is to raise and share consciousness of the need for a revolutionary break. Winning more workers, men and women,

young people from the popular masses, young revolutionaries to the Party is the condition for moving forward on this path.

## **The political orientation that we put forward**

We call for **resistance to the police state** which represses those who fight. It strikes them and maims them, it criminalizes social protest, it guarantees impunity to the police, it protects the interests of the employers. Faced with the class violence of the bourgeoisie, let us oppose the right of the working class and people to organize and to defend themselves.

We are fighting for the repeal of successive repressive laws that were adopted under the pretext of the "fight against terrorism", for the prohibition of the LBD, a weapon of war, and of anti-encirclement grenades, responsible for dozens of wounded. We demand the dissolution of the brigades of rapid response police.

**We are fighting against the rise of reaction**, the trivialization of the far right, the promotion of backward concepts in all areas.

We support the fight of women and men against the violence inflicted on women, against the attempts to eliminate their rights, in particular regarding abortion and the control of their bodies.

**We are fighting against all the policies, ideas, practices used to divide the working class and the popular masses, such as racism and xenophobia.** We fight **Islamophobia** and all the attempts to divide communities. We denounce the policy of ghettoization and discrimination suffered by young people in the popular cities.

We are calling for the struggle **to defend the public services** for their social utility that benefit the users among the popular masses, in the services of health care, education, social protection, housing, transport, culture, information, etc. These must be kept from the appetite of the monopolies. Those that have been privatized must be returned to the public domain, without compensation. These sectors, deprived of human and material resources for years, must become a national priority.

**We are fighting the big costly, useless and polluting works** demanded by the monopolies against the wishes and the interests of the people. These projects, which have multiplied, are primarily intended to fill the orders of large construction groups, the banks, monopolies of large distribution, etc. Several multi-billion projects have been blocked by popular mobilizations, and people must remain vigilant to counter the manoeuvres of circumvention of the



monopolies.

### **Against the main culprits responsible for pollution and climate change**

We call for strengthening the struggle to impose concrete financial and industrial measures on the polluting monopolies. For us, the fight against the causes and consequences of climate change is part of the general struggle against the capitalist-imperialist system.

**We are for putting an end to the civil and military nuclear industry.** In our country, the military-industrial lobby and the nuclear lobby are intimately linked. They reinforce and "justify" each other faced with the challenge that has targeted them for years. They constitute two pillars of French imperialism, which provide it with nuclear weapons, making it a great power, and therefore they are an integral part of the imperialist system of economic plunder and military domination, in order to have access to the uranium deposits of the countries of the Sahel. We also oppose these same countries being used as storage locations for nuclear waste.

### **No to militarization and the politics of war**

We are calling for a struggle against the growing weight of the army in society. We are in favor of a drastic reduction in arms expenditures, whether conventional or nuclear. We are fighting against the conditioning of the youth through the "universal national service" and against the increased presence of the Army in the schools and in the world of learning.

We denounce and demand the end of arms sales and the accompanying maintenance contracts. The weight of the military-industrial lobby is a constant threat to society, especially since it only "deals" with the executive and more particularly the head of state and the "defense committee".

### **No to the Europe of monopolies!**

We refuse to participate in or endorse any policy or mechanism which aims at bringing European integration out of the crisis which is plaguing it. **We are in favor of leaving the EU, the euro**, which are shackles on the workers and peoples. We are for the development of solidarity among the peoples of Europe and the whole world.

**We fight French imperialism and we stand in solidarity with the people it dominates**

We stand in solidarity with the peoples of Africa who are fighting against the military, economic, financial and cultural presence of French imperialism; against the plunder of their wealth by the French monopolies; against the stranglehold of the EU.

We denounce the argument that the French presence would be preferable to that of China, Russia or any other state. It is up to the peoples to decide their own future, the relationships they want to establish with other countries.

We demand the unconditional withdrawal of French military bases and the abrogation of the so-called treaties of assistance, which only protect the regimes which collaborate with French imperialism.

We denounce and oppose the wars in which French imperialism takes part, in the framework of international alliances. We call for strengthening the struggle for the withdrawal of France from NATO, for the dissolution of this military alliance and we oppose any form of "European defense", which will necessarily be an instrument of threat and repression against the people.

We stand in solidarity with the peoples of the French colonies and defend their right to self-determination; that of the Kanak people who continue to demand their independence and that of the other peoples of the French colonies. They are the only ones who can decide the forms it will take, knowing that the colonial metropolis has duties of reparation towards them.

We struggle against the support by French imperialism to the Zionist state of Israel and we support the struggle of the Palestinian people for their national rights.

## **In conclusion**

These are the political orientations that we have set. The struggle to implement them cannot wait. A race is underway between the forces of progress, the democratic, anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces, on the one hand, and those of reaction, the oligarchy and its state, on the other. The working class, the popular masses, the youth, the women from the popular strata and other sectors are showing great potential through their mobilizations. In this period of rapid development of the movement, it is necessary to work hard to bring together the maximum of the forces and to build the revolutionary leadership necessary to develop it and to lead it to a growing number of victories.

The general orientation of our work over the next four years is to raise consciousness of the need and possibility of a revolutionary break with the capitalist imperialist system and to work for this without delay. This revolutionary break is the condition for concretely paving the way to the building of another society, a socialist society, towards communism.

This strategic objective is the aspiration for which, at home and in the world, we Communists are fighting, to liberate Humanity from capitalist exploitation, pillage and imperialist domination, for the emancipation of the workers and peoples.