Put an end to Macron and the Fifth Republic!

After the vote of no confidence, let’s finish with Macron and the 5th Republic!

The result was clear: 331 votes in favour of the no confidence motion. The Barnier government resigned and the austerity budget law fell. This illegitimate government, a symbol of Macron’s decomposition of the Macron presidency, had no future. The promise of ever more austerity and authoritarianism has been rejected by the vast majority of the population.

The economic and social crisis is leading to a political crisis the like of which we have not seen in decades. The capitalists and their institutions no longer have the legitimacy to organise society. They have no workable parliamentary majority. Macron must therefore leave and resign without delay. The forces of the New Popular Front (NFP), the parties but above all the unions, the associations, those from below, must close ranks to change everything. We need to move towards a constituent assembly process and put an end to the presidential system. We need to turn the page on this 5th Republic, which allows every kind of authoritarian power grab.

Faced with the democratic impasse, we need to impose a constituent process where democracy is not limited to the electoral arena but extends to the right to decide in workplaces and neighbourhoods. Decisions on what we produce and the use of resources should be made by the people primarily concerned – employees and users.

This means building strike action in the coming days, on 5 December in the civil service and from 12 December in all sectors. After Macron, this is the only way to defeat the

Rassemblement National (National Rally, Marine Le Pen -Tr), which is on the threshold of power. That's what the NPA, with its partners in the NFP, will be working hard to build in the hours and days ahead.

More broadly, this means building an anti-capitalist, ecosocialist alternative that puts an end to the exploitation of human beings and resources and all forms of oppression.

NPA – Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste

4 December 2024
Montreuil, France

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **l'Anticapitaliste**.*

Progressing by Grassroot Networks – An Interview with Catherine Samary

Before we turn to the discussion of the war in Ukraine and prospects for left internationalism, let's talk about the recent developments in your home country. How do you analyse the current political situation in France and the role that left-wing politics might play in it?

– Michel Barnier's new government combines two core elements: racism and attacks on social rights. The latter is evident in the ongoing parliamentary debates over the 2025 budget and social security funding. Marine Le Pen's National Rally (Rassemblement National) has played a key role in these discussions, not least due to the fact that no single party

has managed to achieve a stable majority in the French parliament. Even though the result of the New Popular Front (Nouveau Front Populaire) in the recent legislative election, which followed the dissolution of the Assembly last June, was unexpectedly high – and most welcome – it is still only a minor and relative victory.

This situation is unlikely to change unless the various forces within the New Popular Front come together, consolidate their victory, and start a large-scale mobilization. This could be achieved through the creation of local political alliances across the entire country that would be focused on concrete struggles. We should not forget that mass mobilizations against attacks on the social system are still possible – and so is the collapse of the government itself.

Against all evidence, the government wants people to believe that it has not introduced an "austerity budget" plan, but rather "a budget [plan] to avoid austerity" – at least, this is what the Minister of Finance Antoine Armand declared on the 21st of October. National Assembly deputies have proposed over 3,500 amendments to this plan! And yet, disagreements between different political alliances in the parliament are obvious. At the moment, no single one of them has a stable majority – these political struggles are indicative of what awaits us during the 2027 presidential election. In the current situation, there is a strong chance that the government will once again resort to Article 49.3 of the Constitution to pass the budget without a parliamentary vote. Previously, this procedure enabled the French government under Élisabeth Borne to push through the pension reform bill. However, the decision to use it now would pose a risk of early collapse for the government both due to internal divisions among the ruling classes and the general unpopularity of these measures.

And what better way is there to "divide and rule" than by designating a scapegoat – immigrants? Valérie Pécresse, who has held numerous high-level positions for different right-

wing political organizations, has become an emblem of the vile demagoguery that drives much of today's right-wing factions. On the 14th of October, she had the audacity to declare: "How do you plan to explain to the French that you are going to ask for more sacrifices from them, to pay more taxes, to benefit from fewer and fewer public services, while allowing immigration-related expenses to keep rising?" She added: "When we are too generous, we end up attracting people we do not want to welcome." Minister of the Interior Bruno Retailleau shares the same philosophy – his immigration bill is directly inspired by the National Rally's ideas. It is the duty of the left today to take a strong stance on this front as well and to stand firmly against all forms of racism.

– During the elections this year some of the international issues – in particular, those related to the wars in Ukraine and Palestine – were included in the programmes of all political parties. Would you say that international issues are politically divisive in France? Are they an important electoral factor in national political life?

– I would answer "yes" to the first question, but for the second question I am inclined to say "no." Political divisions on international issues have never played a central role in the electoral campaign or had any impact on its outcome. As I mentioned earlier, domestic issues have overwhelmingly dominated the political scene, especially in the wake of the crisis triggered by Emmanuel Macron's decision to call early elections. His choice to appoint Michel Barnier as Prime Minister in September – instead of Lucie Castets, the candidate proposed by the New Popular Front, which came first in the legislative elections – highlighted the focus on domestic issues even more prominently. Macron's choice had little to do with international matters: it was strictly about pushing forward his social agenda.

It is also worth noting that parliamentary decisions about the sums allocated to Ukraine were made back in March and did not

generate much controversy during the elections. That being said, a lot of things regarding France's foreign policy are up for debate. The country's contributions to European and global aid packages to Ukraine are minimal. The current military budget is more allocated towards nuclear programs, furthering neocolonial interests in Africa (the "Françafrique" policy), and military support for Israel, rather than towards Ukraine. [1] The lack of real debate on these issues does not imply that they are of secondary importance; rather, it reflects the poor state of parliamentary "democracy" and the limited transparency around France's foreign policy.

– And internally, within political organizations?

– I am not the best person to give a detailed answer here, as I don't closely follow the inner workings of every party across the spectrum. However, what I can say at the very least is that their "political life" lacks democratic transparency. Most of the time, the only thing we see are public "positions" taken by party leaders – and these sometimes shift in noticeable, even awkward ways.

This happened with the right-wing approach to the war in Ukraine. After the invasion, which was widely recognized as an act of aggression, Marine Le Pen, as a representative of the National Rally, had to readjust her public position to distance herself from Vladimir Putin. Macron had to do the same, although this shift did not result from internal debates among his supporters or within his party Renaissance (RE). The same goes for his recent, cautious criticism of Israel's politics in Gaza and his call to recognize the rights of the Palestinians. Yet, overall, there is a consensus among the right on demonizing so-called "Islamo-leftism" as a tactic to discredit any form of support for Palestine.

As for the left-wing parties – from the communists and socialists to La France Insoumise (FI) – there are, of course, political disagreements on various international issues,

including ongoing military conflicts, both between the parties and within them. Some people on the radical left, in France and abroad, frame the Russo-Ukrainian war as a clash between NATO (the United States, essentially) and Russia – thus overlooking Ukraine itself. They see it through the "main enemy" lens and reduce the equation to a single "imperialist enemy" – in particular, the United States and NATO. As Gilbert Achcar puts it, this view might eventually come down to the following conclusion: "The enemy of my (main) enemy is my friend." This explains Jean-Luc Mélenchon's (leader of La France Insoumise) once somewhat sympathetic stance toward Putin compared, for instance, to Raphaël Glucksmann's active campaign against Kremlin's politics in his role as a socialist deputy in the European Parliament.

Given this range of political sentiments and positions within the parties composing the New Popular Front, it was reassuring to see straightforward, positive statements on foreign policy in their last program. They have taken a firm stance on "promoting peace in Ukraine," specifically by "unwaveringly defending Ukraine's sovereignty" through arms deliveries and asset seizures from Russian oligarchs. As far as Gaza is concerned, the New Popular Front has called for "an immediate ceasefire" and a "just and lasting peace," condemning the "complicit support" of the French government for Benjamin Netanyahu's policies. The program demands effective sanctions against Israel, along with official recognition of the state of Palestine in line with the United Nations resolutions. However, while these positions are important and encouraging, we have not seen much of a real political "battle" in the parliament or during the elections to make these statements more concrete.

– What do you think about the political situation in France in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022? What discussions took place within your organization, the New Anticapitalist Party?

– The invasion was certainly a major political shock that raised serious questions across all political organizations. As the war continued, these questions have only deepened, and no clear consensus has emerged. Many pre-war conceptions continue to be actively debated – though, unfortunately, many of these views have not been updated. Even the basic condemnation of the Russian aggression has not led to the development of a unified position and approach across the political spectrum, especially regarding NATO or the European Union's planned expansions to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkans.

Before the invasion, Macron (much like Putin!) had considered NATO a "brain-dead" organization. His conclusion was based on NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as internal disagreements among member countries regarding Russia and its energy resources. Ironically, the war has led to NATO's expansion, harsher sanctions against Russia, and the legitimization of increased military budgets. At the same time, support for Ukraine has been hypocritically instrumentalized. As I said, a large share of the military budget in France (and in the United States, for that matter) is not actually directed toward Ukraine. There is also significant uncertainty around the United States' concrete international commitments, which Macron sees as an opportunity to promote France's arms industry in Europe and beyond. However, all this is not up for debate among the right.

On the left, including the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA), there has been limited debate around what Achcar calls the "New Cold War," even though it is a necessary discussion. The prevailing logic within the NPA has been the following: even without a clear understanding of the rapidly changing world around us, without understanding the connections between various crises, and lacking viable socialist, anti-capitalist alternatives at national, European, and global levels, we can still fight for grassroots internationalism grounded in the

defense of universal equal rights. Echoing our comrades from Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement) in Ukraine, we declared: “From Ukraine to Palestine, occupation is a crime!” We viewed and condemned the war in Ukraine as an aggression by Putin’s Russia against Ukraine’s very right to exist. We stand with our comrades from political organizations and labor unions in Russia and Ukraine, while maintaining independence from “our national governments” and disapproving of their neoliberal practices. We oppose Russian imperialism, shaped – among other things – by czarist and Stalinist legacies, while affirming our stance against “all imperialisms.” We have also called for Ukraine’s debt to be canceled and, alongside our Ukrainian comrades, we have condemned any attempt by Western powers or the Zelensky government to exploit Ukrainian resistance against the Russian aggression as a pretext for imposing anti-social policies.

Practically, the NPA has supported Ukraine’s resistance, both armed and unarmed. We have recognized its legitimate right to request weapons (from those who manufacture them) for self-defense. Since March 2022, we have been involved in the European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine and Against the War (ENSU), where we remain active both at the European level and through its French branch, working alongside progressive Ukrainian groups.

This does not mean there has been no debate or disagreement. While all of us agree on Ukraine’s right to request weapons for self-defense, several questions and dissensions emerged immediately: Is it politically justifiable for an anti-capitalist organization like ours to request arms from “our own bourgeoisie” and for a bourgeois government? Is it practically possible to call for military aid while also opposing militarism and military alliances like NATO?

Personally, I answered “yes” to both questions, as did the majority of the NPA members. Alongside other comrades, I represent the NPA within ENSU and work directly with leftist,

feminist, and student groups in Ukraine engaged in multiple struggles. But this activism requires us to differentiate our position from both “militarist” attitudes and “abstract pacifism.” This is achievable by “politicizing” the arms debate, which entails nationalizing the arms industry so that military budgets and the use of weapons become an object of political debate.

To summarize: “yes” to arms delivery to Ukraine in solidarity; “no” to sales to dictatorships and oppressive regimes like Israel! ENSU recently discussed and adopted a statement on this issue, which will soon be available on its website.

— And what about Emmanuel Macron’s statements regarding the potential deployment of French troops in Ukraine?

— Macron himself admitted there was “no consensus” — and that is an understatement — on this idea. His suggestion was met with criticism, with many seeing it as dangerously escalatory, if not reckless. Still, Macron maintained that “in the face of a regime that excludes nothing, we must exclude nothing ourselves.” However, critics pointed out the discrepancy between Macron’s “commitment” to helping Ukraine and the limited aid that France has actually provided so far. They also highlighted the difference between “deploying troops,” which implies co-belligerency, and sending military personnel and technicians for support tasks, like managing foreign-supplied military equipment. Macron’s other semantic improvisations were heavily criticized as well, for example his statement that France and the European Union were entering a “war economy.” This notion doesn’t match reality, as current production systems haven’t undergone any such transformation.

As I mentioned earlier, another crucial issue is the need to politicize and increase transparency around military budgets. This requires analyzing what the military industry is really producing and sending to Ukraine, alongside the financial and material aid needed to support Ukraine’s actual “war economy.”

If Ukraine’s economy remains state-run and dependent on Western aid tied to neoliberal conditions, it is bound to fail. This is why I support the “internal” strategy of the Ukrainian leftist organization Sotsialnyi Rukh, which criticizes the current trajectory of Zelensky’s government and instead prioritizes the popular and democratic resources of independent Ukraine itself.

— How have people reacted to Vladimir Putin’s repeated nuclear threats?

— Reactions have been mixed and have changed over time. Putin clearly knows that he is spreading fear this is exactly what he wants — and we cannot exclude the risk of a catastrophe. However, it is hard to imagine what “effective” use of nuclear weapons could look like from Putin’s perspective. So far, each of his “red lines” has shifted back in response to the Ukrainian military operations, including those on Russian territories, without triggering the nuclear retaliation he promised. Another reassuring factor has been China’s explicit veto against any use of nuclear weapons by its Russian ally.

Still, some “pacifists” continue to instrumentalize the fear of nuclear escalation as an argument against sending more weapons to Ukraine to avoid further “provoking” Putin!

— Are there ongoing discussions and debates in activist circles about France’s nuclear deterrent and its possible strategic uses?

— No, these debates are not — yet — taking place among activists, who are not necessarily in a position to have such discussions. There is justified political distrust toward our government, especially given France’s post- and neo-colonial history. Both this distrust and our necessary independence from the government make it hard to imagine how a radical, anti-capitalist organization like ours would ask Macron to use “his bomb” in the name of vaguely defined common interests.

Journalists have questioned Macron about the French nuclear deterrent in a context of growing uncertainties surrounding the United States' commitments: while he has not "ruled out" a form of European "mutualization" of France's nuclear arsenal, he has insisted that command would remain under French control.

However, current discussions about "security" should extend far beyond nuclear deterrence. For instance: How should the military and police forces evolve? How can we exercise civilian, democratic control over their actions? The growing influence of far-right ideas within the French police force is particularly alarming. Likewise, the European left urgently needs to consider what a progressive, "alter-globalist" approach to "European defense" might look like. The ongoing crisis in global and European social forums has caused significant delay in this area, but there are efforts underway to revive a "European alternative public sphere." This movement is essential, and we must support it to address these multidimensional "security" issues. I am a participant of a newly formed working group in France comprising left-wing "alter-globalist" activists working on these questions and committed to defending equal social and political rights – both individual, collective, and across national borders.

– Security issues do not solely concern international relations: the ultra-right, for instance, resort to threats, "attacks on the Arabs," and even murders. What options does the left have to counter the rise of the far-right, which is one of this decade's most serious challenges?

– Here too, it is crucial to examine how such factors as state structures of "legal violence," the justice system, and the rise of fascist private militias interact in each country. Much depends on who is in power and the nature of current social struggles. Historically – and likely in the future – the key factor has been the ability of mass organizations, involving both men and women, to self-organize and unite in

self-defense while conducting information and denunciation campaigns in the media. This topic is a central point of discussion within the “European alternative political space” that is currently being (re)built.

– What does it mean for the contemporary left to engage in international politics?

– Environmental threats are just as serious as attacks on social rights, with the poor being the most affected. The “contemporary left” is diverse and currently grappling with issues that weaken its capacity to respond to urgent problems. These issues stem from a series of crises: the crisis of countries that once pursued a socialist project – if not a reality – and those who identified with it, be that in Europe, China, or Cuba; the crisis of social-democratic movements, which have largely given up on transforming capitalist societies; and the crisis within the radical left, which often struggles, for diverse reasons, to offer viable alternatives to the system it criticizes and sometimes indulges in dogmatic, sectarian “vanguard” positions.

These widespread crises have also impacted the global and continental social forums working to invent new transnational modes of operation and action in a rapidly changing world-system. All these difficulties have led to significant political concessions and, at times, acceptance of a “lesser evil” logic. However, valuable assets persist across all the leftist currents I mentioned and beyond. From the radical left to the new social, feminist, eco-socialist, and antiracist movements, there is a wealth of accumulated experience and past struggles. While criticizing “vanguardism” is important when it attempts to substitute itself for social movements, it is equally important to reinforce pluralistic, democratic, international cooperation among anti-capitalist groups. These connections are currently limited, but they are vital for achieving a broad, pluralistic understanding of past challenges and mistakes we made.

It is crucial to progress forward by building strong grassroot international networks that focus on concrete issues. The European Network in Solidarity with Ukraine and the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) campaign in support of the Palestinian cause demonstrate that this is possible. Likewise, we need campaigns that address feminist, anti-racist, social justice, and environmental issues, which are essential to reestablishing a multi-issue, alternative space for rethinking globalization. This vision is taking shape in Europe, and while there is no magic solution, it is clear that failing to move in this direction will only leave us vulnerable to the rising threat of the far-right.

20 November 2024

*Source: **Posle Media**.*

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Macron takes on the colours of the far right on immigration

*Macron and his government have taken a spectacular step towards adopting a discriminatory, racist and xenophobic policy towards non-EU foreigners, with the support of the far right, **writes Léon Crémieux**.*

The law that has just, in December 2023, been passed in France by a joint vote of the Macronist alliance, the right-wing LR party and the far-right RN is the most regressive in France since the one passed almost 40 years ago, in 1986 (Pasqua law) and it contains even more reactionary aspects. It is totally in line with the premises of the far right, which designates foreigners and immigration as a danger, a threat to the country, stirring up the fantasy of “a flood of migrants”, of the economic and social imbalance created by migrants, and confusing immigration with insecurity, delinquency and the threat of terrorism. These themes are widely developed in Europe, but particularly in France by Marine Le Pen’s RN and Marion Maréchal and Éric Zemmour’s small Reconquête party.

Over the last twenty years or so, the traditional right has also made them widely popular, gradually picking up on the ideological propaganda of Jean Marie Le Pen and the Front National on these issues. In the early 2000s, Nicolas Sarkozy in particular tried to divide French society by introducing a debate on “national identity”, even incorporating this concept into the title of the Ministry of the Interior, designated as the “Ministry of the Interior and National Identity”, following the idea of one of his advisers, Patrick Buisson, who came from the “revolutionary nationalist” far right of the 1970s.

Macron and his government have therefore also taken these muddy paths, initially thinking they were making a parliamentary manoeuvre to destabilize the Republican party. The manoeuvre turned into a boomerang against the presidential camp.

At the start of his second term, in the summer of 2022, Macron and his interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, announced the presentation of a new law on entry and residence conditions, centred on the right of asylum, just three years after the one he had pushed through in 2019. Explicitly equating delinquency with asylum seekers, the announced aim was to fight to

“prevent non-European migratory flows”, “speed up procedures for asylum seekers” and “deportation procedures”, all classic reactionary themes.

Above all, at a time when people’s main concerns were inflation, the crisis in the healthcare system and threats to pensions, the main aim was to try to polarize public debate on this issue by brandishing the “unbearable threat of migration” and, once again, to blame migrants for the social situation of the working classes. Darmanin’s stated aim was to “make life impossible for migrants”. His arrogant profile was even that of a “Mr Plus”, boasting that he was tougher on migrants than the far right, speaking with a touch of sexism about Marine Le Pen’s “softness” and Georgia Meloni’s “inability to deal with migration problems”. This bill was fought from the outset by the social movement and the left, with the Unis contre l’immigration jetable (United Against Disposable Immigration) (UCIJ) collective bringing together 800 collectives and associations (including hundreds working on a day-to-day basis for the reception of and solidarity with undocumented migrants and asylum seekers), with the support of the Greens, LFI and the radical left, including the NPA.

Since the June 2022 elections in which Macron emerged without a parliamentary majority or an alliance with other parties, he and his government have had to negotiate bill by bill with the other parties, mainly the party of the traditional Gaullist right, the Republicans (LR). As a result, they voted for two-thirds of the legislation introduced by the government between June 2022 and June 2023 on a piecemeal basis. Darmanin had therefore opened the door to dialogue with the LR on his legislation. The rise of the anti-retirement reform protests in the spring of 2023 forced the government to shelve the debate on this bill. The LR, for their part, saw the debate on this bill as an opportunity to regain a place in the political debate. The result of the June 2022 legislative elections – 62 out of 577 MPs, a loss of 51 seats – has reduced the

Republicans to the position of Macron’s auxiliaries, behind the Rassemblement National and France Insoumise, and they are finding it hard to exist as an independent force, squeezed between Macron and the Rassemblement National.

Moreover, many Macronist leaders are transfers from LR and Nicolas Sarkozy has on several occasions called on the party he led for a long time to form an alliance with Macron. As a result, in spring 2023 LR attempted a political operation by themselves introducing two laws attacking immigration and foreigners living in France. Considering that this was the only ground on which they could make a voice different from Macron’s, their bills seamlessly took up the main elements of the Rassemblement National’s programme, notably adopting “national preference”, discriminating against social rights for non-EU foreigners with reduced entitlements to social benefits, going back on “droit du sol” for children born in France, introducing new obstacles to adopting French nationality, with stronger repression and faster deportations of undocumented foreigners. Over the past year, the LR party has developed an obsessive campaign against the flood of migrants, the invasion of migrants and the exorbitant cost of immigration, making itself much more vocal than the far right on this issue.

GROWING IDEOLOGICAL PRESSURE FROM THE FAR RIGHT

Although France has long been a country of immigration with open legislation, since the 1970s it has significantly tightened entry and residence rights. Still marked by the acquisition of nationality through “droit du sol”, the country practices the great divide between a welcoming attitude and increasingly closed practices. This is as true for immigration as it is for the reception of refugees. France, with 7.7% of its population made up of foreigners, is below the European average (8.4%), compared with 8.7% in Italy and Sweden, and

11-13% in Spain, Germany and Belgium. This is a far cry from the “over-generous policy” the government and its new friends constantly decry.

As far as refugees are concerned, the war led, in particular in 2014 and 2015, to an exodus of refugees from Syria. The reality is that most of the 6.8 million exiles remained in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Only 17%, just over 1 million, applied for asylum in the European Union, with France registering 2.2% of these 17%… around 25,000! In the case of Afghans, the effort was slightly greater, with France accounting for 8% of Afghan refugees in Europe. Similarly, while there are around 4.6 million Ukrainian refugees in the EU and 120,000 in France, and no one has protested against the arrival of a population that is “lucky” not to be of Muslim origin, here again the figure is not at all commensurate with France’s economic (17%) and demographic (15%) weight in Europe. Macron’s pretentious and self-satisfied talk about “France’s share in welcoming refugees” is irrelevant. Especially since France has one of the lowest protection rates in Europe when it comes to asylum applications. Around 70% of asylum applications are refused protection status (refugee or subsidiary protection), leaving asylum seekers in irregular and precarious situations and at risk of being deported.

European and French leaders are living in schizophrenic denial about international migration. Migration is a natural and inescapable phenomenon in the past and present history of humanity, a phenomenon in which Europeans themselves have participated and continue to participate, and which today affects Africa and the Middle East much more than Europe. But reactionaries are trying to turn it into a question of a war of civilizations, of barbarian invasion, of demographic submersion. Unfortunately, it is true that wars and climate change will accentuate migratory phenomena, once again without the European Union being the first destination. The EU’s denial is obviously that it is one of the main culprits of

climate change, directly through environmental pollution and indirectly through European industrial and commercial capitalist groups, that it maintains neo-colonial relations with the countries of the South, causing some of its citizens to leave their homes, that its foreign policy is also responsible for open conflicts and wars, with all their human catastrophes, but that it wants to hinder natural migratory flows, putting hundreds of thousands of men and women at extreme risk, and leading to the deaths of tens of thousands of human beings on the migration routes.

The other denial is that France and the EU as a whole are themselves organizing international immigration, which is largely legal, organized by the European states because it is part and parcel of the European economic and social system. In 2022, for every 350,000 undocumented migrants entering the European Union, 3.5 million did so legally. And beyond the purely ideological reactionary demagoguery, three reactions in France following the vote on the law were characteristic: that of 3,500 doctors, including emergency doctors, that of the presidents of the major universities and the heads of the grandes écoles, and that of the President of the MEDEF. The doctors protested against the threat of abolition of the Aide Médicale de l'Etat (AME) and publicly undertook to continue to provide free care to undocumented migrants if the AME were abolished, out of respect for the "Hippocratic Oath" to treat anyone who is ill and out of concern for public health.

The presidents of the universities and the heads of the *grandes écoles* are protesting against the "return guarantee" system, which already exists in other European countries (a sum that foreign students will have to deposit in their bank account before arriving in France), and against the limitation of social assistance that foreign students will have to endure from now on, on the pretext of the fantasy of "false students taking advantage of the social systems". There are currently around 400,000 foreign students in France, or

13% of the total. They are a pillar of the university system, particularly in the grandes écoles, and contribute to its vitality and, of course, to the internationalization of university education for students, including 70,000 PhD students….far from the xenophobic fantasies of bogus students that are the obsession of Ciotti, President of the LR party, and Darmanin.

The latest reaction came from Patrick Martin, President of the MEDEF, who said that "unless we reinvent our economic model", 3.9 million more foreign workers will be needed in France in the coming years, and at least the same number in the rest of the European Union. Because, unlike the spokespersons of the LR and RN parties, employers are aware of a reality that has long been proclaimed by OECD economists: far from being a financial burden for host countries, foreign and migrant populations in all OECD countries present a "net balance sheet" surplus in the budgets of host countries. In a chorus of nonsense over the last few months, a member of the French Nationalist Party picked up on an article in the right-wing daily *Le Figaro*, which claimed that immigration "costs more than it brings in" and quoted a figure of 53.9 billion. Other figures were quoted, but always with the common thread of the idea that foreigners come to take advantage of the social system, living off social benefits and unemployment insurance. The reality of the exhaustive studies carried out by the OECD in 2021, covering the period 2006/2018, is that in the 25 countries studied, the net budgetary contribution is always between -1% and +1% of GDP, with an average surplus of 10 billion euros per year for France during this period. Beyond these accounts, the obvious reality is that foreigners obviously participate in the economic life of the country where they are, often in Europe with less well-paid work and more difficult working conditions. These difficulties stem both from the difficulties that some people have in regularizing their situation and from the climate of discrimination that makes access to employment more difficult,

not only for foreigners but also for the descendants of 2nd or even 3rd generation foreigners. Maintaining this climate of racism is obviously a weapon used by employers. But employers in sectors which, by definition, cannot relocate their activities, such as transport, logistics, the hotel industry, construction and care, very often call on foreign workers or workers with an immigrant background.

And the reality in Europe is that the natural demographic curve is now on a downward trend everywhere, excluding net migration, and France is no exception to this trend. So, behind the rhetoric of the more or less extreme right-wingers, which serves to divide the working classes and keep them away from the people who are really responsible for the policies of social breakdown, there is obviously the inescapable reality that not only is immigration not a cost, but that to try to hinder it would be to create a social and economic imbalance over the coming decades. The hypocrisy of the dominant classes is that they most often support the discourse of the extreme right, and cultivate it in their written and broadcast media, fantasizing about the "suction power" that the slightest regularization of undocumented migrants would represent, while at the same time thinking about the present and the future by integrating the reality of a continuing influx of migrants. A utilitarian, hypocritical policy that deprives millions of men and women of social rights and decent living conditions, that maintains discrimination and police violence in working-class neighbourhoods where many children of immigrant origin live, but that nevertheless maintains the immigration nets that are essential to economic and social equilibrium.

This policy is even more serious when it comes to migrants and undocumented migrants trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean or continental borders. The right, the far right and their media relays talk about flooding, when the figures tell a different story: according to government figures, there are between 4 and 5 million undocumented migrants in Europe,

or less than 1% of the total population. Half of them live in Germany and the UK, around 700,000 in France and between 5 and 700,000 in Italy. But the fantasy of submersion and xenophobic and racist propaganda justify inhuman treatment for those who want to come to Europe. Tens of billions are spent on securing and controlling borders, turning back arrivals and negotiating with African and Middle Eastern countries to block border crossings. These amounts are to be compared with the small sums granted for reception, housing and aid to migrant populations. Refugees from Ukraine were the only population to be granted “temporary protection status” by the Council of the European Union. In France in particular, they were the only ones to benefit from proper reception conditions: immediate residence permit, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance and access for children to education, the right to open a bank account. These rights should obviously apply to all asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan or elsewhere.

DARMANIN AND MACRON CAUGHT IN A TRAP

So, with regard to the continuation of the debates on this law in the spring of 2023, the Republicans, in their anti-immigration bills presented in May 2023, also wanted a change to the Constitution so that France could derogate from European law regarding obligations towards asylum seekers, and oppose any regularization of undocumented migrants in so-called “short-staffed” occupations (the hotel industry in particular), which is what Darmanin proposed in his bill. They also wanted to abolish state medical aid (AME), which gives undocumented migrants access to healthcare covered by the social security system in hospitals (380,000 people benefited from this in 2023). Darmanin and the government were opposed to this abolition.

LR, still benefiting from a majority in the Senate, thought it could bring strong pressure to bear to force Darmanin and

Macron onto its turf. Darmanin, for his part, hoped that by adopting some of the measures proposed by the LR, he would get at least some of their MPs to vote in favour of his plan, further weakening the LR in the Assembly. This sordid political game on the backs of foreigners also served Darmanin's purpose in trying to find his place in the race to succeed Macron as president in 2027.

Darmanin's bill was therefore put on hold until the start of the new academic year in 2023. Here again, after 6 months of mass protests over pensions, after the revolts in working-class neighbourhoods over the summer in the face of violence and the murder of young people by the police, the government wanted to stigmatize the population of immigrant origin and stifle the social concerns that are predominant among the population: purchasing power, health, the environment…. These concerns are clearly evident in social mobilizations, and even in recent opinion polls (IPSOS institute, September 23, for example, where immigration only appears in ninth place as a concern for those polled). The hyperbolization of migration issues in the media arsenal of the extreme right and reactionary leaders has maintained a nauseating climate aimed at mixing immigration, insecurity and Islamism and making this amalgam the main political issue, with the predominant help of the network of media and written press that are in the hands of the main French capitalists, first and foremost the media galaxy in the hands of Bolloré… This issue did indeed occupy the field of public debate from September to December, but not with the outcome that Macron and his government wanted.

Hoping to manoeuvre as it did on a number of other issues, the government's timing was simple. The debate began with a vote in the Senate in early November, where the Republicans amended Darmanin's draft with all their measures borrowed from the far right. Then, at the beginning of December, the Assembly's Law Committee, where the balance of power gave the government a relative majority, cleaned up the bill, bringing it back to

its original version, a reactionary version that did not include many of the Senate's additions (e.g. the abolition of the AME, the 5-year period of legal residence to obtain social benefits, regularization in "short-staffed" occupations). Then, logically, the game of abstentions should have enabled Borne and Darmanin to pass the law, article after article, counting on the contribution of votes from the Republicans and abstentions from the Socialist Party, depending on the articles of the law.

And that's when things started to go wrong. The ecologists, opposed to the bill along with all the NUPES groups, tabled a motion to reject the bill, thereby blocking its consideration by the Assembly. On 11 December, against all expectations, this motion was adopted by a majority vote of the NUPES, but also of 2/3 of the LR and RN MPs: 270 votes in favour of rejection and 265 against. The trap then closed on Darmanin and his government. There could no longer be an article-by-article vote in the Assembly on the government's version. Macron had the choice between withdrawing his text altogether or making a new attempt at compromise by jointly drafting a new text between MPs and senators (in a joint committee (commission mixte paritaire – CMP)), followed by a block vote in each of the two chambers on the same text. After suffering a resounding defeat and being outvoted in the Assembly for the first time, Macron refused to acknowledge his failure by withdrawing the law. He preferred to put the bill in the hands of the Republicans, since it was only possible to write a joint text in this 14-member CMP (7 deputies and 7 senators) through an agreement between the 5 Macronists and the 5 right-wing Republicans and centrists. In reality, the new draft was negotiated directly between the Prime Minister, Elisabeth Borne, and the Republican leadership.

The text, which was ultimately voted through by the Assembly and Senate, is therefore a very close copy of the positions of the LR, inspired by the Rassemblement National. The latter,

without having taken part in the slightest negotiation, and even displaying their hostility right up to the end to a draft they found too moderate, finally seized the opportunity to show their support by voting for a text largely inspired by their positions, creating a general outcry. This is the first time in 40 years that traditional forces have voted for the same text as the far right on immigration. In addition, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne has formally committed to a parliamentary vote to revise the Aide Médicale de l'Etat. While Macron and Darmanin had hoped that this law would provide a political "coup" by fracturing the Republicans and isolating the RN on its own favourite terrain, the outcome was the opposite: the RN appears to be the political winner of a law that takes up its xenophobic obsessions and adopts national preference, discrimination for social benefits and tougher conditions for naturalization. Thanks to their control of the Senate, the LR parties have emerged stronger, while the Macronists have emerged weakened and divided: only 131 out of 171 MPs voted in favour of the law, 20 voted against and 17 abstained, the "Young with Macron" group has disavowed the law and the Minister of Health has resigned from his post.

THE URGENT NEED FOR A LEFT-WING RESPONSE

The weakened position that Macron had after his second election had already been shattered by the huge mobilization in defence of pensions, and then by the revolts in working-class neighbourhoods at the start of the summer. The government now appears to be a mere hostage of the right and the far right.

On the left and in the NUPES, unfortunately, this shift towards the far right is having trouble creating the necessary jolt. The government, backed by a relentless, multi-faceted press campaign, has done everything in its power over the past year to discredit the NUPES, which emerged as the leading opposition force in the elections, and first and foremost

France insoumise, ostracized and demonized by Macron and Borne as having “left the republican arc” (following, in particular, its stance during the uprisings in working-class neighbourhoods and on the murders committed by police officers) while the tricolour carpet was rolled out beneath the feet of the RN. Maximum pressure was therefore exerted to push for the break-up of this alliance, which was never able to go beyond the status of a parliamentary intergroup. The components of the NUPES, for various reasons, have themselves always refused to build a national popular political force, structured in the towns and neighbourhoods. Despite the convergent positions of its components in support of the mobilization for pensions, no political momentum was created on that occasion. For several months now, it has been the electoral question of the 2024 European elections that has seen the centrifugal tendencies bring the NUPES to a standstill and lead to its de facto break-up, with the parties allied to the FI refusing to present a united list, in particular because they did not want to adopt the radical programme of the NUPES on the European Union.

Despite the broad convergence of the trade union and community movement against police violence and, more recently, to demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza in the face of the massacre perpetrated by the Israeli army, the left-wing opposition to Macron today appears incapable of building a real united political and social balance of power. Nevertheless, following the December vote tens of thousands of activists were up in arms at the sight of the far right dictating government policy. In April 2022, half the votes for Macron against Le Pen came from left-wing voters wanting to block Le Pen‘s *Rassemblement national*.

Around the calls of the UCIJ coalition thousands of people took to the streets in several towns. But the challenge at the start of this year will be to build a united popular force and mobilization to match the social demands and the threat of the

far right.

31 December 2023

Originally published by Fourth International: https://fourth.international/en/europe/570

Photo Credit: Copyright Photothèque Rouge / Martin Noda / Hans Lucas

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France – Criminal policing, systemic racism, anti-social policies: supporting a legitimate revolt

Statement by leaders of the NPA (New Anticapitalist Party France)
Since the death of young Nahel, working-class neighbourhoods have been mobilizing. This mobilization is legitimate. And the source of the violence lies with the police, Darmanin and Macron, who are responsible for this situation.

An anti-racist, anti-authoritarian revolt

For years, those in power have been strengthening the police and racist arsenal: police violence is increasingly regular and deadly, at demonstrations and in working-class neighbourhoods. With rare exceptions, the perpetrators of this violence enjoy organized impunity.

In the police force, it is the far right that sets the tone.

Remember that “angry” police organizations demonstrated on the Champs-Élysées, and that they are still demanding more freedom to kill.

Macron and Darmanin are collaborating and contributing to all this by supporting and reinforcing this impunity, and through the many racist and freedom-destroying laws that strengthen the police and the far right: the separatism law, security laws, etc. Not to mention the authoritarian management of Covid and the repression of social and environmental movements.

The mobilization of working-class neighbourhoods is an opportunity for the working classes as a whole and for the world of work: it paves the way for a social mobilization for justice, against police repression, against the authoritarian power that also expressed itself through the anti-democratic methods used during the movement on pensions, with the 49-3, the 47-1, etc. This authoritarianism is at the heart of the social movement. This authoritarianism has been at work for years, with bans on demonstrations and violent episodes of repression, as well as the dissolution of the CCIF (Collectif contre l’Islamophobie) and Soulèvements de la Terre. [1]

Justice for all!

Justice means, first and foremost, justice for Nahel, for Zyed and Bouna, for Adama, for Alhoussein, for the three young people in the 20th arrondissement of Paris who were hit by a police car, for all the victims of police violence, for the people maimed in the protests. The guilty parties must be punished, and the victims and their families must be compensated.

We must put an end to preventive detention and release the young people imprisoned as a result of the demonstrations of recent nights. Let’s not forget that all the responsibility for these events lies with the government.

Public transport must be re-established in the neighbourhoods, and any state of emergency or curfew must be rejected.

The police must be disarmed immediately.

And (minister of the interior) Darmanin must resign.

Beyond that, we need social justice: the anger we are seeing today is at the same time the expression of a much deeper revolt, against racism, against the stigmatization of people living in working-class neighbourhoods, against racialized people, against Islamophobia, against poverty that is growing, particularly as a result of inflation, low wages, job insecurity, attacks on unemployment insurance, the destruction of public services, etc.

Supporting and extending the revolt

Make no mistake about it: while Macron’s government is increasingly repressive, it is not the only one in the world to act in this way. Repression is the rulers’ only response to the economic, ecological, social and political crisis into which they have plunged the world.

The NPA calls on people to mobilize alongside angry young people, to gather in front of town halls, every evening if necessary, to express our rage and our demands. It calls on the organisations of the workers’ movement, trade unions, associations and parties to meet as soon as possible to discuss how to build a mobilization on the scale and in the forms that will support the current revolt, obtain justice and launch a counter-offensive against the anti-democratic and anti-social power of Macron and his government.

CHRISTINE POUPIN, OLIVIER BESANCENOT, PAULINE SALINGUE, PHILIPPE POUTOU

30 June 2023

Christine Poupin is is a trade union activist in the chemicals sector and a national spokesperson for the NPA in France.

Olivier Besancenot is one of the best-known leaders of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), formed in 2009 following a call by the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR), French section of the Fourth International). As candidate for the LCR in the presidential elections in 2002 and 2007, he received 1.2 million votes (4.5%) and 1.5 million votes (4.2%) respectively. He is a postal worker in the Paris region.

Pauline Salingue is a spokesperson of the NPA.

Philippe Poutou, the NPA candidate in the French presidential elections in 2012 and 2017, works in the Ford cars factory in Bordeaux.

Republished from International Viewpoint: http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8146

Original in French: https://lanticapitaliste.org/actualite/antiracisme/police-criminelle-racisme-systemique-politiques-antisociales-soutenir-une

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French Pensions: “Victory is possible against Macron, his reform and his 49.3!”

Statement by the New Anticapitalist Party (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste NPA) of France on Macron’s pension reforms.

The use of the 49.3 by the government is a democratic scandal.

[1] It shows the weakness of the government's social base and of its authoritarian approach. Under the pressure of the movement, despite an agreement with the LR (Republicans: mainstream conservatives) leadership, their members of parliament did not dare vote for the reform. It reinforces the illegitimacy of the government and pushes the mainstream left and union leaderships with positions in the institutions to continue the mobilisation, notably the CFDT. [2] It shows the particularly undemocratic character of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, which allow a minority government to pass a reform. In a way, what has happened is good news for the movement.



The actions that took place throughout the country on Thursday night testify to the anger at the democratic scandal, the repression that has been unleashed, not only against the demonstrations but also against specifically targeted union activists, such as those in the energy sector, and the hardening of the government's position. Macron and his reform have little support, and the first post–49.3 opinion poll indicates the massive rejection of his draconian action and the depth of the protest, which is not weakening. With the continuation of the mobilisation, it is likely that the government will step up the repression. This will require solidarity and a united response equal to the challenge.

However, nothing is won. The motions of censure will be rejected, and the balance of forces remains uncertain. The movement must take a step forward to win; we can no longer be satisfied with renewable, rolling strikes. The 23rd of March date set for the next national mobilisation announced by the inter-union coordination is too far away. [3] We have to use it to build strikes where there are none by building on the strength of the mobilised sectors. But we need to accelerate

the pace so as not to demoralise people and not to leave the most advanced sections of the labour movement isolated.

For us, a victory depends on the combination of different factors:

• Strengthening the rolling strikes, in particular in the public services and state enterprises. In the private sector, it is necessary to broaden the mobilisation to slow down production and put pressure on the employers and their political representatives. Renewable strikes have greatly contributed to destabilising the government. We have to do everything to enlarge them; to make this struggle a daily mobilisation, the movement has to be in the news every day. What we are aiming for is a general strike.

• Continuing the mass demonstrations which show the depth of the movement and its legitimacy. We call for mobilisations everywhere that directly target political power, as the Yellow Vest movement did. The movement must aim to blockade the country. We need a national demonstration in Paris to politically and massively challenge Macron’s reforms and government.

• Responding to the ongoing democratic scandal The government and Macron must go, but we must prevent the far right from ambushing us and gaining the main benefit. It is a question of imposing a policy that starts with the needs of workers, youth, and pensioners and relies on their mobilisations to impose it. We need a government that is as faithful to the interests of workers as Macron’s is to those of the employers. It is the responsibility of all the organisations of the trade union, political, and social movements on the left to discuss all these points. We will work to help set up such meetings as soon as possible.

Beyond that, and more than ever, a political alternative around a project of breaking with capitalist policies is

necessary—a rupture for an ecosocialist society.

A victory is possible against Macron and his reforms. We must give ourselves all the means necessary to achieve it.

NPA Executive Committee

16 March 2023

Montreuil

FOOTNOTES
[1] Paragraph 3 of Article 49 of the French constitution allows the prime minister, "after deliberation by the Council of Ministers," to force a bill through the Assemblée Nationale with no vote. The only alternative to prevent the bill from passing is then to overthrow the government.When the prime minister triggers this procedure, MPs have the option of tabling a motion of no confidence within 24 hours. Le Monde.

[2] The CFDT is the largest French trade union confederation by number of members (875,000) but historically less radical than the CP-dominated CGT to which it comes second in voting results for representative bodies.

[3] The inter-union coordination is composed of eight trade-union confederations/federations (CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, CFE-CGC, UNSA, Solidaires and FSU) and four youth organisations l'Union nationale des étudiants de France (Unef), l'Union nationale lycéenne (UNL), le Syndicat général des lycéens (SGL), and the Fédération indépendante et démocratique lycéenne (FIDL).

Reprinted from International Viewpoint: https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8026
Original article (in French): https://nouveaupartianticapitaliste.org/actualite/politique/une-victoire-est-possible-contre-macron-sa-reforme-et-son-493-0

Main photo credit: Photothèque Rouge /Martin Noda/Hans Lucas

Protestors demand justice for assassinated Kurdish activists on streets of Paris – interview with Sarah Glynn, Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan

On 7 January 2023, 25,000 marched through the streets of Paris to demand justice for assassinated Kurdish activists, writes Mike Picken. The event was initially to commemorate the anniversary of three murders of Kurdish activists in Paris' 10th arondissement by a Turkish state agent in 2013 but was overshadowed by the assassination of three more Kurdish activists on 23 December 2022 in front of the Kurdish Democratic Center (CDKF) on rue d'Enghien in the same arondissement. In both assassinations the French state of President Macron has failed to satisfy Kurdish demands for the links with the Turkish state to be exposed and to classify the recent murders as terrorism.

*The mass demonstration was supported by the left parties in France and there is a report from Mireille Court of the march in l'**Anticapitaliste**, weekly paper of the NPA (Nouvelle Parti Anticapitaliste) issue 644, here (in French).*

*Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan (SSK) activist **Sarah Glynn** was also on the march in Paris, and below we republish an*

interview with her, taken from the Australian ecosocialist ***Green Left*** *together with pictures by Sarah. Sarah Glynn also writes a weekly column on the Kurdish struggle on* ***Medyanews*** *that we encourage our readers to follow.*

Events in Scotland in Solidarity with Kurdistan can be found on the Facebook page of SSK here: https://en-gb.facebook.com/ScottishSolidaritywithKurdistan/ .

The Centre for Kurdish Progress is hosting Newroz celebrations in ***Edinburgh*** *on* ***Wednesday 8th March 2023****, with leading figures from the Kurdish Community, joined by Members of the Scottish Parliament from SNP, Labour and Scottish Greens (Tickets available here)*

France: 25,000 march in Paris to demand justice for assassinated Kurdish activists

Kurdish protest in Paris on January 7. Photo: Sarah Glynn

A large march took place in Paris, on January 7, to demand justice for three Kurdish female activists – including Sakine Cansız, a co-founders of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) – were assassinated by a Turkish gunman in that city 10 years ago. The French government has withheld documents that could prove that the Turkish state was responsible by classifying them "top secret".

Protests have been held every year to mark this atrocity, but

this year's action was supercharged with anger at another assassination of three Kurdish activists in Paris on December 23. *Green Left*'s **Peter Boyle** spoke to Kurdish solidarity activist and writer **Sarah Glynn** who participated in the march.

What do you estimate were the numbers at the march and what were the main groups participating?

The organisers estimated an attendance of 25,000. Most were Kurds, and Kurdish organisations had organised buses from different parts of Europe. There were also trade unionists, and representatives from the different left parties, and sympathetic organisations and individuals.

The march started from opposite the Gard du Nord, near 147 rue la Fayette where the three Kurdish women were assassinated ten years ago, and many people took the opportunity, before it set off, to visit the community centre where the three Kurds were assassinated in December. Both places, in Paris's 10th Arrondissement, were marked by portraits and flowers.

Among the sea of Kurdish flags and placards, there was a sprinkling of trade union flags, and the Union Syndicale Solidaires marched behind their own banner supporting the Kurdish struggle. All the French left parties were represented, with elected members standing out from the crowd with their blue, white and red sashes.

The final demonstration, in Place de la Republique, was addressed by the families of those killed and by leaders of the Kurdish community in Europe, and also by speakers from various organisations (including a representative from France's Armenian community) and from the mayor of the 10th Arrondissement and political parties.

The politicians not only stressed the importance of a full investigation of both triple murders, but also the need to delist the PKK and stop criminalising Kurdish politics.

Sylvie Jan, co-president of l'Association France Kurdistan observed how public support for the Kurds has grown over the ten years since the first assassination.

We heard some important and strong words, but full the weight of the demonstration was summed up in the final lament, composed and sung by Diyar Mehrovi, a friend of the murdered musician Mîr Perwer.



Mathilde Panot, La France Insoumise MP addressing the protest in Paris. Photo: Sarah Glynn

French authorities have arrested the person who is alleged to have carried out the latest massacre and suggested that racism was his motive but Kurds and their supporters are not satisfied with this. Can you explain why?

The Kurds have no faith in the French authorities because of their deliberate blocking of the investigation into the 2013 assassinations. The man accused of that earlier attack conveniently died of a brain tumour in December 2016, a few weeks before he was due to go on trial, and the case was closed.

However, there is a wealth of evidence that he was working for the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation and that the French state impeded the investigation, and they have closed access to crucial defence documents. The families of the murdered women began a civil action and managed to get the case reopened in 2019, but the state has refused the request of the judges to declassify the documents.

After the assassinations on December 23, the French Interior Minister, Gerald Darmanin, was very quick to declare that this was the action of a lone gunman – to dismiss any wider

conspiracy and so rule out a terrorism investigation. The man who fired the gun was a Frenchman who has also been accused of an earlier racist attack on Somalis, but he was just out of prison, and could have been recruited to direct his violence against the Kurds by someone he met inside. The Kurds argue that there are several circumstances that suggest a planned and targeted attack.

With the approaching tenth anniversary of the first assassinations, this was a significant period, and at the time of the recent assassination there was supposed to be a large meeting at the community centre to plan for last Saturday's demonstration – thankfully, delayed an hour due to transport problems. An attack at this time could have been an even worse disaster for the Kurdish community.

After shooting into the community centre – and making sure that Evîn Goyî was dead with a second shot – the gunman shot at the Kurdish restaurant opposite the centre, and then went down the road and entered theKurdish hairdresser where he was eventually caught by the workers as he reloaded his gun. The community centre is an important place for the French Kurdish community and all three places are Kurdish. Shops of other nationalities between the restaurant and the hairdresser were not attacked.

The day after the recent assassinations, Turkey's Home Minister, Süleyman Soylu, stated: "Tayyip Erdoğan will not only purge the terrorists in Turkey, but also the terrorists in the world."

The Turkish government appears to want Kurds to believe that Turkey is behind this assassination, and to be confident that the French authorities will not investigate this.

In a live broadcast on CNN-Türk in February 2021, the former head of the Turkish General Staff's Intelligence Department not only admitted that the 2013 assassinations were an

operation by the Turkish state, but also called for more of the same, telling viewers, “They also have their elements in Europe. We have to do something in this direction in Europe. I mean, it was already done once in Paris …”

No action was taken then either.



Kurdish protest in Paris.
Photo: Sarah Glynn

What are the barriers to a proper public investigation of the latest and the 2013 atrocities?
It is widely understood that, for political reasons, the French government will avoid any investigation that could implicate the Turkish state.

As in so many other areas, Turkey is allowed to spread their terror with impunity.

Interview originally published by Green Left (Australia) https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/france-25000-march-paris-demand-justice-assassinated-kurdish-activists

Top photo: l’Anticapitaliste, credited to DR

Left and independentists advance in French elections

The population of the French state go to the polls for the fourth time this year in the second round of the legislative elections on Sunday 19 June. While the right wing Macron won the Presidency again, this was against the far right

challenger despite the strong showing of the left. However in the parliamentary elections the left has organised better, into a new coalition known as NUPES (pronounced ‘noop’) led by Jean Luc Melenchon. NUPES is putting up a strong challenge to the Macron Presidency and stands to be at least the main opposition, and possibly even the majority grouping in the National Assembly.

Of particular interest in Scotland will be the election campaign in France’s colonial possessions in South America and the Pacific. In Guyane (French Guiana), the left and independentist movements had a strong showing in the first round in one of the constituencies with only candidates of the left going through to the next round in one of the two constituencies and NUPES are challenging Macron’s candidate in the other (see article on Guyane here – in French at present, we will try to get English language updates shortly). In Kanaky in the Pacific, the independentist forces of the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) have succeeded in being the challenger to Macron in the second round.

ecosocialist.scot is pleased to republish two articles explaining the latest situation – one by fellow Fourth Internationalist Dave Kellaway, originally published on the website of Anti*Capitalist Resistance (a new revolutionary organisation in England and Wales), and the other an article on the Kanak elections originally published by L’Anticapitaliste and translated by International Viewpoint.

Setback for macron in ‘third round’ of french elections



Dave Kellaway reports on the first round of the French parliamentary elections.

14 Jun 2022

Gérald Darmanin, the French interior minister, the same politician who blamed the Liverpool fans for the debacle of the Champions league final a few weeks ago, did his best to massage the election results. He tried to define some left candidates as not really being part of the left coalition so that the overall vote for the coalition was reduced. Respected news outlets like Le Monde did not stand for it and declared the New Popular Ecological and Social Union (NUPES) the winners by a small margin. No wonder Darmanin was trying to fiddle the figures; this is the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic that a recently elected president has failed to come first in the parliamentary elections that immediately follow the Presidential race.

The margin of victory for the coalition led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon was around half a percentage point. NUPES scored 26% followed by Macron’s Ensemble on 25% and Le Pen’s far right National Rally (RN) came in at just under 20%. French politics is still currently structured around these three political blocs. The traditional conservative party which came out of the Gaullist tradition, the Republicans (LR), got 11%.

Notable successes for the left included the election of Danièle Obono, a black woman leader of the LFI who had received much abuse from the right and the first place of Stéphane Ravacley, a left wing baker who did a successful 11 day hunger strike to stop his 18 year old Guinean apprentice being deported. He beat Macron’s candidate.

Since it is a first past the post electoral system over two rounds, the popular vote will not translate into the same proportion of seats. At the moment NUPES is projected to get between 150 and 190 seats whereas Ensemble is predicted to get between 255 and 295. A working majority is 289 so at the moment it is likely, but not certain, that Macron will just about do that. Of course Macron could govern without 289 seats by doing deals with the other blocs, particularly the LR, but it would make it more difficult to get controversial legislation through like increasing the retirement age.

The limits of Macron's popularity were seen in the elimination of the former hated Minister of Education, Blanquer, in the first round.

The limits of Macron's popularity were seen in the elimination of the former hated Minister of Education, Blanquer, in the first round. His attacks on teachers have received their just desserts. Macron has still failed to create a solid political base. His success has always been based on skilful manoeuvring, taking advantage of the crisis and decline of the mainstream left and right of centre parties. At the same time the rise of the hard right and fascists allow him to present himself as the safe alternative to the extreme right. Today he is trying to extend the notion of bullwark against extremes by red baiting Mélenchon. His ministers keep talking about a French Chávez or a risk to the French role in the European Union.

Despite the good showing of the left, particularly compared to 2017 when there was no unity among the left and ecologists, the slogan put forward by the France Unbowed (La France Insoumise – LFI) of 'Mélenchon Prime Minister!' will not become reality. It will be the main opposition bloc in parliament and its political centre of gravity will be more radical that the previous social liberal Socialist Party. The LFI will have the biggest number of MPs within the left/ecologist alliance. On paper the LFI has an even more

radical left social democratic programme than Corbyn's.

Only 47% of the French electorate bothered to vote, a new low for these elections. This expresses a real disgust at and alienation from the political system. It also shows both the difficulty and opportunity for the left coalition. Even before the first round, the left recognised that one way of completely blocking Macron was to convince the abstainers to vote for progressive reform. Current projections of seats could change significantly if there were to be a big mobilisation and a cut in the rate of abstention. Mélenchon made his post election speech centre on the nation of 'deferlement' – general mobilisation for the second round.

Only 47% of the French electorate bothered to vote, a new low for these elections. This expresses a real disgust at and alienation from the political system.

Although the NUPES are through to the second round in over 300 seats, there is a much smaller stock of potential votes from those parties which did not make it through. NUPES already regrouped the whole of the left except for candidates of Lutte Ouvrière (Workers Struggle), which always rejected the coalition, and the few supported by the NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party), which generally voted for NUPES except where social liberal PS candidates were standing. These currents only got about 1.4% of the vote and so will not weigh heavily.

On the other hand, Macron can expect to pick up a good part of the LR vote whether its candidates are standing against NUPES or the hard right RN. Where NUPES are running off against the RN the LR vote is more likely to go to the hard right. Leaders of Macron's coalition have been much more ambivalent about supporting NUPES candidates against the RN as a 'republican duty'. Some have come out clearly for a NUPES vote while others say that it has to be on a case by case basis since some NUPES candidates do not share 'republican values'. Of

course, Macron was happy to bleat on about solidarity with republican values when he relied on left voters voting for him in the second round of the presidential elections in order to defeat Le Pen.

The near 20% for Le Pen is much better than in 2017 and is a success for her reactionary current. It will help to further embed her hard right politics in the political institutions. This time she is more confident about getting the 15 seats needed to have an official parliamentary group which confers definite advantages. It will further change the relationship of forces between her current and the mainstream rightwing. Her absolute refusal to make any agreement with the pro-Vichy, fascist Éric Zemmour has paid off politically. He even failed to make the second round in a constituency where he had done well in the presidential elections. It looks like he is very much a busted flush – a balloon pumped up by the media in the preliminary phase of the presidential elections. Le Pen's continued threat to the left is her popularity among some working class communities.

Any weakening of the dominant class enemy is always helpful to working people's struggle to defend their gains and build a fairer society.

Any weakening of the dominant class enemy is always helpful to working people's struggle to defend their gains and build a fairer society. Macron has to get his reforms through parliament and therefore a working majority is important. It is a practical motivation for people to vote left in the second round. Even if, as likely, NUPES fails to block Macron in parliament, the fact of having around 100 MPs on a radical left position could well help any mobilisations. The social liberal PS will not be the leadership of the left.

The anti-capitalist and revolutionary left will be doing their best to mobilise for the second round but will also be calling on NUPES to develop the struggles outside parliament. If you

cannot stop reactionary bills going through parliament, you have do it by mobilising forces on the streets. In recent decades, France has seen various neo-liberal reforms, including by Macron, stopped by mass demonstrations and strikes. Progress in the unity of the left and greens can give confidence to such movements.

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Originally published here: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/setback-for-macron-in-third-round-of-french-elections/

Kanak independentists present common candidates for legislative elections



WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE 2022, BY USTKE

The French elections also concerned the French overseas départements and collectivities such as Kanaky (New Caledonia)

in the south-west Pacific Ocean. The results of the vote on 12 June showed that the independendist forces grouped under the FLNKS (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front) banner had achieved their first goal – to be present in the second round, despite the very low turn out of barely one-third of registered voters. The archipelago is divided into two constituencies, in both cases the run off is between the candidate of Macron's grouping (Union loyaliste-Ensemble) and the FLNKS candidate.

At a press conference on Tuesday 17 May at Karigou in the town of Dumbéa, the Kanak independence movement announced the names of its candidates for the June 2022 legislative elections. Grouped around Wasissi Konyi, representative of the Palika in the political bureau of the FLNKS, the independentist candidates presented themselves, along with their alternates. Why were they standing? What were their goals?

"The independence movement must be represented in the National Assembly, it must be in the negotiations with the French government when they start. The independentists will ask for bilateral discussions," announced the spokesperson for the Front. Following the last two congresses, that of the FLNKS and the popular congress, on 7 and 8 May at the N'Dé tribe, the independentist, progressive and nationalist forces made this commitment, and they reaffirmed that "the Nouméa Accord is a process of decolonization, the country is on the road to emancipation" . "The goal is to get into the second round, it is completely achievable," indicated the FLNKS spokesperson, before the candidates took the floor to introduce themselves and explain their participation in these national elections.

> *"In the National Assembly, our independence movement is not represented"*

In the first constituency (Nouméa, Îles-des-Pins, Loyalty Islands): Wali Wahetra, representative of Palika in the

Province of the Islands at the congress, originally from Drehu, has been a teacher for thirty years. In the Congress, she is the Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee. “It’s a huge responsibility. The independence movement has chosen us to be ambassadors”. During her speech, she recalled the five positions on which the Front and its allies agreed: “Challenging the political legitimacy of the last referendum consultation; the accession of New Caledonia to its full and entire sovereignty by the transfer of the last remaining powers; the non-negotiable maintenance of the achievements of the Nouméa Accord, which is guaranteed by the principle of irreversibility; maintaining New Caledonia on the list of countries to be decolonized; a categorical refusal to choose a new status within the French Republic. The bilateral format was recorded at the N’Dé congresses,” she said. “The first constituency is represented by Nouméa, Île-des-Pins and the Loyalty Islands. The delimitation of boundaries (decided by the then Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua in 1986) is totally iniquitous and unjust. We want to call on the solidarity of the New Caledonian people, if they have the values of democracy at heart. In the National Assembly, our independence movement is not represented. We would like to go there to have our own say. The last Kanak deputy who went to the Assembly was Rock Pidjot in 1986 and since then the independentists have never been able to be elected because of these boundaries. This is partisan and completely unfair. It is a colonial attitude of the French state…”

> *“We must tell the ordinary Caledonian that they must no longer be afraid”*

Her alternate is Jean-Fidéli Malalua, fourth Vice President of the USTKE (Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers). He has been active in the trade-union movement for fifteen years. He says he is “battle-hardened from politics and especially from social questions” . He is of Futunian origin, he was born in La Foa in 1973. “I have taken up a cause that corresponds to

my convictions, it is the struggle of the Kanak people. I'm not hiding from you that it's not easy" . Questions might arise. "Why go to the National Assembly if you are asking for independence? Why participate in these elections? It is precisely the opportunity to go there to give a certain tone to the vision of the country and to give our point of view to the elected members of the National Assembly, but especially to Caledonians of all ethnic groups. As a non-Kanak and especially one of our generation. This country is viable together. We have to tell the average Caledonian that they don't have to be afraid anymore. We need respect from the Caledonian voters … In the word independence, there are clichés that scare people… In Kanak and Oceanian culture, the search for consensus means that we have to discuss anyway…," he explained, saying that the politics of fear would lead nowhere. "The mosaic of communities gathered around an independence project is not exclusive. It is a common project and of general interest," he concluded.

"We are proud to be in this fight"

In the second constituency (the municipalities of Grand-Nouméa and the rest of the territory), the candidate is Gérard Reignier, former head of the Union Calédonienne and the FLNKS. "What we want is to have a representation in the National Assembly to make heard the voice of independentists and nationalists, of those who want this country to become a nation with all its populations in a common destiny". "The load is heavy but the combat is beautiful," he said. "We are proud to be in this fight. We hope to win and bring back some truth to the National Assembly… We have the duty to inform the French political class, but also French public opinion, which is in favour of the full sovereignty of our country. The words liberty, equality, fraternity should not be besmirched. Perhaps France will be less beautiful without New Caledonia, but certainly if the French state, along with the independentists, allows this country to access its full

sovereignty, France will be greater," he added.

His alternate, Marie-Pierre Goyetche, was president of the USTKE from April 2012 to December 2015. Currently, she is vice-president of the honorary college of the Trade Union Organization and vice-president of the Labour Party. A teacher by training, she got involved very early in the trade union struggle. This trade union commitment will enable her to make the link with the field of politics. She was elected to a municipal council, to the southern province and to the congress. "I am mixed-race, I am proud of my New Caledonian family who arrived through prison. [1] And I am proud of my Kanak culture in which I was brought up" . She wanted to send this message to the government: "It is out of the question to touch the composition of the electorate, that is the reason for our commitment to these legislative elections."

[1] New Caledonia was a French penal colony from 1864 to 1987. Prisoners sent included those convicted for participation in the Paris Commune ,notably Louise Michel.

Published on the USTKE (Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers) website and in the weekly Anticapitaliste , issue 619, 9/06/22. Reproduced from: https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7704=

French elections: A New Electoral Union on the French

Left

After several weeks of negotiations, mainly with the Greens and the Socialist Party, **writes Leon Crémieux**, La France Insoumise, the left wing organisation led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has sealed an electoral alliance for the coming French parliamentary elections on 12th and 19th June which will choose the 577 deputies of the National Assembly.

The NUPES ("Nouvelle union populaire, écologique et sociale" – New Popular, Ecological and Social Union) will therefore bring together La France Insoumise, the Greens (EELV), the Communist Party (PCF) and the Socialist Party (PS). The guiding principle is a single candidacy of this alliance in all electoral districts (except the overseas departments and Corsica). Obviously, this agreement was imposed on the partners of La France Insoumise, given the balance of power resulting from the presidential election and the risk that these parties would be marginalized again in the National Assembly.

On the other hand, La France Insoumise and Mélenchon wanted to seek the widest possible agreement on the left, pursuing the prospect of obtaining a parliamentary majority and the post of Prime Minister. Also, they have redoubled their efforts for this, and to guarantee the agreement and prevent EELV and the PS from presenting alternative candidates, by "buying" their adhesion. While the France Insoumise had initially spoken of a proportional distribution (according to the result of the presidential election) of the candidacies, which would have given 29 for the PS, 38 for the PC, 78 for EELV, the latest proposals have greatly inflated the figures for the PS and EELV which obtain respectively 70 and 100 candidates, with 50 for the PCF, which nevertheless achieved a better result than the PS). But the challenge, especially in relation to the PS, was to be sure that the agreement would have a majority in the party's National Council and that there would be little chance

of a dissident list. Thus, the 19 outgoing deputies of the PS will be candidates for the NUPS.

Given the electoral system for these parliamentary elections (single-member with two rounds) union around a single candidate in the first round is necessary for the election of a large number of deputies. Without an agreement, La France Insoumise would have obtained a maximum of around fifty deputies.

No one is fooled by the sudden conversion of the PS to the political positions of La France Insoumise, but the PS apparatus, at least the part that is not rallying to a Macronist majority in the assembly, considered that between Macron and Mélenchon, the future of the party was rather to be played on the left. The same was true for EELV.

To obtain its Union, La France Insoumise has therefore, in the name of electoral "realpolitik" in relation to EELV and the PS, chosen to reduce its electoral program, on retirement at full rate at 60, disobeying the treaties of the European Union, and even on immediately increasing the minimum wage to 1,400 euros, in particular. Similarly, the idea of opening up to activist groupings from working-class neighbourhoods within the framework of the new union has been more than limited. Finally, La France Insoumise has never sought to give the Nouveau parti anticapitaliste (NPA) the place, small but real, to which a unitary logic entitled it. Thus, La France Insoumise did not envisage in any way the possibility that Philippe Poutou would be a candidate in a constituency where he could have been electable, let alone run in Bordeaux in continuation of a common political activity with France Insoumise since the municipal and regional elections.

And finally, alongside the gifts made to the PS which obtained 3 times more candidates than its electoral weight, France Insoumise offered the NPA only 5 candidates (3 times less than its electoral weight) and without much hope of electability …

Quite a symbol.

The NPA, which maintained to the end a framework of negotiations with the will to reach an agreement, was therefore confronted with negotiators who did not, in fact, make any serious proposal to the NPA either on programme or candidacies, except to put the acronym of the NPA in an alliance framework in which it did not politically exist. As Philippe Poutou said, “the NPA understood that in the end, its presence was not really desired by La France Insoumise”.

Nevertheless, the NPA will continue to be in the framework of the dynamics that have emerged in recent weeks, trying to stimulate and participate in unitary activist frameworks. As the statement issued by its National Political Council says, the NPA will call for a vote and actively support those NUPES candidates representing a left of rupture. In other constituencies, faced with the candidacies of social liberals, notably the PS, but under the NUPES label, the NPA will seek to make an alternative heard with unitary candidates, from the world of labour and popular neighbourhoods, representing a fighting left, independent of the institutions and social-liberalism.

The rejection the NPA has suffered shows that the France Insoumise is playing all its cards on the institutional side and that of social-compatible moderation while many activist currents want a logic aimed at organizing a unitary mobilization and organization from below. But this does not call into question the analysis of the objective place that this electoral alliance has in the political field.

No one really knows what the electoral impact of this union will be, but the NUPES is clearly becoming the main electoral threat to a majority supporting Macron in the Assembly. This will clearly exceed the cursors of the political debate in the next six weeks.

Until now, Macron has built his image as a bulwark against the extreme right, against his best enemy Marine Le Pen, playing on the anti-fascist instincts of the traditional left electorate. This logic will be totally destabilized. According to initial projections, a majority of second-round duels would pit an En Marche candidacy against an NUPES candidacy.

Also, in recent days, across the media and from En Marche, all the blows are targeting Mélenchon and the new Union. Many politicians deplore the PS scuttling itself by allying with Mélenchon, they would have preferred it to scuttle itself by joining Macron. So, the limited but real risk that the left will become the main opposition to Macron and could even deprive him of a majority really frightens the presidential majority.

There is currently no split in the PS, but a dissident current will clearly organize itself with candidates opposed to the NUPES in some constituencies.

Leon Crémieux is an activist of the Solidaires trade-union federation and of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA, France). He is a member of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International of which ecosocialist.scot is a part.

Reproduced from International Viewpoint, English-language magazine of the Fourth International, 11 May 2022: https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article7651

Kanaky referendum: statement

of the Independence forces

The 12 December 2021 referendum on Kanaky independence from France was boycotted by the pro-independence forces, leading to a turnout of only 43% – half that of previous elections and denying the referendum any legitimacy.

ecosocialist.scot is pleased to republish below, in solidarity, parts of the statement of the pro-independence forces explaining their boycott stance. [The statement is translated by International Viewpoint, from l'Anticapitaliste. the journal of the NPA (New Anticapitalist Party) in France.]

Kanaky is a multi-ethnic colony of the French state in the Pacific Ocean east of Australia, with a population of over 250,000 people. Nouméa is the capital and largest city. It came under a vicious French military occupation in 1853 and was used as a penal colony, housing many of those imprisoned from the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871. The French colonialists curently call it *Nouvelle-Calédonie* or "New Caledonia", apparently because it reminded the first European colonist to visit it – James Cook in 1774 – of Scotland! The Kanak indigenous inhabitants support an independent sovereign state from France that encompasses all ethnic groups living in Kanaky. Solidarity from Scottish organisations for Kanaky independence and the independence movement would be welcome.

Further background can be found here and (in French) here.

"The population will not

accept the result of a consultation organized under the current conditions”

Gathered under the name of “Independence Strategic Committee of Non-participation”, the representatives of the political parties (FLNKS, the nationalists of MNSK, PT, DUS, MOI) and the independentist trade unions (USTKE, FLS, CNTP) ***call for the non-participation in the referendum of 12 December****, maintained by the French authorities. We publish extracts from their joint declaration.*

We, the participants of the Yes camp, hope that this final consultation of the Nouméa Accord will take place in a serene and peaceful climate; everyone can see that this will not be the case. Since 6 September 2021, our country has been hard hit by the health crisis. The death toll continues to rise and the time has come for compassion and condolences for the families. The Covid-19 has created a climate of anxiety, the population is divided on the vaccination obligation and the health pass, both among the Yes and No supporters, in addition to its impact on the world of work, from sensitive sectors to those impacted by the reduction in their turnover. […]

A biased consultation

The final declaration of the Nainville-les-Roches round table of 12 July 1983 opened a 38-year long period in which the Kanak people decided to share their right to self-determination with the other ethnic groups present in New Caledonia. We invited the victims of colonial history, who no longer have any other country, to be part of us, through three consultations and through Caledonian citizenship. This citizenship open to others also provides non-Kanak citizens

and communities with a political guarantee of equal treatment and inclusion in the common destiny. It secures the future of the populations concerned. It is the matrix of the legitimized people of this Country. Is there a forced march towards the destruction of this living together?

We refuse to be locked in, as the French State is trying to force us to do, in a choice between a solitary independence of rupture and a new status in France with the enlargement of the specific electoral body to the citizens of this Country. The State's document on the consequences of Yes and No does not enjoy consensus. It was judged as "being neither more nor less than a propaganda manifesto for the No" by the 39th FLNKS congress on 21 August in Nouméa, and by the other pro-independence movements. […]

An irrevocable decision of non-participation

The Minister for Overseas France limits his arguments to a health situation that has become acceptable, without addressing the question of the social climate. In all countries, health and social issues go hand in hand, never one without the other. It would be more appropriate to work on the conditions for organizing a new electoral campaign and voting modalities for a consultation whose date would be agreed for September or October 2022 depending on the health situation, which would however, by that time, have continued in the local way of life.

The Nouméa Accord provides that in the event of a third No, the political forces will discuss the situation thus created. We will only respect the outcome of the last consultation if it takes place in a calm and peaceful social climate and after a fair campaign.

If the French State decides to maintain the date of 12 December, the political groups have already given notice of

their irrevocable decision not to participate by not sending any propaganda material to the control commission for the referendum consultation.

Refusal of any commitment to the transition period

If the French state decides to maintain the date of 12 December, who will be around the table to discuss the following day? We won't be there. We do not feel committed to the timetable of a period, transitional or otherwise, that would take us to June 2023.

The consequence of maintaining the date of 12 December will make it impossible to be serene about our institutional and economic future in the short or medium term. The French state will have to assume sole responsibility for the situation thus created. The population will not accept the result of a third consultation organized under the current conditions. When the time comes, if necessary, we will point out to the international community the failings, the underbelly and the shortcomings of a backward-looking state that does not keep its word and clings to the reductive schemes of yesteryear. The time of colonization is over.

Our future will be one of full and complete sovereignty, because today what divides us is French neo-colonization. We must put an end to this situation once and for all. We have always reiterated our desire to define a new link with France or other countries, as advocated in the Nouméa Accord. This choice is that of a sovereign State free to co-construct interdependence, as Jean-Marie Tjibaou stated. The deepening of these interdependencies or partnerships must be at the heart of the reflection on a project referendum for the 3rd consultation. But if it is absolutely necessary to choose between freedom and these interdependencies, then we will choose our freedom.

8 December 2021

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **L'Anticapitaliste**.*